ORAON

[*Authorities*: The most complete account of the Oraons is a monograph entitled, *The Religion and Customs of the Oraons*, by the late Rev. Father P. Dehon, published in 1906 in the *Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, vol. i. No. 9. The tribe is also described at length by Colonel Dalton in *The Ethnography of Bengal*, and an article on it is included in Mr. (Sir H.) Risley's *Tribes and Castes of Bengal*. References to the Oraons are contained in Mr. Bradley-Birt's *Chota Nāgpur*, and Mr. Ball's *Jungle Life in India*. The Kurukh language is treated by Dr. Grierson in the volume of the Linguistic Survey on *Munda and Dravidian Languages*. The following article is principally made up of extracts from the accounts of Father Dehon and Colonel Dalton. Papers have also been received from Mr. Hīra Lāl, Mr. Balārām Nand, Deputy Inspector of Schools, Sambalpur, Mr. Jeorākhan Lāl, Deputy Inspector of Schools, Bilāspur, and Munshi Kanhya Lāl of the Gazetteer Office.]

LIST OF PARAGRAPHS

Oraon, Uraon, Kurukh, Dhangar, Kūda, Kisān.— The Oraons are an important Dravidian tribe of the Chota Nāgpur plateau, numbering altogether about 750,000 persons, of whom 85,000 now belong to the Central Provinces, being residents of the Jashpur and Sargūja States and the neigh- 1. General notice.

bouring tracts. They are commonly known in the Central Provinces as Dhāngar or Dhāngar-Oraon. In Chota Nāgpur the word Dhāngar means a farmservant engaged according to a special customary contract, and it has come to be applied to the Oraons, who are commonly employed in this capacity. Kūda means a digger or navvy in Uriya, and enquiries made by Mr. B. C. Mazumdar and Mr. Hīra Lāl have demonstrated that the 18,000 persons returned under this designation from Raigarh and Sambalpur in 1901 were really Oraons. The same remark applies to 33,000 persons returned from Sambalpur as Kisān or cultivator, these also being members of the tribe. The name by which the Oraons know themselves is Kurukh or Kurunkh, and the designation of Oraon or Orao has been applied to them by outsiders. The meaning of both names is obscure. Dr. Halm[1] was of opinion that the word *kurukh* might be identified with the Kolarian *horo*, man, and explained the term Oraon as the totem of one of the septs into which the Kurukhs were divided. According to him Oraon was a name coined by the Hindus, its base being *orgorān*, hawk or cunny bird, used as the name of a totemistic sept. Sir G. Grierson, however, suggested a connection with the Kaikāri, *urūpai*, man; Burgandi *urāpo*, man; *urāng*, men. The Kaikāris are a Telugu caste, and as the Oraons are believed to have come from the south of India, this derivation sounds plausible. In a similar way Sir. G. Grierson states, Kurukh may be connected with Tamil *kurūgu*, an eagle, and be the name of a totemistic clan. Compare also names, such as Korava, Kurru, a dialect of Tamil, and Kudāgu. In the Nerbudda valley the farmservant who pours the seed through the tube of the sowing-plough is known as Oraya; this word is probably derived from the verb *ūrna* to pour, and means 'one who pours.' Since the principal characteristic of the Oraons among the Hindus is their universal employment as farmservants and labourers, it may be suggested that the name is derived from this term. Of the other names by which they are known to outsiders Dhāngar means a farmservant, Kūda a digger, and Kisān a cultivator. The name Oraon and its variant Orao is very close to Oraya, which, as already seen, means a farmservant. The nasal seems to

[1] *Linguistic Survey*, vol. iv. p. 406.

be often added or omitted in this part of the country, as Kurukh or Kurunkh.

2. Settlement in Chota Nāgpur.

According to their own traditions, Mr. Gait writes,[1] "The Kurukh tribe originally lived in the Carnatic, whence they went up the Nerbudda river and settled in Bihār on the banks of the Son. Driven out by the Muhammadans, the tribe split into two divisions, one of which followed the course of the Ganges and finally settled in the Rājmahāl hills: while the other went up the Son and occupied the north-western portion of the Chota Nāgpur plateau, where many of the villages they occupy are still known by Mundāri names. The latter were the ancestors of the Oraons or Kurukhs, while the former were the progenitors of the Māle or Saonria as they often call themselves." Towards Lohardaga the Oraons found themselves among the Mundas or Kols, who probably retired by degrees and left them in possession of the country. "The Oraons," Father Dehon states, "are an exceedingly prolific tribe and soon become the preponderant element, while the Mundas, being conservative and averse to living among strangers, emigrate towards another jungle. The Mundas hate zamīndārs, and whenever they can do so, prefer to live in a retired corner in full possession of their small holding; and it is not at all improbable that, as the zamīndārs took possession of the newly-formed villages, they retired towards the east, while the Oraons, being good beasts of burden and more accustomed to subjection, remained." In view of the fine physique and martial character of the Larka or Fighting Kols or Mundas, Dalton was sceptical of the theory that they could ever have retired before the Oraons; but in addition to the fact that many villages in which Oraons now live have Mundāri names, it may be noted that the headman of an Oraon village is termed Munda and is considered to be descended from its founder, while for the Pāhan or priest of the village gods, the Oraons always employ a Munda if available, and it is one of the Pāhan's duties to point out the boundary of the village in cases of dispute; this is a function regularly assigned to the earliest residents, and seems to be strong evidence that

[1] *Bengal Census Report* (1901).

the Oraons found the Mundas settled in Chota Nāgpur when they arrived there. It is not necessary to suppose that any conquest or forcible expropriation took place; and it is probable that, as the country was opened up, the Mundas by preference retired to the wilder forest tracts, just as in the Central Provinces the Korkus and Baigas gave way to the Gonds, and the Gonds themselves relinquished the open country to the Hindus. None of the writers quoted notice the name Munda as applied to the headman of an Oraon village, but it can hardly be doubted that it is connected with that of the tribe; and it would be interesting also to know whether the Pāhan or village priest takes his name from the Pāns or Gandas. Dalton says that the Pāns are domesticated as essential constituents of every Ho or Kol village community, but does not allude to their presence among the Oraons. The custom in the Central Provinces, by which in Gond villages the village priest is always known as Baiga, because in some localities members of the Baiga tribe are commonly employed in the office, suggests the hypothesis of a similar usage here. In villages first settled by Oraons, the population, Father Dehon states, is divided into three *khūnts* or branches, named after the Munda, Pāhan and Mahto, the founders of the three branches being held to have been sons of the first settler. Members of each branch belong therefore to the same sept or *got*. Each *khūnt* has a share of the village lands.

3. Sub-divisions.

The Oraons have no proper subcastes in the Central Provinces, but the Kudas and Kisāns, having a distinctive name and occupation, sometimes regard themselves as separate bodies and decline intermarriage with other Oraons. In Bengal Sir H. Risley gives five divisions, Barga, Dhānka, Kharia, Khendro and Munda; of these Kharia and Munda are the names of other tribes, and Dhānka may be a variant for Dhāngar. The names show that as usual with the tribes of this part of the country the law of endogamy is by no means strict. The tribe have also a large number of exogamous septs of the totemistic type, named after plants and animals. Members of any sept commonly abstain from killing or eating their sept totem. A man must not marry a member of his own sept nor a first cousin on the mother's side.

Marriage is adult and pre-nuptial unchastity appears to be tacitly recognised. Oraon villages have the institution of the Dhūmkuria or Bachelors' dormitory, which Dalton describes as follows:[1] "In all the older Oraon villages when there is any conservation of ancient customs, there is a house called the Dhūmkuria in which all the bachelors of the village must sleep under penalty of a fine. The huts of the Oraons have insufficient accommodation for a family, so that separate quarters for the young men are a necessity. The same remark applies to the young unmarried women, and it is a fact that they do not sleep in the house with their parents. They are generally frank enough when questioned about their habits, but on this subject there is always a certain amount of reticence, and I have seen girls quietly withdraw when it was mooted. I am told that in some villages a separate building is provided for them like the Dhūmkuria, in which they consort under the guardianship of an elderly duenna, but I believe the more common practice is to distribute them among the houses of the widows, and this is what the girls themselves assert, if they answer at all when the question is asked; but however billeted, it is well known that they often find their way to the bachelors' hall, and in some villages actually sleep there. I not long ago saw a Dhūmkuria in a Sargūja village in which the boys and girls all slept every night." Colonel Dalton considered it uncertain that the practice led to actual immorality, but the fact can hardly be doubted. Sexual intercourse before marriage, Sir H. Risley says, is tacitly recognised, and is so generally practised that in the opinion of the best observers no Oraon girl is a virgin at the time of her marriage. "To call this state of things immoral is to apply a modern conception to primitive habits of life. Within the tribe, indeed, the idea of sexual morality seems hardly to exist, and the unmarried Oraons are not far removed from the condition of modified promiscuity which prevails among many of the Australian tribes. Provided that the exogamous circle defined by the totem is respected, an unmarried woman may bestow her favours on whom she will. If, however, she becomes pregnant, arrangements are made to get her married without delay,

4. Pre-nuptial licence.

[1] *Ethnography*, p. 248.

and she is then expected to lead a virtuous life."[1] According to Dalton, however, *liaisons* between boys and girls of the same village seldom end in marriage, as it is considered more respectable to bring home a bride from a distance. This appears to arise from the primitive rule of exogamy that marriage should not be allowed between those who have been brought up together. The young men can choose for themselves, and at dances, festivals and other social gatherings they freely woo their sweethearts, giving them flowers for the hair and presents of grilled field-mice, which the Oraons consider to be the most delicate of food. Father Dehon, however, states that matches are arranged by the parents, and the bride and bridegroom have nothing to say in the matter. Boys are usually married at sixteen and girls at fourteen or fifteen. The girls thus have only about two years of preliminary flirtation or Dhūmkuria life before they are settled.

5. Betrothal.

The first ceremony for a marriage is known as *pān bandhi* or the settling of the price; for which the boy's father, accompanied by some men of his village to represent the *panch* or elders, goes to the girl's house. Father Dehon states that the bride-price is five rupees and four maunds of grain. When this has been settled the rejoicings begin. "All the people of the village are invited; two boys come and anoint the visitors with oil. From every house of the village that can afford it a *handia* or pot of rice-beer is brought, and they drink together and make merry. All this time the girl has been kept inside, but now she suddenly sallies forth carrying a *handia* on her head. A murmur of admiration greets her when stepping through the crowd she comes and stands in front of her future father-in-law, who at once takes the *handia* from her head, embraces her, and gives her one rupee. From that time during the whole of the feast the girl remains sitting at the feet of her father-in-law. The whole party meanwhile continue drinking and talking; and voices rise so high that they cannot hear one another. As a diversion the old women of the village all come tumbling in, very drunk and wearing fantastic hats made of leaves, gesticulating like devils and carrying a straw manikin representing the

[1] *Tribes and Castes*, vol. ii. p. 141.

bridegroom. They all look like old witches, and in their drunken state are very mischievous."

6. Marriage ceremony.

The marriage takes place after about two years, visits being exchanged twice a year in the meantime. When the day comes the bridegroom proceeds with a large party of his friends, male and female, to the bride's house. Most of the males have warlike weapons, real or sham, and as they approach the village of the bride's family the young men from thence emerge, also armed, as if to repel the invasion, and a mimic fight ensues, which like a dissolving view blends pleasantly into a dance. In this the bride and bridegroom join, each riding on the hips of one of their friends. After this they have a feast till late in the night. Next morning bread cooked by the bride's mother is taken to the *dari* or village spring, where all the women partake of it. When they have finished they bring a vessel of water with some leaves of the mango tree in it. Meanwhile the bride and bridegroom are in the house, being anointed with oil and turmeric by their respective sisters. When everybody has gathered under the marriage-bower the boy and girl are brought out of the house and a heap is made of a plough-yoke, a bundle of thatching-grass and a curry-stone. The bride and bridegroom are made to stand on the curry-stone, the boy touching the heels of the bride with his toes, and a long piece of cloth is put round them to screen them from the public. Only their heads and feet can be seen. A goblet full of vermilion is presented to the boy, who dips his finger in it and makes three lines on the forehead of the girl; and the girl does the same to the boy, but as she has to reach him over her shoulder and cannot see him, the boy gets it anywhere on his face, which never fails to provoke hearty bursts of laughter. "When this is complete," Dalton states, "a gun is fired and then by some arrangement vessels full of water, placed over the bower, are upset, and the young couple and those near them receive a drenching shower-bath, the women shouting, 'The marriage is done, the marriage is done.' They now retire into an apartment prepared for them, ostensibly to change their clothes, but they do not emerge for some time, and when they do appear they are saluted as man and wife."

7. Special customs.

Meanwhile the guests sit round drinking *handias* or earthen pots full of rice-beer. The bride and bridegroom come out and retire a second time and are called out for the following rite. A vessel of beer is brought and the bride carries a cupful of it to the bridegroom's brother, but instead of giving it into his hand she deposits it on the ground in front of him. This is to seal a kind of tacit agreement that from that time the bridegroom's brother will not touch his sister-in-law, and was probably instituted to mark the abolition of the former system of fraternal polyandry, customs of an analogous nature being found among the Khonds and Korkus. "Then," Father Dehon continues, "comes the last ceremony, which is called *khirītengna handia* or the *handia* of the story, and is considered by the Oraons to be the true form of marriage which has been handed down to them by their forefathers. The boy and girl sit together before the people, and one of the elder men present rises and addressing the boy says: 'If your wife goes to fetch *sāg* and falls from a tree and breaks her leg, do not say that she is disfigured or crippled. You will have to keep and feed her.' Then turning to the girl: 'When your husband goes hunting, if his arm or leg is broken, do not say, "He is a cripple, I won't live with him." Do not say that, for you have to remain with him. If you prepare meat, give two shares to him and keep only one for yourself. If you prepare vegetables, give him two parts and keep only one part for yourself. If he gets sick and cannot go out, do not say that he is dirty, but clean his mat and wash him.' A feast follows, and at night the girl is brought to the boy by her mother, who says to him, 'Now this my child is yours; I do not give her for a few days but for ever; take care of her and love her well.' A companion of the bridegroom's then seizes the girl in his arms and carries her inside the house."

8. Widow-remarriage and divorce.

It is uncommon for a man to have two wives. Divorce is permitted, and is usually effected by the boy or girl running away to the Duārs or Assam. Widow-remarriage is a regular practice. The first time a widow marries again, Father Dehon states, the bridegroom must pay Rs. 3-8 for her; if successive husbands die her price goes down by a

rupee on each fresh marriage, so that a fifth husband would pay only eight annas. Cases of adultery are comparatively rare. When offenders are caught a heavy fine is imposed if they are well-to-do, and if they are not, a smaller fine and a beating.

9. Customs at birth.

"The Oraons," Father Dehon continues, "are a very prolific race, and whenever they are allowed to live without being too much oppressed they increase prodigiously. What strikes you when you come to an Oraon village is the number of small dirty children playing everywhere, while you can scarcely meet a woman that does not carry a baby on her back. The women seem, to a great extent, to have been exempted from the curse of our first mother: 'Thou shalt bring forth, etc.' They seem to give birth to their children with the greatest ease. There is no period of uncleanness, and the very day after giving birth to a child, you will see the mother with her baby tied up in a cloth on her back and a pitcher on her head going, as if nothing had happened, to the village spring." This practice, it may be remarked in parenthesis, may arise from the former observance of the Couvade, the peculiar custom prevailing among several primitive races, by which, when a child is born, the father lies in the house and pretends to be ill, while the mother gets up immediately and goes about her work. The custom has been reported as existing among the Oraons by one observer from Bilāspur,[1] but so far without confirmation.

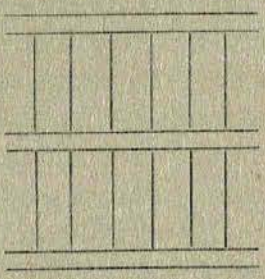
10. Naming a child.

"A child is named eight or ten days after birth, and on this day some men of the village and the members of the family assemble at the parents' house. Two leaf-cups are brought, one full of water and the other of rice. After a preliminary formula grains of rice are let fall into the cup, first in the name of the child and then successively in those of his ancestors in the following order: paternal grandfather, paternal great-grandfather, father, paternal uncle, maternal grandfather, other relatives. When the grain dropped in the name of any relative meets the first one dropped to represent the child, he is given the name of that relative and is probably considered to be a reincarnation of him."

[1] Panna Lāl, Revenue Inspector.

11. Branding and tattooing.

"When a boy is six or seven years old it is time for him to become a member of the Dhūmkuria or common dormitory. The eldest boys catch hold of his left arm and, with burning cloth, burn out five deep marks on the lower part of his arm. This is done so that he may be recognised as an Oraon at his death when he goes into the other world." The ceremony was probably the initiation to manhood on arrival at puberty, and resembled those prevalent among the Australian tribes. With this exception men are not tattooed, but this decoration is profusely resorted to by women. They have three parallel vertical lines on the forehead which form a distinctive mark, and other patterns on the arms, chest, knees and ankles. These usually consist of lines vertical and horizontal as shown below:



The marks on the knees are considered to be steps by which the wearer will ascend to heaven after her death. If a baby cries much it is also tattooed on the nose and chin.

12. Dormitory discipline.

The Dhūmkuria fraternity, Colonel Dalton remarks, are, under the severest penalties, bound down to secrecy in regard to all that takes place in their dormitory; and even girls are punished if they dare to tell tales. They are not allowed to join in the dances till the offence is condoned. They have a regular system of fagging in this curious institution. The small boys serve those of larger growth, shampoo their limbs, comb their hair, and so on, and they are sometimes subjected to severe discipline to make men of them.

13. Disposal of the dead.

The Oraons either bury or burn the dead. As the corpse is carried to the grave, beginning from the first cross-roads, they sprinkle a line of rice as far as the grave or pyre.

This is done so that the soul of the deceased may find its way back to the house. Before the burial or cremation cooked food and some small pieces of money are placed in the mouth of the corpse. They are subsequently, however, removed or recovered from the ashes and taken by the musicians as their fee. Some clothes belonging to the deceased and a vessel with some rice are either burnt with the corpse or placed in the grave. As the grave is being filled in they place a stalk of *orai*[1] grass vertically on the head of the corpse and gradually draw it upwards as the earth is piled on the grave. They say that this is done in order to leave a passage for the air to pass to the nostrils of the deceased. This is the grass from which reed pens are made, and the stalk is hard and hollow. Afterwards they plant a root of the same grass where the stalk is standing over the head of the corpse. On the tenth day they sacrifice a pig and fowl and bury the legs, tail, ears and nose of the pig in a hole with seven balls of iron dross. They then proceed to the grave scattering a little parched rice all the way along the path. Cooked rice is offered at the grave. If the corpse has been burnt they pick up the bones and place them in a pot, which is brought home and hung up behind the dead man's house. At night-time a relative sits inside the house watching a burning lamp, while some friends go outside the village and make a miniature hut with sticks and grass and set fire to it. They then call out to the dead man, 'Come, your house is being burnt,' and walk home striking a mattock and sickle together. On coming to the house they kick down the matting which covers the doorway; the man inside says, 'Who are you?' and they answer, 'It is we.' They watch the lamp and when the flame wavers they believe it to show that the spirit of the deceased has followed them and has also entered the house. Next day the bones are thrown into a river and the earthen pot broken against a stone.

14. Worship of ancestors.

The *pitras* or ancestors are worshipped at every festival, and when the new rice is reaped a hen is offered to them. They pray to their dead parents to accept the offering and then place a few grains of rice before the hen. If she eats them, it is a sign that the ancestors have accepted

[1] *Sorghum halepense.*

the offering and a man kills the hen by crushing its head with his closed fist. This is probably, as remarked by Father Dehon, in recollection of the method employed before the introduction of knives, and the same explanation may be given of the barbaric method of the Baigas of crushing a pig to death by a beam of wood used as a see-saw across its body, and of the Gond bride and bridegroom killing a fowl by treading on it when they first enter their house after the wedding.

15. Religion. The supreme deity.

The following account of the tribal religion is abridged from Father Dehon's full and interesting description:

"The Oraons worship a supreme god who is known as Dharmes; him they invoke in their greatest difficulties when recourse to the village priests and magicians has proved useless. Then they turn to Dharmes and say, 'Now we have tried everything, but we have still you who can help us.' They sacrifice to him a white cock. They think that god is too good to punish them, and that they are not answerable to him in any way for their conduct; they believe that everybody will be treated in the same way in the other world. There is no hell for them or place of punishment, but everybody will go to *merkha* or heaven. The Red Indians speak of the happy hunting-grounds and the Oraons imagine something like the happy ploughing-grounds, where everybody will have plenty of land, plenty of bullocks to plough it with, and plenty of rice-beer to drink after his labour. They look on god as a big zamīndār or landowner, who does nothing himself, but keeps a *chaprāsi* as an agent or debt-collector; and they conceive the latter as having all the defects so common to his profession. Baranda, the *chaprāsi*, exacts tribute from them mercilessly, not exactly out of zeal for the service of his master, but out of greed for his *talbāna* or perquisites. When making a sacrifice to Dharmes they pray: 'O god, from to-day do not send any more your *chaprāsi* to punish us. You see we have paid our respects to you, and we are going to give him his *dastūri* (tip).'

16. Minor godlings.

"But in the concerns of this world, to obtain good crops and freedom from sickness, a host of minor deities have to be propitiated. These consist of *bhūts* or spirits of the

household, the sept, the village, and common deities, such as the earth and sun. Chola Pācho or the lady of the grove lives in the *sarna* or sacred grove, which has been left standing when the forest was cleared. She is credited with the power of giving rain and consequently good crops. Churel is the shade of a woman who has died while pregnant or in childbirth. She hovers over her burial-place and is an object of horror and fright to every passer-by. It is her nature to look out for a companion, and she is said always to choose that member of a family whom she liked best during her lifetime. She will then come at night and embrace him and tickle him under the arms, making him laugh till he dies. Bhūla or the wanderers are the shades of persons who have died an unnatural death, either having been murdered, hanged, or killed by a tiger. 'They all keep the scars of their respective wounds and one can imagine what a weird-looking lot they are. They are always on the move, and are, as it were, the mendicant portion of the invisible community. They are not very powerful and are responsible only for small ailments, like nightmares and slight indispositions. When an Ojha or spirit-raiser discovers that a Bhūla has appeared in the light of his lamp he shows a disappointed face, and says: 'Pshaw, only Bhūla!' No sacrifice is offered to him, but the Ojha then and there takes a few grains of rice, rubs them in charcoal and throws them at the flame of his lamp, saying, 'Take this, Bhūla, and go away.' Mūrkuri is the thumping *bhūt*. Europeans to show their kindness and familiarity thump people on the back. If this is followed by fever or any kind of sickness it will be ascribed to the passing of Mūrkuri from the body of the European into the body of the native.

"*Chordewa* is a witch rather than a *bhūt*. It is believed that some women have the power to change their soul into a black cat, who then goes about in the houses where there are sick people. Such a cat has a peculiar way of mewing, quite different from its brethren, and is easily recognised. It steals quietly into the house, licks the lips of the sick man and eats the food which has been prepared for him. The sick man soon gets worse and dies. They say it is very difficult to catch the cat, as it has all the nimbleness of its

nature and the cleverness of a *bhūt*. However, they sometimes succeed, and then something wonderful happens. The woman out of whom the cat has come remains insensible, as it were in a state of temporary death, until the cat re-enters her body. Any wound inflicted on the cat will be inflicted on her; if they cut its ears or break its legs or put out its eyes the woman will suffer the same mutilation. The Oraons say that formerly they used to burn any woman who was suspected of being a *Chordewa*.

17. Human sacrifice.

"There is also Anna Kuāri or Mahādhani, who is in our estimation the most cruel and repulsive deity of all, as she requires human sacrifice. Those savage people, who put good crops above everything, look upon her in a different light. She can give good crops and make a man rich, and this covers a multitude of sins. People may be sceptical about it and say that it is impossible that in any part of India under the British Government there should still be human sacrifices. Well, in spite of all the vigilance of the authorities, there are still human sacrifices in Chota Nāgpur. As the vigilance of the authorities increases, so also does the carefulness of the Urkas or Otongas increase. They choose for their victims poor waifs or strangers, whose disappearance no one will notice. April and May are the months in which the Urkas are at work. Doīsa, Panāri, Kūkra and Sargūja have a very bad reputation. During these months no strangers will go about the country alone and during that time nowhere will boys and girls be allowed to go to the jungle and graze the cattle for fear of the Urkas. When an Urka has found a victim he cuts his throat and carries away the upper part of the ring finger and the nose. Anna Kuāri finds votaries not only among the Oraons, but especially among the big zamīndārs and Rājas of the Native States. When a man has offered a sacrifice to Anna Kuāri she goes and lives in his house in the form of a small child. From that time his fields yield double harvest, and when he brings in his paddy he takes Anna Kuāri and rolls her over the heap to double its size. But she soon becomes restless and is only pacified by new human sacrifices. At last after some years she cannot bear remaining in the same house any more and kills every one."

In Jashpur State where the Oraons number 47,000 about half the total number have become Christians. The non-Christians call themselves Sansār, and the principal difference between them is that the Christians have cut off the pigtail, while the Sansār retain it. In some families the father may be a Sansār and the son a Kiristān, and they live together without any distinction. The Christians belong to the Roman Catholic and Lutheran Missions, but though they all know their Church, they naturally have little or no idea of the distinctions of doctrine. 18. Christianity.

The principal festivals are the Sārhūl, celebrated when the *sāl* tree[1] flowers, the Karma or May-day when the rice is ready for planting out, and the Kanihāri or harvest celebration. 19. Festivals. The Karma or May-day.

"At the Karma festival a party of young people of both sexes," says Colonel Dalton, "proceed to the forest and cut a young *karma* tree (*Nauclea parvifolia*) or the branch of one; they bear this home in triumph and plant it in the centre of the Akhāra or wrestling ground. Next morning all may be seen at an early hour in holiday array, the elders in groups under the fine old tamarind trees that surround the Akhāra, and the youth of both sexes, arm-linked in a huge circle, dancing round the *karma* tree, which, festooned with garlands, decorated with strips of coloured cloth and sham bracelets and necklets of plaited straw, and with the bright faces and merry laughter of the young people encircling it, reminds one of the gift-bearing tree so often introduced at our own great festival." The tree, however, probably corresponds to the English Maypole, and the festival celebrates the renewal of vegetation.

At the Sārhūl festival the marriage of the sun-god and earth-mother is celebrated, and this cannot be done till the *sāl* tree gives the flowers for the ceremony. It takes place about the beginning of April on any day when the tree is in flower. A white cock is taken to represent the sun and a black hen the earth; their marriage is celebrated by marking them with vermilion, and they are sacrificed. The villagers then accompany the Pāhan or Baiga, the village priest, to the *sarna* or sacred grove, a remnant of the old *sāl* forest in 20. The *sāl* flower festival.

[1] *Shorea robusta.*

which is located Sarna Burhi or 'The old women of the grove.' "To this dryad," writes Colonel Dalton, "who is supposed to have great influence over the rain (a superstition not improbably founded on the importance of trees as cloud-compellers), the party offer five fowls, which are afterwards eaten, and the remainder of the day is spent in feasting. They return laden with the flowers of the *sāl* tree, and next morning with the Baiga pay a visit to every house, carrying the flowers. The women of the village all stand on the threshold of their houses, each holding two leaf-cups; one empty to receive the holy water; the other with rice-beer for the Baiga. His reverence stops at each house, and places flowers over it and in the hair of the women. He sprinkles the holy water on the seeds that have been kept for the new year and showers blessings on every house, saying, 'May your rooms and granary be filled with paddy that the Baiga's name may be great.' When this is accomplished the woman throws a vessel of water over his venerable person, heartily dousing the man whom the moment before they were treating with such profound respect. This is no doubt a rain-charm, and is a familiar process. The Baiga is prevented from catching cold by being given the cup of rice-beer and is generally gloriously drunk before he completes his round. There is now a general feast, and afterwards the youth of both sexes, gaily decked with the *sāl* blossoms, the pale cream-white flowers of which make the most becoming of ornaments against their dusky skins and coal-black hair, proceed to the Akhāra and dance all night."

21. The harvest festival.

The Kanihāri, as described by Father Dehon, is held previous to the threshing of the rice, and none is allowed to prepare his threshing-floor until it has been celebrated. It can only take place on a Tuesday. A fowl is sacrificed and its blood sprinkled on the new rice. In the evening a common feast is held at which the Baiga presides, and when this is over they go to the place where Mahādeo is worshipped and the Baiga pours milk over the stone that represents him. The people then dance. Plenty of rice-beer is brought, and a scene of debauchery takes place in which all restraint is put aside. They sing the most obscene

songs and give vent to all their passions. On that day no one is responsible for any breach of morality.

22. Fast for the crops.

Like other primitive races, and the Hindus generally, the Oraons observe the Lenten fast, as explained by Sir J. G. Frazer, after sowing their crops. Having committed his seed with every propitiatory rite to the bosom of Mother Earth, the savage waits with anxious expectation to see whether she will once again perform on his behalf the yearly miracle of the renewal of vegetation, and the growth of the corn-plants from the seed which the Greeks typified by the descent of Proserpine into Hades for a season of the year and her triumphant re-emergence to the upper air. Meanwhile he fasts and atones for any sin or shortcoming of his which may possibly have offended the goddess and cause her to hold her hand. From the beginning of *Asārh* (June) the Oraons cease to shave, abstain from eating turmeric, and make no leaf-plates for their food, but eat it straight from the cooking-vessel. This they now say is to prevent the field-mice from consuming the seeds of the rice.

23. Physical appearance and costume of the Oraons.

"The colour of most Oraons," Sir H. Risley states, "is the darkest brown approaching to black; the hair being jet-black, coarse and rather inclined to be frizzy. Projecting jaws and teeth, thick lips, low narrow foreheads, and broad flat noses are the features characteristic of the tribe. The eyes are often bright and full, and no obliquity is observable in the opening of the eyelids."

"The Oraon youths," Dalton states, "though with features very far from being in accordance with the statutes of beauty, are of a singularly pleasing class, their faces beaming with animation and good humour. They are a small race, averaging 4 feet 5 inches, but there is perfect proportion in all parts of their form, and their supple, pliant, lithe figures are often models of symmetry. There is about the young Oraon a jaunty air and mirthful expression that distinguishes him from the Munda or Ho, who has more of the dignified gravity that is said to characterise the North American Indian. The Oraon is particular about his personal appearance only so long as he is unmarried, but he is in no hurry to withdraw from the Dhūmkuria community, and generally

his first youth is passed before he resigns his decorative propensities.

"He wears his hair long like a woman, gathered in a knot behind, supporting, when he is in gala costume, a red or white turban. In the knot are wooden combs and other instruments useful and ornamental, with numerous ornaments of brass.[1] At the very extremity of the roll of hair gleams a small circular mirror set in brass, from which, and also from his ears, bright brass chains with spiky pendants dangle, and as he moves with the springy elastic step of youth and tosses his head like a high-mettled steed in the buoyancy of his animal spirits, he sets all his glittering ornaments in motion and displays as he laughs a row of teeth, round, white and regular, that give light and animation to his dusky features. He wears nothing in the form of a coat; his decorated neck and chest are undraped, displaying how the latter tapers to the waist, which the young dandies compress within the smallest compass. In addition to the cloth, there is always round the waist a girdle of cords made of tasar-silk or of cane. This is now a superfluity, but it is no doubt the remnant of a more primitive costume, perhaps the support of the antique fig-leaves.

"Out of the age of ornamentation nothing can be more untidy or more unprepossessing than the appearance of the Oraon. The ornaments are nearly all discarded, hair utterly neglected, and for raiment any rags are used. This applies both to males and females of middle age.

24. Dress of women.

"The dress of the women consists of one cloth, six yards long, gracefully adjusted so as to form a shawl and a petticoat. The upper end is thrown over the left shoulder and falls with its fringe and ornamented border prettily over the back of the figure. Vast quantities of red beads and a large, heavy brass ornament shaped like a *torque* are worn round the neck. On the left hand are rings of copper, as many as can be induced on each finger up to the first joint, on the right hand a smaller quantity; rings on the second toe only of brass or bell-metal, and anklets and bracelets of the same material are also worn." The women wear only

[1] In Bilāspur the men have an iron comb in the hair with a circular end and two prongs like a fork. Women do not wear this.

metal and not glass bangles, and this with the three vertical tattoo-marks on the forehead and the fact that the head and right arm are uncovered enables them to be easily recognised. "The hair is made tolerably smooth and amenable by much lubrication, and false hair or some other substance is used to give size to the mass into which it is gathered not immediately behind, but more or less on one side, so that it lies on the neck just behind and touching the right ear; and flowers are arranged in a receptacle made for them between the roll of hair and the head." Rings are worn in the lobes of the ear, but not other ornaments. "When in dancing costume on grand occasions they add to their head-dress plumes of heron feathers, and a gay bordered scarf is tightly bound round the upper part of the body."

25. Dances.

"The tribe I am treating of are seen to best advantage at the great national dance meetings called Jātras, which are held once a year at convenient centres, generally large mango groves in the vicinity of old villages. As a signal to the country round, the flags of each village are brought out on the day fixed and set upon the road that leads to the place of meeting. This incites the young men and maidens to hurry through their morning's work and look up their *jātra* dresses, which are by no means ordinary attire. Those who have some miles to go put up their finery in a bundle to keep it fresh and clean, and proceed to some tank or stream in the vicinity of the tryst grove; and about two o'clock in the afternoon may be seen all around groups of girls laughingly making their toilets in the open air, and young men in separate parties similarly employed. When they are ready the drums are beaten, huge horns are blown, and thus summoned the group from each village forms its procession. In front are young men with swords and shields or other weapons, the village standard-bearers with their flags, and boys waving yaks' tails or bearing poles with fantastic arrangements of garlands and wreaths intended to represent umbrellas of dignity. Sometimes a man riding on a wooden horse is carried, horse and all, by his friends as the Rāja, and others assume the form of or paint themselves up to represent certain beasts of prey. Behind this motley group the main body

form compactly together as a close column of dancers in alternate ranks of boys and girls, and thus they enter the grove, where the meeting is held in a cheery dashing style, wheeling and countermarching and forming lines, circles and columns with grace and precision. The dance with these movements is called *kharia*, and it is considered to be an Oraon rather than a Munda dance, though Munda girls join in it. When they enter the grove the different groups join and dance the *kharia* together, forming one vast procession and then a monstrous circle. The drums and musical instruments are laid aside, and it is by the voices alone that the time is given; but as many hundreds, nay, thousands, join, the effect is imposing. In serried ranks, so closed up that they appear jammed, they circle round in file, all keeping perfect step, but at regular intervals the strain is terminated by a *kurūru*, which reminds one of Paddy's 'huroosh' as he 'welts the floor,' and at the same moment they all face inwards and simultaneously jumping up come down on the ground with a resounding stamp that makes the finale of the movements, but only for a momentary pause. One voice with a startling yell takes up the strain again, a fresh start is made, and after gyrating thus till they tire of it the ring breaks up, and separating into village groups they perform other dances independently till near sunset, and then go dancing home."

26. Social customs.

But more often they go on all night. Mr. Ball mentions their dance as follows:[1] "The Oraon dance was distinct from any I had seen by the Santāls or other races. The girls, carefully arranged in lines by sizes, with the tallest at one end and the smallest at the other, firmly grasp one another's hands, and the whole movements are so perfectly in concert that they spring about with as much agility as could a single individual." Father Dehon gives the following interesting notice of their social customs: "The Oraons are very sociable beings, and like to enjoy life together. They are paying visits or *pahis* to one another nearly the whole year round. In these the *handia* (beer-jar) always plays a great part. Any man who would presume to receive visitors without offering them a *handia* would be

[1] *Jungle Life in India*, p. 134.

hooted and insulted by his guests, who would find a sympathising echo from all the people of the village. One may say that from the time of the new rice at the end of September to the end of the marriage feast or till March there is a continual coming and going of visitors. For a marriage feast forty *handias* are prepared by the groom's father, and all the people of the village who can afford it supply one also. Each *handia* gives about three gallons of rice-beer, so that in one day and a half, in a village of thirty houses, about 200 gallons of rice-beer are despatched. The Oraons are famous for their dances. They delight in spending the whole night from sunset till morning in this most exciting amusement, and in the dancing season they go from village to village. They get, as it were, intoxicated with the music, and there is never any slackening of the pace. On the contrary, the evolutions seem to increase till very early in the morning, and it sometimes happens that one of the dancers shoots off rapidly from the gyrating group, and speeds away like a spent top, and, whirlwind-like, disappears through paddy-fields and ditches till he falls entirely exhausted. Of course it is the devil who has taken possession of him. One can well imagine in what state the dancers are at the first crow of the cock, and when '*L'aurore avec ses doigts de rose entr'ouvre les portes de l'orient*,' she finds the girls straggling home one by one, dishevelled, *traînant l'aile*, too tired even to enjoy the company of the boys, who remain behind in small groups, still sounding their tom-toms at intervals as if sorry that the performance was so soon over. And, wonderful to say and incredible to witness, they will go straight to the stalls, yoke their bullocks, and work the whole morning with the same spirit and cheerfulness as if they had spent the whole night in refreshing sleep. At eleven o'clock they come home, eat their meal, and stretched out in the verandah sleep like logs until two, when poked and kicked about unmercifully by the people of the house, they reluctantly get up with heavy eyes and weary limbs to resume their work."

27. Social rules.

The Oraons do not now admit outsiders into the tribe. There is no offence for which a man is permanently put out of caste, but a woman living with any man other than an

Oraon is so expelled. Temporary expulsion is awarded for the usual offences. The head of the caste *panchāyat* is called Panua, and when an offender is reinstated, the Panua first drinks water from his hand, and takes upon himself the burden of the erring one's transgression. For this he usually receives a fee of five rupees, and in some States the appointment is in the hands of the Rāja, who exacts a fine of a hundred rupees or more from a new candidate. The Oraons eat almost all kinds of food, including pork, fowls and crocodiles, but abstain from beef. Their status is very low among the Hindus; they are usually made to live in a separate corner of the village, and are sometimes not allowed to draw water from the village well. As already stated, the dress of the men consists only of a narrow wisp of cloth round the loins. Some of them say, like the Gonds, that they are descended from the subjects of Rāwan, the demon king of Ceylon; this ancestry having no doubt in the first instance been imputed to them by the Hindus. And they explain that when Hanumān in the shape of a giant monkey came to the assistance of Rāma, their king Rāwan tried to destroy Hanumān by taking all the loin-cloths of his subjects and tying them soaked in oil to the monkey's tail with a view to setting them on fire and burning him to death. The device was unsuccessful and Hanumān escaped, but since then the subjects of Rāwan and their descendants have never had a sufficient allowance of cloth to cover them properly.

28. Character.

"The Oraons," Colonel Dalton says, "if not the most virtuous, are the most cheerful of the human race. Their lot is not a particularly happy one. They submit to be told that they are especially created as a labouring class, and they have had this so often dinned into their ears that they believe and admit it. I believe they relish work if the taskmaster be not over-exacting. Oraons sentenced to imprisonment without labour, as sometimes happens, for offences against the excise laws, insist on joining the working gangs, and wherever employed, if kindly treated, they work as if they felt an interest in their task. In cold weather or hot, rain or sun, they go cheerfully about it, and after some nine or ten hours of toil (seasoned with a little play and chaff among themselves) they return blithely home

in flower-decked groups holding each other by the hand or round the waist and singing."

The Kurukh language, Dr. Grierson states, has no written character, but the gospels have been printed in it in the Devanāgri type. The translation is due to the Rev. F. Halm, who has also published a Biblical history, a catechism and other small books in Kurukh. More than five-sixths of the Oraons are still returned as speaking their own language. 29. Language.

Pāik.—A small caste of the Uriya country formed from military service, the term *pāik* meaning 'a foot-soldier.' In 1901 the Pāiks numbered 19,000 persons in the Kālāhandi and Patna States and the Raipur District, but since the transfer of the Uriya States to Bengal less than 3000 remain in the Central Provinces. In Kālāhandi, where the bulk of them reside, they are called Nalia Sipāhis from the fact that they were formerly armed with *nalis* or matchlocks by the State. After the Khond rising of 1882 in Kālāhandi these were confiscated and bows and arrows given in lieu of them. The Pāiks say that they were the followers of two warriors, Kālmīr and Jaimīr, who conquered the Kālāhandi and Jaipur States from the Khonds about a thousand years ago. There is no doubt that they formed the rough militia of the Uriya Rājas, a sort of rabble half military and half police, like the Khandaits. But the Khandaits were probably the leaders and officers, and, as a consequence, though originally only a mixed occupational group, have acquired a higher status than the Pāiks and in Orissa rank next to the Rājpūts. The Pāiks were the rank and file, mainly recruited from the forest tribes, and they are counted as a comparatively low caste, though to strangers they profess to be Rājpūts. In Sambalpur it is said that Rājpūts, Sudhs, Bhuiyas and Gonds are called Pāiks. In Kālāhandi they wear the sacred thread, being invested with it by a Brāhman at the time of their marriage, and they say that this privilege was conferred on them by the Rāja. It is reported, however, that social distinctions may be purchased in some of the Uriya States for comparatively small sums. A Bhatra or member of a forest tribe was

observed wearing the sacred thread, and, on being questioned, stated that his grandfather had purchased the right from the Rāja for Rs. 50. The privileges of wearing gold ear ornaments, carrying an umbrella, and riding on horseback were obtainable in a similar manner. It is also related that when one Rāja imported the first pair of boots seen in his State, the local landholders were allowed to wear them in turn for a few minutes on payment of five rupees each, as a token of their right thereafter to procure and wear boots of their own. In Damoh and Jubbulpore another set of Pāiks is to be found who also claim to be Rājpūts, and are commonly so called, though true Rājpūts will not eat or intermarry with them. These are quite distinct from the Sambalpur Pāiks, but have probably been formed into a caste in exactly the same manner. The sept or family names of the Uriya Pāiks sufficiently indicate their mixed descent. Some of them are as follows: Dube (a Brāhman title), Chālak Bansi (of the Chalukya royal family), Chhit Karan (belonging to the Karans or Uriya Kāyasths), Sahāni (a sais or groom), Sudh (the name of an Uriya caste), Benet Uriya (a subdivision of the Uriya or Od mason caste), and so on. It is clear that members of different castes who became Pāiks founded separate families, which in time developed into exogamous septs. Some of the septs will not eat food cooked with water in company with the rest of the caste, though they do not object to intermarrying with them. After her marriage a girl may not take food cooked by her parents nor will they accept it from her. And at a marriage party each guest is supplied with grain and cooks it himself, but everybody will eat with the bride and bridegroom as a special concession to their position. Besides the exogamous clans the Pāiks have totemistic *gots* or groups named after plants and animals, as Harin (a deer), Kadamb (a tree), and so on. But these have no bearing on marriage, and the bulk of the caste have the Nāgesh or cobra as their sept name. It is said that anybody who does not know his sept considers himself to be a Nāgesh, and if he does not know his clan, he calls himself a Mahanti. Each family among the Pāiks has also a Sainga or title, of a high-sounding nature, as Nāik (lord), Pujāri (worshipper), Baidya

(physician), Raut (noble), and so on. Marriages are generally celebrated in early youth, but no penalty is incurred for a breach of this rule. If the signs of adolescence appear in a girl for the first time on a Tuesday, Saturday or Sunday, it is considered a bad omen, and she is sometimes married to a tree to avert the consequences. Widow-marriage and divorce are freely permitted. The caste burn their dead and perform the *shrāddh* ceremony. The women are tattooed, and men sometimes tattoo their arms with figures of the sun and moon in the belief that this will protect them from snake-bite. The Pāiks eat flesh and fish, but abstain from fowls and other unclean animals and from liquor. Brāhmans will not take water from them, but other castes generally do so. Some of them are still employed as armed retainers and are remunerated by free grants of land.

PANKA

LIST OF PARAGRAPHS

1. Origin of the caste.

Panka.[1]—A Dravidian caste of weavers and labourers found in Mandla, Raipur and Bilāspur, and numbering 215,000 persons in 1911. The name is a variant on that of the Pān tribe of Orissa and Chota Nāgpur, who are also known as Panika, Chīk, Gānda and by various other designations. In the Central Provinces it has, however, a peculiar application; for while the Pān tribe proper is called Gānda in Chhattīsgarh and the Uriya country, the Pankas form a separate division of the Gāndas, consisting of those who have become members of the Kabīrpanthi sect. In this way the name has been found very convenient, for since Kabīr, the founder of the sect, was discovered by a weaver woman lying on the lotus leaves of a tank, like Moses in the bulrushes, and as a newly initiated convert is purified with water, so the Pankas hold that their name is *pāni ka* or 'from water.' As far as possible then they disown their connection with the Gāndas, one of the most despised castes, and say that they are a separate caste consisting of the disciples of Kabīr. This has given rise to the following doggerel rhyme about them:

Pāni sé Panka bhae, bundan rāche sharīr,
Age age Panka bhae, pāchhe Dās Kabīr.

Which may be rendered, 'The Panka indeed is born of

[1] This article is compiled from papers by Pyāre Lāl Misra, Ethnographic clerk, and Hazāri Lāl, Manager, Court of Wards, Chānda.

water, and his body is made of drops of water, but there were Pankas before Kabīr.' Or another rendering of the second line is, 'First he was a Panka, and afterwards he became a disciple of Kabīr.' Nevertheless the Pankas have been successful in obtaining a somewhat higher position than the Gāndas, in that their touch is not considered to convey impurity. This is therefore an instance of a body of persons from a low caste embracing a new religion and thereby forming themselves into a separate caste and obtaining an advance in social position.

2. Caste sub-divisions.

Of the whole caste 84 per cent are Kabīrpanthis and these form one subcaste; but there are a few others. The Mānikpuria say that their ancestors came from Mānikpur in Darbhanga State about three centuries ago; the Saktaha are those who profess to belong to the Sākta sect, which simply means that they eat flesh and drink liquor, being unwilling to submit to the restrictions imposed on Kabīrpanthis; the Bajania are those who play on musical instruments, an occupation which tends to lower them in Hindu eyes; and the Dom Pankas are probably a section of the Dom or sweeper caste who have somehow managed to become Pankas. The main distinction is however between the Kabirha, who have abjured flesh and liquor, and the Saktaha, who indulge in them; and the Saktaha group is naturally recruited from backsliding Kabīrpanthis. Properly the Kabirha and Saktaha do not intermarry, but if a girl from either section goes to a man of the other she will be admitted into the community and recognised as his wife, though the regular ceremony is not performed. The Saktaha worship all the ordinary village deities, but some of the Kabirha at any rate entirely refrain from doing so, and have no religious rites except when a priest of their sect comes round, when he gives them a discourse and they sing religious songs.

3. Endogamous divisions.

The caste have a number of exogamous septs, many of which are named after plants and animals: as Tandia an earthen pot, Chhura a razor, Neora the mongoose, Parewa the wild pigeon, and others. Other septs are Panaria the bringer of betel-leaf, Kuldīp the lamp-lighter, Pandwār the washer of feet, Ghughua one who eats the leavings of the

assembly, and Khetgarhia, one who watches the fields during religious worship. The Sonwānia or 'Gold-water' sept has among the Pankas, as with several of the primitive tribes, the duty of readmitting persons temporarily put out of caste; while the Naurang or nine-coloured sept may be the offspring of some illegitimate unions. The Sati sept apparently commemorate by their name an ancestress who distinguished herself by self-immolation, naturally a very rare occurrence in so low a caste as the Pankas. Each sept has its own Bhāt or genealogist who begs only from members of the sept and takes food from them.

4. Marriage.

Marriage is prohibited between members of the same sept and also between first cousins, and a second sister may not be married during the lifetime of the first. Girls are usually wedded under twelve years of age. In Mandla the father of the boy and his relatives go to discuss the match, and if this is arranged each of them kisses the girl and gives her a piece of small silver. When a Saktaha is going to look for a wife he makes a fire offering to Dūlha Deo, the young bridegroom god, whose shrine is in the cook-room, and prays to him saying, 'I am going to such and such a village to ask for a wife; give me good fortune.' The father of the girl at first refuses his consent as a matter of etiquette, but finally agrees to let the marriage take place within a year. The boy pays Rs. 9, which is spent on the feast, and makes a present of clothes and jewels to the bride. In Chānda a *chauka* or consecrated space spread with cow-dung with a pattern of lines of flour is prepared and the fathers of the parties stand inside this, while a member of the Pandwār sept cries out the names of the *gotras* of the bride and bridegroom and says that the everlasting knot is to be tied between them with the consent of five caste-people and the sun and moon as witnesses. Before the wedding the betrothed couple worship Mahādeo and Pārvati under the direction of a Brāhman, who also fixes the date of the wedding. This is the only purpose for which a Brāhman is employed by the caste. Between this date and that of the marriage neither the boy nor girl should be allowed to go to a tank or cross a river, as it is considered dangerous to their lives. The superstition has apparently

some connection with the belief that the Pankas are sprung from water, but its exact meaning cannot be determined. If a girl goes wrong before marriage with a man of the caste, she is given to him to wife without any ceremony. Before the marriage seven small pitchers full of water are placed in a bamboo basket and shaken over the bride's head so that the water may fall on her. The principal ceremony consists in walking round the sacred pole called *magrohan*, the skirts of the pair being knotted together. In some localities this is done twice, a first set of perambulations being called the Kunwāri (maiden) Bhānwar, and the second one of seven, the Byāhi (married) Bhānwar. After the wedding the bride and her relations return with the bridegroom to his house, their party being known as Chauthia. The couple are taken to a river and throw their tinsel wedding ornaments into the water. The bride then returns home if she is a minor, and when she subsequently goes to live with her husband the *gauna* ceremony is performed. Widow-marriage is permitted, and divorce may be effected for bad conduct on the part of the wife, the husband giving a sort of funeral feast, called *Marti jīti ka bhāt*, to the caste-fellows. Usually a man gives several warnings to his wife to amend her bad conduct before he finally casts her off.

5. Religion.

The Pankas worship only Kabīr. They prepare a *chauka* and, sitting in it, sing songs in his praise, and a cocoanut is afterwards broken and distributed to those who are present. The assembly is presided over by a Mahant or priest and the *chauka* is prepared by his subordinate called the Dīwān. The offices of Mahant and Dīwān are hereditary, and they officiate for a collection of ten or fifteen villages. Otherwise the caste perform no special worship, but observe the full moon days of Māgh (January), Phāgun (February) and Kārtik (October) as fasts in honour of Kabīr. Some of the Kabirhas observe the Hindu festivals, and the Saktahas, as already stated, have the same religious practices as other Hindus. They admit into the community members of most castes except the impure ones. In Chhattīsgarh a new convert is shaved and the other Pankas wash their feet over him in order to purify him. He then breaks a stick in token of having given up his former caste and is

invested with a necklace of *tulsi*[1] beads. A woman of any such caste who has gone wrong with a man of the Panka caste may be admitted after she has lived with him for a certain period on probation, during which her conduct must be satisfactory, her paramour also being put out of caste for the same time. Both are then shaved and invested with the necklaces of *tulsi* beads. In Mandla a new convert must clean and whitewash his house and then vacate it with his family while the Panch or caste committee come and stay there for some time in order to purify it. While they are there neither the owner nor any member of his family may enter the house. The Panch then proceed to the river-side and cook food, after driving the new convert across the river by pelting him with cowdung. Here he changes his clothes and puts on new ones, and coming back again across the stream is made to stand in the *chauk* and sip the urine of a calf. The *chauk* is then washed out and a fresh one made with lines of flour, and standing in this the convert receives to drink the *dal*, that is, water in which a little betel, raw sugar and black pepper have been mixed and a piece of gold dipped. In the evening the Panch again take their food in the convert's house, while he eats outside it at a distance. Then he again sips the *dal*, and the Mahant or priest takes him on his lap and a cloth is put over them both ; the Mahant whispers the *mantra* or sacred verse into his ear, and he is finally considered to have become a full Kabirha Panka and admitted to eat with the Panch.

6. Other customs.

The Pankas are strict vegetarians and do not drink liquor. A Kabirha Panka is put out of caste for eating flesh meat. Both men and women generally wear white clothes, and men have the garland of beads round the neck. The dead are buried, being laid on the back with the head pointing to the north. After a funeral the mourners bathe and then break a cocoanut over the grave and distribute it among themselves. On the tenth day they go again and break a cocoanut and each man buries a little piece of it in the earth over the grave. A little cup made of flour containing a lamp is placed on the grave for three days afterwards, and some food and water are put in a leaf cup outside

[1] The basil plant.

the house for the same period. During these days the family do not cook for themselves but are supplied with food by their friends. After childbirth a mother is supposed not to eat food during the time that the midwife attends on her, on account of the impurity caused by this woman's presence in the room.

7. Occupation.

The caste are generally weavers, producing coarse country cloth, and a number of them serve as village watchmen, while others are cultivators and labourers. They will not grow *sān*-hemp nor breed tasar silk cocoons. They are somewhat poorly esteemed by their neighbours, who say of them, 'Where a Panka can get a little boiled rice and a pumpkin, he will stay for ever,' meaning that he is satisfied with this and will not work to get more. Another saying is, 'The Panka felt brave and thought he would go to war; but he set out to fight a frog and was beaten'; and another, 'Every man tells one lie a day; but the Ahīr tells sixteen, the Chamār twenty, and the lies of the Panka cannot be counted.' Such gibes, however, do not really mean much. Owing to the abstinence of the Pankas from flesh and liquor they rank above the Gāndas and other impure castes. In Bilāspur they are generally held to be quiet and industrious.[1] In Chhattīsgarh the Pankas are considered above the average in intelligence and sometimes act as spokesmen for the village people and as advisers to zamīndārs and village proprietors. Some of them become religious mendicants and act as *gurus* or preceptors to Kabīrpanthis.[2]

[1] *Bilaspur Settlement Report* (1868), p. 49.

[2] From a note by Mr. Gauri Shankar, Manager, Court of Wards, Drūg.

PANWĀR RĀJPŪT

LIST OF PARAGRAPHS

1. Historical notice. The Agnikula clans and the slaughter of the Kshatriyas by Parasurāma.

Panwār,[1] **Puar, Ponwār, Prāmara Rājpūt.** — The Panwār or Pramāra is one of the most ancient and famous of the Rājpūt clans. It was the first of the four Agnikulas, who were created from the fire-pit on the summit of Mount Abu after the Kshatriyas had been exterminated by Parasurāma the Brāhman. "The fire-fountain was lustrated with the waters of the Ganges;[2] expiatory rites were performed, and after a protracted debate among the gods it was resolved that Indra should initiate the work of recreation. Having formed an image of *dūba* grass he sprinkled it with the water of life and threw it into the fire-fountain. Thence on pronouncing the *sajīvan mantra* (incantation to give life) a figure slowly emerged from the flame, bearing in the right hand a mace and exclaiming, '*Mār, Mār!*' (Slay, slay). He was called Pramār; and Abu, Dhār and Ujjain were assigned to him as a territory."

The four clans known as Agnikula, or born from the fire-pit, were the Panwār, the Chauhān, the Parihār and

[1] With the exception of the historical notice, this article is principally based on a paper by Mr. Muhammad Yusuf, reader to Mr. C. E. Low, Deputy Commissioner of Bālāghāt.

[2] Tod's *Rājasthān*, ii. p. 407.

the Chalukya or Solanki. Mr. D. R. Bhandarkar adduces evidence in support of the opinion that all these were of foreign origin, derived from the Gūjars or other Scythian or Hun tribes.[1] And it seems therefore not unlikely that the legend of the fire-pit may commemorate the reconstitution of the Kshatriya aristocracy by the admission of these tribes to Hinduism after its partial extinction during their wars of invasion; the latter event having perhaps been euphemised into the slaughter of the Kshatriyas by Parasurāma the Brāhman. A great number of Indian castes date their origin from the traditional massacre of the Kshatriyas by Parasurāma, saying that their ancestors were Rājpūts who escaped and took to various occupations; and it would appear that an event which bulks so largely in popular tradition must have some historical basis. It is noticeable also that Buddhism, which for some five centuries since the time of Asoka Maurya had been the official and principal religion of northern India, had recently entered on its decline. "The restoration of the Brāhmanical religion to popular favour and the associated revival of the Sanskrit language first became noticeable in the second century, were fostered by the satraps of Gujarāt and Surāshtra during the third, and made a success by the Gupta emperors in the fourth century.[2] The decline of Buddhism and the diffusion of Sanskrit proceeded side by side with the result that by the end of the Gupta period the force of Buddhism on Indian soil had been nearly spent; and India with certain local exceptions had again become the land of the Brāhman.[3] The Gupta dynasty as an important power ended about A.D. 490 and was overthrown by the Huns, whose leader Toramāna was established at Mālwa in Central India prior to A.D. 500."[4] The revival of Brāhmanism and the Hun supremacy were therefore nearly contemporaneous. Moreover one of the Hun leaders, Mihiragula, was a strong supporter of Brāhmanism and an opponent of the Buddhists. Mr. V. A. Smith writes: "The savage invader, who worshipped as his patron deity Siva, the god of destruction, exhibited ferocious hostility

[1] Foreign elements in the Hindu population, *Ind. Ant.* (January 1911), vol. xl.

[2] *Early History of India* (Oxford, Clarendon Press), 3rd ed., p. 303.

[3] *Ibidem*, 2nd ed., p. 288.

[4] *Ibidem*, p. 316.

against the peaceful Buddhist cult, and remorselessly overthrew the *stūpas* and monasteries, which he plundered of their treasures."[1] This warrior might therefore well be venerated by the Brāhmans as the great restorer of their faith and would easily obtain divine honours. The Huns also subdued Rājputāna and Central India and were dominant here for a time until their extreme cruelty and oppression led to a concerted rising of the Indian princes by whom they were defeated. The discovery of the Hun or Scythian origin of several of the existing Rājpūt clans fits in well with the legend. The stories told by many Indian castes of their first ancestors having been Rājpūts who escaped from the massacre of Parasurāma would then have some historical value as indicating that the existing occupational grouping of castes dates from the period of the revival of the Brāhman cult after a long interval of Buddhist supremacy. It is however an objection to the identification of Parasurāma with the Huns that he is the sixth incarnation of Vishnu, coming before Rāma and being mentioned in the Mahābhārata, and thus if he was in any way historical his proper date should be long before their time. As to this it may be said that he might have been interpolated or put back in date, as the Brāhmans had a strong interest in demonstrating the continuity of the Kshatriya caste from Vedic times and suppressing the Hun episode, which indeed they have succeeded in doing so well that the foreign origin of several of the most prominent Rājpūt clans has only been established quite recently by modern historical and archaeological research. The name Parasurāma signifies 'Rāma with the axe' and seems to indicate that this hero came after the original Rāma. And the list of the incarnations of Vishnu is not always the same, as in one list the incarnations are nearly all of the animal type and neither Parasurāma, Rāma nor Krishna appear.

2. The legend of Parasurāma.

The legend of Parasurāma is not altogether opposed to this view in itself.[2] He was the son of a Brāhman Muni or hermit, named Jamadagni, by a lady, Renuka, of the Kshatriya caste. He is therefore not held to have been a Brāhman and neither was he a true Kshatriya. This might

[1] *Early History of India* (Oxford, Clarendon Press), 3rd ed., p. 319.

[2] *Garrett's Classical Dictionary of Hinduism*, *s.v.* Jamadagni and Rāma.

portray the foreign origin of the Huns. Jamadagni found his wife Renuka to be harbouring thoughts of conjugal infidelity, and commanded his sons, one by one, to slay her. The four elder ones successively refused, and being cursed by Jamadagni lost all understanding and became as idiots ; but the youngest, Parasurāma, at his father's bidding, struck off his mother's head with a blow of his axe. Jamadagni thereupon was very pleased and promised to give Parasurāma whatever he might desire. On which Parasurāma begged first for the restoration of his mother to life, with forgetfulness of his having slain her and purification from all defilement ; secondly, the return of his brothers to sanity and understanding ; and for himself that he should live long and be invincible in battle ; and all these boons his father bestowed. Here the hermit Jamadagni might represent the Brāhman priesthood, and his wife Renuka might be India, unfaithful to the Brāhmans and turning towards the Buddhist heresy. The four elder sons would typify the princes of India refusing to respond to the exhortations of the Brāhmans for the suppression of Buddhism, and hence themselves made blind to the true faith and their understandings darkened with Buddhist falsehood. But Parasurāma, the youngest, killed his mother, that is, the Huns devastated India and slaughtered the Buddhists ; in reward for this he was made invincible as the Huns were, and his mother, India, and his brothers, the indigenous princes, regained life and understanding, that is, returned to the true Brāhman faith. Afterwards, the legend proceeds, the king Kārrtavīrya, the head of the Haihaya tribe of Kshatriyas, stole the calf of the sacred cow Kamdhenu from Jamadagni's hermitage and cut down the trees surrounding it. When Parasurāma returned, his father told him what had happened, and he followed Kārrtavīrya and killed him in battle. But in revenge for this the sons of the king, when Parasurāma was away, returned to the hermitage and slew the pious and unresisting sage Jamadagni, who called fruitlessly for succour on his valiant son. When Parasurāma returned and found his father dead he vowed to extirpate the whole Kshatriya race. 'Thrice times seven did he clear the earth of the Kshatriya caste,' says the Mahābhārata. If the first part of the story refers to the Hun conquest of northern

India and the overthrow of the Gupta dynasty, the second may similarly portray their invasion of Rājputāna. The theft of the cow and desecration of Jamadagni's hermitage by the Haihaya Rājpūts would represent the apostasy of the Rājpūt princes to Buddhist monotheism, the consequent abandonment of the veneration of the cow and the spoliation of the Brāhman shrines; while the Hun invasions of Rājputāna and the accompanying slaughter of Rājpūts would be Parasurāma's terrible revenge.

3. The Panwār dynasty of Dhār and Ujjain.

The Kings of Mālwa or Ujjain who reigned at Dhār and flourished from the ninth to the twelfth centuries were of the Panwār clan. The seventh and ninth kings of this dynasty rendered it famous.[1] "Rāja Munja, the seventh king (974–995), renowned for his learning and eloquence, was not only a patron of poets, but was himself a poet of no small reputation, the anthologies including various works from his pen. He penetrated in a career of conquest as far as the Godāvarī, but was finally defeated and executed there by the Chalukya king. His nephew, the famous Bhoja, ascended the throne of Dhāra about A.D. 1018 and reigned gloriously for more than forty years. Like his uncle he cultivated with equal assiduity the arts of peace and war. Though his fights with neighbouring powers, including one of the Muhammadan armies of Mahmūd of Ghaznī, are now forgotten, his fame as an enlightened patron of learning and a skilled author remains undimmed, and his name has become proverbial as that of the model king according to the Hindu standard. Works on astronomy, architecture, the art of poetry and other subjects are attributed to him. About A.D. 1060 Bhoja was attacked and defeated by the confederate kings of Gujarāt and Chedi, and the Panwār kingdom was reduced to a petty local dynasty until the thirteenth century. It was finally superseded by the chiefs of the Tomara and Chauhān clans, who in their turn succumbed to the Muhammadans in 1401." The city of Ujjain was at this time a centre of Indian intellectual life. Some celebrated astronomers made it

[1] The following extract is taken from Mr. V. A. Smith's *Early History of India*, 3rd ed., pp. 395, 396. The passage has been somewhat abridged in reproduction.

their home, and it was adopted as the basis of the Hindu meridional system like Greenwich in England. The capital of the state was changed from Ujjain to Dhār or Dhāranāgra by the Rāja Bhoja already mentioned;[1] and the name of Dhār is better remembered in connection with the Panwārs than Ujjain.

A saying about it quoted by Colonel Tod was:

Jahān Puār tahān Dhār hai;
Aur Dhār jahān Puār;
Dhār bina Puār nahin;
Aur nahin Puār bina Dhār:

or, "Where the Panwār is there is Dhār, and Dhār is where the Panwār is; without the Panwārs Dhār cannot stand, nor the Panwārs without Dhār." It is related that in consequence of one of his merchants having been held to ransom by the ruler of Dhār, the Bhatti Rāja of Jaisalmer made a vow to subdue the town. But as he found the undertaking too great for him, in order to fulfil his vow he had a model of the city made in clay and was about to break it up. But there were Panwārs in his army, and they stood out to defend their mock capital, repeating as their reason the above lines; and in resisting the Rāja were cut to pieces to the number of a hundred and twenty.[2] There is little reason to doubt that the incident, if historical, was produced by the belief in sympathetic magic; the Panwārs really thought that by destroying its image the Rāja could effect injury to the capital itself,[3] just as many primitive races believe that if they make a doll as a model of an enemy and stick pins into or otherwise injure it, the man himself is similarly affected. A kindred belief prevails concerning certain mythical old kings of the Golden Age of India, of whom it is said that to destroy their opponents all they had to do was to collect a bundle of juāri stalks and

1 Malcolm, i. p. 26.

2 *Rājasthān*, ii. p. 215.

3 A similar instance in Europe is related by Colonel Tod, concerning the origin of the Madrid Restaurant in the Bois de Boulogne at Paris. After Francis I. had been captured by the Spaniards he was allowed to return to his capital, on pledging his parole that he would go back to Madrid. But the delights of liberty and Paris were too much for honour; and while he wavered a hint was thrown out similar to that of destroying the clay city. A mock Madrid arose in the Bois de Boulogne, to which Francis retired. (*Rājasthān*, ii. p. 428.)

cut off the heads, when the heads of their enemies flew off in unison.

The Panwārs were held to have ruled from nine castles over the Marusthali or 'Region of death,' the name given to the great desert of Rājputāna, which extends from Sind to the Aravalli mountains and from the great salt lake to the flat skirting the Garah. The principal of these castles were Abu, Nundore, Umarkot, Arore, and Lodorva.[1] And, 'The world is the Prāmara's,' was another saying expressive of the resplendent position of Dhāranāgra or Ujjain at this epoch. The siege and capture of the town by the Muhammadans and consequent expulsion of the Panwārs are still a well-remembered tradition, and certain castes of the Central Provinces, as the Bhoyars and Korkus, say that their ancestors formed part of the garrison and fled to the Satpūra hills after the fall of Dhāranāgra. Mr. Crooke[2] states that the expulsion of the Panwārs from Ujjain under their leader Mitra Sen is ascribed to the attack of the Muhammadans under Shāhab-ud-dīn Ghori about A.D. 1190.

4. Diffusion of the Panwārs over India.

After this they spread to various places in northern India, and to the Central Provinces and Bombay. The modern state of Dhār is or was recently still held by a Panwār family, who had attained high rank under the Marāthas and received it as a grant from the Peshwa. Malcolm considered them to be the descendants of Rājpūt emigrants to the Deccan. He wrote of them:[3] "In the early period of Marātha history the family of Puār appears to have been one of the most distinguished. They were of the Rājpūt tribe, numbers of which had been settled in Mālwa at a remote era; from whence this branch had migrated to the Deccan. Sivaji Puār, the first of the family that can be traced in the latter country, was a landholder; and his grandsons, Sambaji and Kāloji, were military commanders in the service of the celebrated Sivaji. Anand Rao Puār was vested with authority to collect the Marātha share of the revenue of Mālwa and Gujarāt in 1734, and he soon afterwards settled at Dhār, which province,

[1] *Rājasthān*, ii. pp. 264, 265. [2] *Tribes and Castes*, art. Panwār.
[3] *Memoir of Central India*, i. 96.

with the adjoining districts and the tributes of some neighbouring Rājpūt chiefs, was assigned for the support of himself and his adherents. It is a curious coincidence that the success of the Marāthas should, by making Dhār the capital of Anand Rāo and his descendants, restore the sovereignty of a race who had seven centuries before been expelled from the government of that city and territory. But the present family, though of the same tribe (Puār), claim no descent from the ancient Hindu princes of Mālwa. They have, like all the Kshatriya tribes who became incorporated with the Marāthas, adopted even in their modes of thinking the habits of that people. The heads of the family, with feelings more suited to chiefs of that nation than Rājpūt princes, have purchased the office of patel or headman in some villages in the Deccan; and their descendants continue to attach value to their ancient, though humble, rights of village officers in that quarter. Notwithstanding that these usages and the connections they formed have amalgamated this family with the Marāthas, they still claim, both on account of their high birth and of being officers of the Rāja of Satāra (not of the Peshwa), rank and precedence over the houses of Sindhia and Holkar; and these claims, even when their fortunes were at the lowest ebb, were always admitted as far as related to points of form and ceremony." The great Marātha house of Nimbhālkar is believed to have originated from ancestors of the Panwār Rājpūt clan. While one branch of the Panwārs went to the Deccan after the fall of Dhār and marrying with the people there became a leading military family of the Marāthas, the destiny of another group who migrated to northern India was less distinguished. Here they split into two, and the inferior section is described by Mr. Crooke as follows:[1] "The Khidmatia, Barwār or Chobdār are said to be an inferior branch of the Panwārs, descended from a low-caste woman. No high-caste Hindu eats food or drinks water touched by them." According to the Ain-i-Akbari[2] a thousand men of the sept guarded the environs of the palace of Akbar, and Abul Fazl says of them: "The caste to which they

[1] *Tribes and Castes*, art. Panwār.
[2] Blockmann, i. 252, quoted by Crooke.

belong was notorious for highway robbery, and former rulers were not able to keep them in check. The effective orders of His Majesty have led them to honesty; they are now famous for their trustworthiness. They were formerly called *Māwis*. Their chief has received the title of Khidmat Rao. Being near the person of His Majesty he lives in affluence. His men are called Khidmatias." Thus another body of Panwārs went north and sold their swords to the Mughal Emperor, who formed them into a bodyguard. Their case is exactly analogous to that of the Scotch and Swiss Guards of the French kings. In both cases the monarch preferred to entrust the care of his person to foreigners, on whose fidelity he could the better rely, as their only means of support and advancement lay in his personal favour, and they had no local sympathies which could be used as a lever to undermine their loyalty. Buchanan states that a Panwār dynasty ruled for a considerable period over the territory of Shāhabād in Bengal. And Jagdeo Panwār was the trusted minister of Sidhrāj, the great Solanki Rāja of Gujarāt. The story of the adventures of Jagdeo and his wife when they set out together to seek their fortune is an interesting episode in the Rāsmāla. In the Punjab the Panwārs are found settled up the whole course of the Sutlej and along the lower Indus, and have also spread up the Biās into Jalandhar and Gurdāspur.[1]

5. The Nāgpur Panwārs.

While the above extracts have been given to show how the Panwārs migrated from Dhār to different parts of India in search of fortune, this article is mainly concerned with a branch of the clan who came to Nāgpur, and subsequently settled in the rice country of the Wainganga Valley. At the end of the eleventh century Nāgpur appears to have been held by a Panwār ruler as an appanage of the kingdom of Mālwa.[2] It has already been seen how the kings of Mālwa penetrated to Berār and the Godāvari, and Nāgpur may well also have fallen to them. Mr. Muhammad Yūsuf quotes an inscription as existing at Bhāndak in Chānda of the year A.D. 1326, in which it is mentioned that the Panwār of Dhār

[1] Ibbetson, P. C. R., para. 448.

[2] His name, Lakshma Deva, is given in a stone inscription dated A.D. 1104–1105.

repaired a statue of Jag Nārāyan in that place.[1] Nothing more is heard of them in Nāgpur, and their rule probably came to an end with the subversion of the kingdom of Mālwa in the thirteenth century. But there remain in Nāgpur and in the districts of Bhandāra, Bālāghāt and Seoni to the north and east of it a large number of Panwārs, who have now developed into an agricultural caste. It may be surmised that the ancestors of these people settled in the country at the time when Nāgpur was held by their clan, and a second influx may have taken place after the fall of Dhār. According to their own account, they first came to Nagardhan, an older town than Nāgpur, and once the headquarters of the locality. One of their legends is that the men who first came had no wives, and were therefore allowed to take widows of other castes into their houses. It seems reasonable to suppose that something of this kind happened, though they probably did not restrict themselves to widows. The existing family names of the caste show that it is of mixed ancestry, but the original Rājpūt strain is still perfectly apparent in their fair complexions, high foreheads and in many cases grey eyes. The Panwārs have still the habit of keeping women of lower castes to a greater degree than the ordinary, and this has been found to be a trait of other castes of mixed origin, and they are sometimes known as Dhākar, a name having the sense of illegitimacy. Though they have lived for centuries among a Marāthi-speaking people, the Panwārs retain a dialect of their own, the basis of which is Bagheli or eastern Hindi. When the Marāthas established themselves at Nāgpur in the eighteenth century some of the Panwārs took military service under them and accompanied a general of the Bhonsla ruling family on an expedition to Cuttack. In return for this they were rewarded with grants of the waste and forest lands in the valley of the Wainganga river, and here they developed great skill in the construction

[1] The inscription is said to be in one of the temples in Winj Bāsini, near Bhāndak, in the Devanāgri character in Marāthi, and to run as follows: "Consecration of Jagnārāyan (the serpent of the world). Dajíanashnaku, the son of Chogneka, he it was who consecrated the god. The Panwār, the ruler of Dhār, was the third repairer of the statue. The image was carved by Gopināth Pandit, inhabitant of Lonār Mehkar. Let this shrine be the pride of all the citizens, and let this religious act be notified to the chief and other officers."

of tanks and the irrigation of rice land, and are the best agricultural caste in this part of the country. Their customs have many points of interest, and, as is natural, they have abandoned many of the caste observances of the Rājpūts. It is to this group of Panwārs[1] settled in the Marātha rice country of the Wainganga Valley that the remainder of this article is devoted.

6. Sub-divisions.

They number about 150,000 persons, and include many village proprietors and substantial cultivators. The quotations already given have shown how this virile clan of Rājpūts travelled to the north, south and east from their own country in search of a livelihood. Everywhere they made their mark so that they live in history, but they paid no regard to the purity of their Rājpūt blood and took to themselves wives from the women of the country as they could get them. The Panwārs of the Wainganga Valley have developed into a caste marrying among themselves. They have no subcastes but thirty-six exogamous sections. Some of these have the names of Rājpūt clans, while others are derived from villages, titles or names of offices, or from other castes. Among the titular names are Chaudhri (headman), Patlia (patel or chief officer of a village) and Sonwānia (one who purifies offenders among the Gonds and other tribes). Among the names of other castes are Bopcha or Korku, Bhoyar (a caste of cultivators), Pārdhi (hunter), Kohli (a local cultivating caste) and Sahria (from the Saonr tribe). These names indicate how freely they have intermarried. It is noticeable that the Bhoyars and Korkus of Betūl both say that their ancestors were Panwārs of Dhār, and the occurrence of both names among the Panwārs of Bālāghāt may indicate that these castes also have some Panwār blood. Three names, Rahmat (kind), Turukh or Turk, and Farīd (a well-known saint), are of Muhammadan origin, and indicate intermarriage in that quarter.

7. Marriage customs.

Girls are usually, but not necessarily, wedded before adolescence. Occasionally a Panwār boy who cannot afford a regular marriage will enter his prospective father-in-law's

[1] A few Panwār Rājpūts are found in the Saugor District, but they are quite distinct from those of the Marātha country, and marry with the Bundelas. They are mentioned in the article on that clan.

Benrose, Collo., Derby.

TRANSPLANTING RICE.

house and serve him for a year or more, when he will obtain a daughter in marriage. And sometimes a girl will contract a liking for some man or boy of the caste and will go to his house, leaving her home. In such cases the parents accept the accomplished fact, and the couple are married. If the boy's parents refuse their consent they are temporarily put out of caste, and subsequently the neighbours will not pay them the customary visits on the occasions of family joys and griefs. Even if a girl has lived with a man of another caste, as long as she has not borne a child, she may be re-admitted to the community on payment of such penalty as the elders may determine. If her own parents will not take her back, a man of the same *gotra* or section is appointed as her guardian and she can be married from his house.

The ceremonies of a Panwār marriage are elaborate. Marriage-sheds are erected at the houses both of the bride and bridegroom in accordance with the usual practice, and just before the marriage, parties are given at both houses; the village watchman brings the *toran* or string of mango-leaves, which is hung round the marriage-shed in the manner of a triumphal arch, and in the evening the party assembles, the men sitting at one side of the shed and the women at the other. Presents of clothes are made to the child who is to be married, and the following song is sung:

The mother of the bride grew angry and went away to the mango grove.
Come soon, come quickly, Mother, it is the time for giving clothes.
The father of the bridegroom has sent the bride a fold of cloth from his house,
The fold of it is like the curve of the winnowing-fan, and there is a bodice decked with coral and pearls.

Before the actual wedding the father of the bridegroom goes to the bride's house and gives her clothes and other presents, and the following is a specimen given by Mr. Muhammad Yūsuf of the songs sung on this occasion:

Five years old to-day is Bāja Bai the bride;
Send word to the mother of the bridegroom;
Her dress is too short, send for the Koshta, Husband;
The Koshta came and wove a border to the dress.

Afterwards the girl's father goes and makes similar presents to the bridegroom. After many preliminary cere-

monies the marriage procession proper sets forth, consisting of men only. Before the boy starts his mother places her breast in his mouth; the maid-servants stand before him with vessels of water, and he puts a pice in each. During the journey songs are sung, of which the following is a specimen:

The linseed and gram are in flower in Chait.[1]
O! the boy bridegroom is going to another country;
O Mother! how may he go to another country?
Make payment before he enters another country;
O Mother! how may he cross the border of another country?
Make payment before he crosses the border of another country;
O Mother! how may he touch another's bower?
Make payment before he touches another's bower;
O Mother! how shall he bathe with strange water?
Make payment before he bathes with strange water;
O Mother! how may he eat another's *banwat*?[2]
Make payment before he eats another's *banwat*;
O Mother! how shall he marry another woman?
He shall wed her holding the little finger of her left hand.

The bridegroom's party are always driven to the wedding in bullock-carts, and when they approach the bride's village her people also come to meet them in carts. All the party then turn and race to the village, and the winner obtains much distinction. The cartmen afterwards go to the bridegroom's father and he has to make them a present of from one to forty rupees. On arriving at the village the bridegroom is carried to Devi's shrine in a man's arms, while four other men hold a canopy over him, and from there to the marriage-shed. He touches a bamboo of this, and a man seated on the top pours turmeric and water over his head. Five men of the groom's party go to the bride's house carrying salt, and here their feet are washed and the *tīka* or mark of anointing is made on their foreheads. Afterwards they carry rice in the same manner and with this is the wedding-rice, coloured yellow with turmeric and known as the Lagun-gāth. Before sunset the bridegroom goes to the bride's house for the wedding. Two baskets are hung before Dulha Deo's shrine inside the house, and the couple are seated in these with a cloth between them. The ends of their clothes are knotted,

[1] March.

[2] Rice boiled with milk and sugar.

each places the right foot on the left foot of the other and holds the other's ear with the hand. Meanwhile a Brāhman has climbed on to the roof of the house, and after saying the names of the bride and bridegroom shouts loudly, '*Rām nawara, Sīta nawari, Saodhān*,' or 'Rām, the Bridegroom, and Sīta, the Bride, pay heed.' The people inside the house repeat these words and someone beats on a brass plate; the wedding-rice is poured over the heads of the couple, and a quid of betel is placed first in the mouth of one and then of the other. The bridegroom's party dance in the marriage-shed and their feet are washed. Two plough-yokes are brought in and a cloth spread over them, and the couple are seated on them face to face. A string of twisted grass is drawn round their necks and a thread is tied round their marriage-crowns. The bride's dowry is given and her relatives make presents to her. This property is known as *khamora*, and is retained by a wife for her own use, her husband having no control over it. It is customary also in the caste for the parents to supply clothes to a married daughter as long as they live, and during this period a wife will not accept any clothes from her husband. On the following day the maid-servants bring a present of *gulāl* or red powder to the fathers of the bride and bridegroom, who sprinkle it over each other. The bridegroom's father makes them a present of from one to twenty rupees according to his means, and also gives suitable fees to the barber, the washerman, the Barai or betel-leaf seller and the Bhāt or bard. The maid-servants then bring vessels of water and throw it over each other in sport. After the evening meal, the party go back, the bride and bridegroom riding in the same cart. As they start the women sing:

Let us go to the basket-maker
And buy a costly pair of fans;
Fans worth a lot of money;
Let us praise the mother of the bride.

8. Widow-marriage.

After a few days at her husband's house the bride returns home, and though she pays short visits to his family from time to time, she does not go to live with her husband until she is adolescent, when the usual *pathoni* or going-away

ceremony is performed to celebrate the event. The people repeat a set of verses containing advice which the bride's mother is supposed to give her on this occasion, in which the desire imputed to the caste to make money out of their daughters is satirised. They are no doubt libellous as being a gross exaggeration, but may contain some substratum of truth. The gist of them is as follows: "Girl, if you are my daughter, heed what I say. I will make you many sweetmeats and speak words of wisdom. Always treat your husband better than his parents. Increase your private money (*khamora*) by selling rice and sugar; abuse your sisters-in-law to your husband's mother and become her favourite. Get influence over your husband and make him come with you to live with us. If you cannot persuade him, abandon your modesty and make quarrels in the household. Do not fear the village officers, but go to the houses of the patel [1] and Pāndia [2] and ask them to arrange your quarrel."

It is not intended to imply that Panwār women behave in this manner, but the passage is interesting as a sidelight on the joint family system. It concludes by advising the girl, if she cannot detach her husband from his family, to poison him and return as a widow. This last counsel is a gibe at the custom which the caste have of taking large sums of money for a widow on her second marriage. As such a woman is usually adult, and able at once to perform the duties of a wife and to work in the fields, she is highly valued, and her price ranges from Rs. 25 to Rs. 1000. In former times, it is stated, the disposal of widows did not rest with their parents but with the Sendia or headman of the caste. The last of them was Karūn Panwār of Tumsar, who was empowered by the Bhonsla Rāja of Nāgpur to act in this manner, and was accustomed to receive an average sum of Rs. 25 for each widow or divorced woman whom he gave away in marriage. His power extended even to the reinstatement of women expelled from the caste, whom he could subsequently make over to any one who would pay for them. At the end of his life he lost his authority among the people by keeping a Dhīmar woman as a mistress, and he had no successor. A Panwār widow must not marry again

[1] Village headman. [2] Patwāri or village accountant.

until the expiry of six months after her husband's death. The stool on which a widow sits for her second marriage is afterwards stolen by her husband's friends. After the wedding when she reaches the boundary of his village the axle of her cart is removed, and a new one made of *tendu* wood is substituted for it. The discarded axle and the shoes worn by the husband at the ceremony are thrown away, and the stolen stool is buried in a field. These things, Mr. Hīra Lāl points out, are regarded as defiled, because they have been accessories in an unlucky ceremony, that of the marriage of a widow. On this point Dr. Jevons writes[1] that the peculiar characteristic of taboo is this transmissibility of its infection or contagion. In ancient Greece the offerings used for the purification of the murderer became themselves polluted during the process and had to be buried. A similar reasoning applies to the articles employed in the marriage of a widow. The wood of the *tendu* or ebony tree[2] is chosen for the substituted axle, because it has the valuable property of keeping off spirits and ghosts. When a child is born a plank of this wood is laid along the door of the room to keep the spirits from troubling the mother and the newborn infant. In the same way, no doubt, this wood keeps the ghost of the first husband from entering with the widow into her second husband's village. The reason for the ebony-wood being a spirit-scarer seems to lie in its property of giving out sparks when burnt. "The burning wood gives out showers of sparks, and it is a common amusement to put pieces in a camp fire in order to see the column of sparks ascend."[3] The sparks would have a powerful effect on the primitive mind and probably impart a sacred character to the tree, and as they would scare away wild animals, the property of averting spirits might come to attach to the wood. The Panwārs seldom resort to divorce, except in the case of open and flagrant immorality on the part of a wife. "They are not strict," Mr. Low writes,[4] "in the matter of sexual offences within the caste, though they bitterly resent and if able heavily avenge any attempt on the virtue of their women by an outsider. The men of the caste are on the

[1] *Introduction to the History of Religion*, p. 59.

[2] *Diospyros tomentosa.*

[3] Gamble, *Manual of Indian Timbers*, p. 461.

[4] *Bālāghāt District Gazetteer.*

other hand somewhat notorious for the freedom with which they enter into relations with the women of other castes." They not infrequently have Gond and Ahīr girls from the families of their farmservants as members of their households.

9. Religion.

The caste worship the ordinary Hindu divinities, and their household god is Dūlha Deo, the deified bridegroom. He is represented by a nut and a date, which are wrapped in a cloth and hung on a peg in the wall of the house above the platform erected to him. Every year, or at the time of a marriage or the birth of a first child, a goat is offered to Dūlha Deo. The animal is brought to the platform and given some rice to eat. A dedicatory mark of red ochre is made on its forehead and water is poured over the body, and as soon as it shivers it is killed. The shivering is considered to be an indication from the deity that the sacrifice is acceptable. The flesh is cooked and eaten by the family inside the house, and the skin and bones are buried below the floor. Nārāyan Deo or Vishnu or the Sun is represented by a bunch of peacock's feathers. He is generally kept in the house of a Mahār, and when his worship is to be celebrated he is brought thence in a gourd to the Panwār's house, and a black goat, rice and cakes are offered to him by the head of the household. While the offering is being made the Mahār sings and dances, and when the flesh of the goat is eaten he is permitted to sit inside the Panwār's house and begin the feast, the Panwārs eating after him. On ordinary occasions a Mahār is not allowed to come inside the house, and any Panwār who took food with him would be put out of caste; and this rite is no doubt a recognition of the position of the Mahārs as the earlier residents of the country before the Panwārs came to it. The Turukh or Turk sept of Panwārs pay a similar worship to Bāba Farīd, the Muhammadan saint of Girar. He is also represented by a bundle of peacock's feathers, and when a goat is sacrificed to him a Muhammadan kills it and is the first to partake of its flesh.

10. Worship of the spirits of those dying a violent death.

When a man has been killed by a tiger (*bāgh*) he is deified and worshipped as Bāgh Deo. A hut is made in the yard of the house, and an image of a tiger is placed inside and worshipped on the anniversary of the man's death.

The members of the household will not afterwards kill a tiger, as they think the animal has become a member of the family. A man who is bitten by a cobra (*nāg*) and dies is similarly worshipped as Nāg Deo. The image of a snake made of silver or iron is venerated, and the family will not kill a snake. If a man is killed by some other animal, or by drowning or a fall from a tree, his spirit is worshipped as Ban Deo or the forest god with similar rites, being represented by a little lump of rice and red lead. In all these cases it is supposed, as pointed out by Sir James Frazer, that the ghost of the man who has come to such an untimely end is especially malignant, and will bring trouble upon the survivors unless appeased with sacrifices and offerings. A good instance of the same belief is given by him in *Psyche's Task*[1] as found among the Karens of Burma: "They put red, yellow and white rice in a basket and leave it in the forest, saying: Ghosts of such as died by falling from a tree, ghosts of such as died of hunger or thirst, ghosts of such as died by the tiger's tooth or the serpent's fang, ghosts of the murdered dead, ghosts of such as died by smallpox or cholera, ghosts of dead lepers, oh ill-treat us not, seize not upon our persons, do us no harm! Oh stay here in this wood! We will bring hither red rice, yellow rice, and white rice for your subsistence."

That the same superstition is generally prevalent in the Central Provinces appears to be shown by the fact that among castes who practise cremation, the bodies of men who come to a violent end or die of smallpox or leprosy are buried, though whether burial is considered as more likely to prevent the ghost from walking than cremation, is not clear. Possibly, however, it may be considered that the bodies are too impure to be committed to the sacred fire.

11. Funeral rites.

Cremation of the dead is the rule, but the bodies of those who have not died a natural death are buried, as also of persons who are believed to have been possessed of the goddess Devi in their lifetime. The bodies of small children are buried when the Khīr Chatai ceremony has not

[1] P. 62, quoting from Bringand, *Missions Catholiques*, xx. (1888), *Les Karens de la Birmanie, Les* p. 208.

been performed. This takes place when a child is about two years old: he is invited to the house of some member of the same section on the Diwāli day and given to eat some Khīr or a mess of new rice with milk and sugar, and thus apparently is held to become a proper member of the caste, as boys do in other castes on having their ears pierced. When a corpse is to be burnt a heap of cowdung cakes is made, on which it is laid, while others are spread over it, together with butter, sugar and linseed. The fire with which the pyre is kindled is carried by the son or other chief mourner in an earthen pot at the head of the corpse. After the cremation the ashes of the body are thrown into water, but the bones are kept by the chief mourner; his head and face are then shaved by the barber, and the hair is thrown into the water with most of the bones; he may retain a few to carry them to the Nerbudda at a convenient season, burying them meanwhile under a mango or pīpal tree. A present of a rupee or a cow may be made to the barber. After the removal of a dead body the house is swept, and the rubbish with the broom and dustpan are thrown away outside the village. Before the body is taken away the widow of the dead man places her hands on his breast and forehead, and her bangles are broken by another widow. The *shrāddh* ceremony is performed every year in the month of Kunwār (September) on the same day of the fortnight as that on which the death took place. On the day before the ceremony the head of the household goes to the houses of those whom he wishes to invite, and sticks some grains of rice on their foreheads. The guests must then fast up to the ceremony. On the following day, when they arrive at noon, the host, wearing a sacred thread of twisted grass, washes their feet with water in which the sacred *kusa* grass has been mixed, and marks their foreheads with sandal-paste and rice. The leaf-plates of the guests are set out inside the house, and a very small quantity of cooked rice is placed in each. The host then gathers up all this rice and throws it on to the roof of the house while his wife throws up some water, calling aloud the name of the dead man whose *shrāddh* ceremony is being performed, and after this the whole party take their dinner.

12. Caste discipline.

As has been shown, the Panwārs have abandoned most of the distinctive Rājpūt customs. They do not wear the sacred thread and they permit the remarriage of widows. They eat the flesh of goats, fowls, wild pig, game-birds and fish, but abstain from liquor except on such ceremonial occasions as the worship of Nārāyan Deo, when every one must partake of it. Mr. Low states that the injurious habit of smoking *madak* (a preparation of opium) is growing in the caste. They will take water to drink from a Gond's hand and in some localities even cooked food. This is the outcome of their close association in agriculture, the Gonds having been commonly employed as farmservants by Panwār cultivators. A Brāhman usually officiates at their ceremonies, but his presence is not essential and his duties may be performed by a member of the caste. Every Panwār male or female has a *guru* or spiritual preceptor, who is either a Brāhman, a Gosain or a Bairāgi. From time to time the *guru* comes to visit his *chela* or disciple, and on such occasions the *chauk* or sacred place is prepared with lines of wheat-flour. Two wooden stools are set within it and the *guru* and his *chela* take their seats on these. Their heads are covered with a new piece of cloth and the *guru* whispers some text into the ear of the disciple. Sweetmeats and other delicacies are then offered to the *guru*, and the disciple makes him a present of one to five rupees. When a Panwār is put out of caste two feasts have to be given on reinstatement, known as the Maili and Chokhi Roti (impure and pure food). The former is held in the morning on the bank of a tank or river and is attended by men only. A goat is killed and served with rice to the caste-fellows, and in serious cases the offender's head and face are shaved, and he prays, 'God forgive me the sin, it will never be repeated.' The Chokhi Roti is held in the evening at the offender's house, the elders and women as well as men of the caste being present. The Sendia or leader of the caste eats first, and he will not begin his meal unless he finds a *douceur* of from one to five rupees deposited beneath his leaf-plate. The whole cost of the ceremony of readmission is from fifteen to fifty rupees.

The Panwār women wear their clothes tied in the

13. Social customs.

Hindustāni and not in the Marātha fashion. They are tattooed on the legs, hands and face, the face being usually decorated with single dots which are supposed to enhance its beauty, much after the same fashion as patches in England. Padmākar, the Saugor poet, Mr. Hīra Lāl remarks, compared the dot on a woman's chin to a black bee buried in a half-ripe mango. The women, Mr. Low says, are addicted to dances, plays and charades, the first being especially graceful performances. They are skilful with their fingers and make pretty grass mats and screens for the house, and are also very good cooks and appreciate variety in food. The Panwārs do not eat off the ground, but place their dishes on little iron stands, sitting themselves on low wooden stools. The housewife is a very important person, and the husband will not give anything to eat or drink out of the house without her concurrence. Mr. Low writes on the character and abilities of the Panwārs as follows: "The Panwār is to Bālāghāt what the Kunbi is to Berār or the Gūjar to Hoshangābād, but at the same time he is less entirely attached to the soil and its cultivation, and much more intelligent and cosmopolitan than either. One of the most intelligent officials in the Agricultural Department is a Panwār, and several members of the caste have made large sums as forest and railway contractors in this District; Panwār *shikāris* are also not uncommon. They are generally averse to sedentary occupations, and though quite ready to avail themselves of the advantages of primary education, they do not, as a rule, care to carry their studies to a point that would ensure their admission to the higher ranks of Government service. Very few of them are to be found as patwāris, constables or peons. They are a handsome race, with intelligent faces, unusually fair, with high foreheads, and often grey eyes. They are not, as a rule, above middle height, but they are active and hard-working and by no means deficient in courage and animal spirits, or a sense of humour. They are clannish in the extreme, and to elucidate a criminal case in which no one but Panwārs are concerned, and in a Panwār village, is usually a harder task than the average local police officer can tackle. At times they are apt to affect, in conversation with Government officials, a

whining and unpleasant tone, especially when pleading their claim to some concession or other; and they are by no means lacking in astuteness and are good hands at a bargain. But they are a pleasant, intelligent and plucky race, not easily cast down by misfortune and always ready to attempt new enterprises in almost any direction save those indicated by the Agricultural Department.

"In the art of rice cultivation they are past masters. They are skilled tank-builders, though perhaps hardly equal to the Kohlis of Chānda. But they excel especially in the mending and levelling of their fields, in neat transplantation, and in the choice and adaptation of the different varieties of rice to land of varying qualities. They are by no means specially efficient as labourers, though they and their wives do their fair share of field work; but they are well able to control the labour of others, especially of aborigines, through whom most of their tank and other works are executed."

PARDHĀN

LIST OF PARAGRAPHS

1. General notice.

Pardhān, Pathāri, Panāl.—An inferior branch of the Gond tribe whose occupation is to act as the priests and minstrels of the Gonds. In 1911 the Pardhāns numbered nearly 120,000 persons in the Central Provinces and Berār. The only other locality where they are found is Hyderābād, which returned 8000. The name Pardhān is of Sanskrit origin and signifies a minister or agent. It is the regular designation of the principal minister of a Rājpūt State, who often fulfils the functions of a Mayor of the Palace. That it was applied to the tribe in this sense is shown by the fact that they are also known as Diwān, which has the same meaning. There is a tradition that the Gond kings employed Pardhāns as their ministers, and as the Pardhāns acted as genealogists they may have been more intelligent than the Gonds, though they are in no degree less illiterate. To themselves and their Gond relations the Pardhāns are frequently not known by that name, which has been given to them by the Hindus, but as Panāl. Other names for the tribe are Parganiha, Desai and Pathāri. Parganiha is a title signifying the head of a *pargana*, and is now applied by courtesy to some families in Chhattīsgarh. Desai has the same signification, being a variant of Deshmukh or the Marātha revenue officer in charge of a circle of villages. Pathāri means a bard or genealogist, or according to another derivation a hillman. On the Satpūra plateau and