

SOCIAL STRUCTURE & CULTURAL CHANGE IN A BHIL VILLAGE

by

J. K. DOSHI, M.A.Ph.D.

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PREFACE

My interest in the Bhils dates back to my boyhood days when I first noticed some of them working as orderlies in our house. My father was a police officer and was posted at Rikhabdev, where the surrounding villages were largely inhabited by the members of this tribe. The Bhils visited this small town for selling items like firewood, wax, honey, ghee (purified butter), mangoes and other wild fruits and vegetables, and for buying such of their requirements as salt, oil, tobacco, 'biri' (indigenous cigarettes), clothes and so on. We used to be very appreciative of these people for their trustworthiness, sincerity and honesty—the qualities we believed to be generally lacking in city dwellers. What impressed my young mind most was their excessive indulgence in the activities of magic and witchcraft. In those days it was a common practice in our family to take an ailing person to the hospital for treatment but also to consult one of these witch-doctors. In the mind of the people there was strong fear of ghosts, evil spirits and witches who were believed to be capable of making people fall ill, of eating all their internal parts and of depriving them of health and ultimately of life. One of our Bhil orderlies who had acquired a good reputation for his magic skills once told me confidently : "If I throw seven (or perhaps ten) pebbles charged with a magic spell at a tree it will dry up instantaneously, but I'll not do as it is sinful."

When I grew a little older my parents moved over to Udaipur. The Bhils' image as magicians gradually began to fade away from my mind ; I often noticed them moving around in batches with loads of wood, chillies, mangoes, and so on, or sitting at shops buying ornaments or clothes. It was this background which perhaps influenced my selection of the village when in May 1959, I had to do some field-work as a graduate student of Anthropology. I had then

spent two months in a village that contained a mixed population—the Hindu peasants and the Bhil tribals. The spell of field-work was no doubt brief, but I came out of this very interesting experience with a firm conviction of the desirability of an intensive first-hand study of the Bhils' social structure and culture. I became conscious of the fact that the available material on the Bhils, a widely distributed tribe, was very meagre.

In September 1961, I availed an opportunity to spend a year and a half among the Bhils. This was through a job of research assistant with Mr. (now Dr.) David W. McCurdy who had come to India on a Ford Foundation Fellowship for an anthropological study of the Bhils.

In September-October 1961, we toured extensively in the districts of Udaipur and Dungarpur which have a heavy concentration of the Bhils, for the selection of a village which would form the venue for intensive field-work. A series of villages had to be rejected because of the following factors which appeared to characterize them :

1. inaccessibility ;
2. high degree of urbanization ;
3. large-scale conversion of the population to faiths and sects such as Christianity, Kabir Panth and so on ;
4. intensive programme of directed change under the Community Development Block ; and
5. official coldness, suspicion and lack of appreciation for anthropological research in the area.

We also rejected those villages which were highly faction-ridden, and were scenes of intense political awakening.

Finally, our choice fell on Pai. One afternoon, when we were returning to Udaipur after having spent three or four days in visiting more than half a dozen villages of the Jhadol Sub-division, on the road side we stopped by a tea-shop of Pai. The shopkeeper was curious about us and so we told him what we were out for. When I

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asked him where I could meet the village headman, he pointed to a robust fellow, sitting in one corner of the shop and surrounded by four men of the village. We introduced ourselves to him and expressed our desire to see his village. He immediately agreed to take us around. He asked one of his companions to accompany us in our jeep, and show us round the village. And he told us he would be following us soon on foot. We were taken to the village school and the village temple. The polite welcome by the school teacher had a favourable impact on the village headman and others. We discussed with the village headman our problem, and told him that we liked his village and that if he and his people had no objection, we would come back, and also that, if it suited both of us, we might live in their village for a year or so. The headman replied, "You come and live like good people in this village ; what objection could we have ? If you will be nice to us, we will be nice to you but if you play mischief you will know the consequences. I warn you if you have come to make my people Christians, better leave now, and never come back." We told him that we were not missionaries, and were not at all in favour of the activities of missionaries. This seemed to settle the matter.

Pai conformed largely to our research requirements. It was twenty miles from Udaipur and was linked to it by a motorable road generally all round the year. Though in terms of miles, the distance between Pai and Udaipur was not much, the natural hazards unfriendly fauna had prevented a serious impact of urbanization on the life of the people. Its people seemed to have largely preserved their tribal organization, customs and beliefs. Though the village had come under the jurisdiction of the Community Development Block of Girwa, since October 1954, it had remained almost untouched by any of the developmental programmes. The village was still resistant to any foreign interventions in its internal affairs and its council of elders functioned prominently. The village had actually refused to become a member of the elected village panchayat. It still presented a traditional picture of conflict between the Raj (government) and the village, by not surrendering its autonomy in many res-

pects. It was only after 1963 that village unity and autonomy suffered heavily due to internal dissensions and external interventions. The position in regard to forest, land, etc. also underwent a change during this period.

The presence of a foreigner in the village along with his jeep aroused some curiosity and interest in us but this curiosity was within limits. We were accorded treatment due to guests. Our neighbours made it a point to see to our comforts. All our adult neighbours tried to be quite friendly and nice to us. The curious eyes peeping through our windows were mostly those of children between five and twelve years of age.

For a month or so we lived in the school building. During this period a contract was negotiated through the headman of the village for the construction of a house for us. This was to be a bamboo house with a roof of locally made tiles. We discovered a friendly person in one of our house contractors and hired him for cooking, dish-washing, bringing water and sweeping the house. This man proved himself to be a trustworthy friend and a good informant, and became an indispensable part of our project.

In the village nobody seriously believed that our interest in their culture had brought us there. Some days after we settled down, news got going around the village that we had come to dig out the gold that lay buried in their village land. Often people were heard saying, "Nobody throws away tonnes of money for nothing, they must be having some better reasons to be in this village." Another rumour that spread particularly among the women of the village was, "Sab has come to castrate all our menfolk and start a new race of his own." Within a short while, however, such doubts and fears were put to rest.

In the field we operated as a compact research team and often discussed field data of our mutual interest. I utilized this period for collecting field data which were relevant for my problem of research. Besides the period spent in the field with Mr. McCurdy which ended

in February 1963, as the work in progress demanded. I went to the field at different points of time : between August and October 1963, and during October and November 1966, and during March and April of 1968. Between 1963 and 1966 when there was a long gap I maintained my contacts with the village through the village school teacher and a few villagers who occasionally visited Udaipur, my home town, and stayed with me at my residence.

During these later trips, varied kinds of data were collected and gaps were filled. Genealogical mapping of the Bhils of the village was done for achieving a clear understanding of the structural units (both in form and process) and following the exact nature of the transfer of power in the village. Besides genealogies with wide coverage, some more penetrating data were collected on leadership, on power equation in order to find out the possible relationship between witchcraft and magic and social structure.

Before we actually landed in Pai we had gathered some secondary data about the Bhils through various government officials, school teachers, village headman, political workers, and ex-feudal lords of Udaipur and Dungarpur Districts. In Pai, we employed mainly two techniques of anthropological research for the collection of data : participant observation and interviewing. In a census of the village information regarding numerical and kin composition of households, clan affiliations, and age of members was gathered. Nineteen (ten per cent of the total) households distributed over the village were then chosen for intensive study. Our participation in several village activities as in the celebration of festivals, marriages and funeral ceremonies helped to remove doubts from the minds of the villagers regarding our objectives. It is true that for a long time people kept on asking whether only our interest in their culture had brought us there. But they gradually adjusted to our presence and got used to our taking notes and clicking cameras. Besides people noticed that we stayed in the village as useful people ; we treated many of their ailments and even ran people to the hospital at Udaipur in an emergency. I would say that, if nothing else, our

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medical aid to the people took us a long way towards establishing rapport with them. Besides, I also read for them circulars issued by the government departments. We consciously avoided identifying ourselves with missionaries, government officials, and outsiders of all sorts, and this helped to win the confidence of the people.

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The manuscript of this book earned me a Ph. D. degree from the University of Saugar in the year 1970. The thesis was completed on the financial support of Government of India Research Training Scholarship under the guidance of Dr. (Mrs.) Leela Dube, Reader in the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at the University of Saugar. I owe a deep gratitude to Prof. S. C. Dube, Director, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla not only for my training under him as anthropologist but also for his constant interest throughout the completion of this work and for having agreed to write foreword to this book. I am also indebted to Dr. Yogesh Atal for my initiation in the science of man. I also acknowledge my thanks to Dr. D.W. McCurdy with whom I worked as a research assistant for a year and a half between 1961 and 1963 when I got an excellent opportunity to observe closely the life of Bhils. During and after the fieldwork in the village, Pai my parents played hosts to many of my respondents on several occasions when they visited my home town, Udaipur. Sushila, my wife helped me in preparing the genealogies and constantly suffered and enjoyed with me the writing of the manuscript.

I shall be failing in my duty if I do not recall the wonderful time that I had with the people of Pai. Except for initial suspicion, throughout the stay they were very co-operative and understanding. In particular I wish to remember, among many others, Kanji Chhapnia, Naro Katara, Vaka Katara and Deeta Hirawat who besides friendship and hospitality contributed substantially in the collection of the data.

The life of Bhils is full of romance and adventure but often made miserable by self-imposing religious leaders of Baniyas, Brahmins and Christians and greedy government officials. If the romance of their life is not fully depicted in this book the failure is due to my inadequacy of expression. Finally I am thankful to Indian Council of Social Science Research for a grant in aid for the publication of this book.

Jainendra Kumar Doshi

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Introduction

The Bhils are a massive tribe which ranks third in size on the tribal map of India. The 1941 census put their number at 23,30,270 whereas the other two large tribes, the Gonds and the Santals were put at 32,01,004 and 27,32,266 respectively (Mamoria 1967 : 10). The bulk of the tribe of Bhils is concentrated in the contiguous areas of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh, and accounts for about 85% of the total Bhil population. Bhils are found also, in small numbers, in Andhra Pradesh. In the states mentioned above, the Bhils are scattered over a wide area, from the Aravalli range of hills in the north to Dangs in the south and, in the east, up to the forests of Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh, the whole region lying between the latitudes of 20°-25° N and the longitudes of 73°-75° E. The entire Bhil country is hilly and woody. The hills and woods—and the rivers flowing through them—have kept the Bhil country mostly inaccessible to outsiders, and travelling through it is even more difficult in the rainy season.

The following was the state-wise or province-wise distribution of the Bhils in 1941 :

<i>Province or State</i>	<i>Population</i>
1. Bombay	5,68,576
2. C.P. & Berar	29,570
3. Sind	82,118
4. Ajmer-Merwara	8,572
5. Hyderabad	18,021
6. Baroda	63,033
7. Central India	5,21,911
8. Gujarat	899
9. Gwalior	98,204
10. Rajputana	7,49,748
11. Western India	1,558
Total	23,30,270

Note : Later figures are not available.

The Bhils are believed to be among the oldest settlers in India. Gustav Oppert also makes a reference to this tribe in his book "The Original Inhabitants of India" (1893 : 79-85). Erskine writes : "The Bhils are among the oldest inhabitants of the country and are said to have entered India from the north and north-east several hundred years before the Christian era ; and to have been driven to their present fastnesses at the time of Hindu invasion" (1908 : 228). A systematic history of the tribe is not available, and only stray references are found here and there about these people. Recorded history tells us mainly about the Bhils of Rajasthan. By putting bits and parts together, we can trace the following historical development of this tribe :

1. Presence of the Bhil kingdoms particularly in the southern half of the province of Rajputana (now known as Rajasthan) about 1300 to 1500 years ago.

2. Unseating of the Bhils and annexation of the Bhil kingdoms by the Rajputs.

3. The Bhils' removal to deeper gorges of Aravalli hills and the casual, unpredictable relationship between the Rajputs and the Bhils.

4. Oppression of the Bhils by the Rajput kings by way of high taxation, by the imposition of forced labour and so on.

5. The Bhils as plunderers, thieves and law-breakers ; the problem of lawlessness caused by inefficient, weak and the corrupt administration of the Rajput kings ; the arrival of the British on the scene.

6. The Bhils as settled agriculturists.

Prior to the conquest of Rajputana by the Rajputs, the Bhils held the greater part of the southern half of the province. Many of the princely states, such as Banswara, Dungarpur, Kota and Deolia are all believed to have been named after the Bhil chieftains who formerly ruled over them. The Rajputs met stiff opposition before they wrested these states from the Bhil chiefs.

Around the sixth century A.D. the state of Vallabhi in Kathiawar in western India, fell before the barbarian Hun invaders, and the king of the state, Siladitya, of the dynasty of Ram of the famous sun clan, was killed in the course of battle. His queen, who was pregnant at that time, managed to escape, and after some time

gave birth to a son. She handed over her son to the care of a Brahman woman and killed herself by voluntarily jumping into the fire, in the Rajput tradition. As her child was born in a 'Goha' (cave), he was designated as Goha, or the 'cave born'. Goha grew in the State of Idur, in southern Rajputana, which was being ruled over at that time by a Bhil chief, Mandalica. Though Goha was brought up in a Brahman family, most of his childhood was spent in playing with the Bhil boys with whom he also frequently went to the forest and whose 'habits better assimilated with his daring nature than those of the Brahmans'. His Bhil companions once in sport elected him as their king, and in reality also later helped him in his successful venture of becoming the king of Idur by dethroning the Bhil king. Though Goha was helped by the Bhils in his venture, ungratefully and without any obvious justification, he killed his benefactors. "Goha's name became the patronymic of his descendants who were styled Gohilote, classically Grahilote", in time softened to Gehlote (Tod 1960 : 181).

The descendants of Goha reigned for eight generations in the mountainous southern region. The Bhils, tired of alien rule, assassinated the eighth prince, Nagaditya, when he was out for hunting. Not only did Nagaditya lose his life, the kingdom was lost to his family. "The infant Bappa, son of Nagaditya, then only three years old, was conveyed to the fortress by a Bhil of Yadu descent, then he was removed for greater security to the wilds of Parassur" (Tod 1960 : 181). There is a legend that Bappa, who was then living in Nagda, near Udaipur, one day played the game of marriage with the princess of the Solanki Rajput chief of Nagda. Bappa, coming to know that the news of his marriage, even in sport, had enraged the chief, made good his escape into the forests. "The companions of his flight were two Bhils : one of Condree, in the valley of present capital ; the other of Solanki descent, from Oguna Panora, in the western wilds. Their names, Bale and Dewa, have been handed down with Bappa's and the former had the honour of drawing the teeka of sovereignty with his own blood on the forehead of the prince, on the occasion of his taking the crown from the Mori" (Tod 1960 : 183). The custom of marking the forehead of the prince with their blood, at the time of his coronation, was continued by the descendants of Bale and Dewa Bhils for generations, and was abandoned finally only when the cost of the ceremony became prohibitive.

There is no recording of events relating to the Bhils for a long time, till Rana Pratap's emergence on the scene of Mewar in 1572. At the time when Rana Pratap became the ruler of Mewar, the Moghal empire was expanding by leaps and bounds, the emperor Akbar at its head. When all other princes of this country were surrendering their dignity and sovereignty to the might of Akbar, Rana Pratap stood boldly fighting with grim determination for the honour and the freedom of his country. It was a long-drawn battle, and the Rana could not have fought it but for the support of the Bhils who displayed excellent skill in guerilla warfare. "This association proved (the) decisive factor in his struggle against the superior foe" (Sharma 1962 : 75). The Bhils were rewarded and honoured by the Rana for their services with grants of many freeholdings of land, and their association was symbolized in the royal crest of Mewar which showed a Bhil and a Rajput standing on either side of a sun.

The Bhils were also victims of oppression at the hands of the Rajput rulers. Goha's case has already been cited. Major Hendeley wrote about the Bhils in 1875 : "Though robbers, and timorous, owing to ages of illtreatment, the men are brave when trusted, and very faithful; they have been looked upon by the Rajputs as the wild beasts to be hunted down, as vermin, and now only beginning to feel themselves men. History proves them always to have been faithful to their nominal Rajput sovereigns, especially in their adversity. The Bhil is a merry soul loving a jest." (Gustav Oppert 1893 : 85). Around the year 1730 A.D., armed bands of the Bhils engaged freely in acts of looting, killing and arson. This unrest was largely due to the weak misrule of the Rajputs and the Gaikwar. About the same time when the British entered into treaties with the Rajput chiefs of Rajasthan, ".....the wilder Bhils in the Mewar Hilly Tracts and Banswara and Dungarpur gave much trouble by their claim to levy blackmail throughout this country and their inveterate habits of plundering. It was difficult either to pursue them into their fastnesses or to fix the responsibility on the state to which they belonged territorially; expeditions sent under British officers against them rarely effected anything permanent, while the Darbars were only strong to oppress and exasperate them, without subduing them." (Erskine 1908 : 230).

In 1881 when the census operations were in progress in the southern part of the Mewar State, some Bhils took offence at a joke

cut by one of the census workers, and began opposing the idea of census-taking. This opposition then spread over to other areas. Arrows were shot at the police, and the staff of the police station at Barapal was killed. The Bhils of Barapal, Tidi and Paduna assembled at a common place and set fire to the police station. When this news was received, the State army and the artillery enforcements were despatched to Barapal. The Bhils had attacked in a strength of two to three thousand, and the small police force could not resist them. In all seventeen persons were killed. The army took revenge by setting fire to all the Bhil houses. The Bhils, however, adopted guerilla tactics, and the army could not kill them in any considerable numbers.

On the 29th of March in 1881, the Bhils of Alsigarh and Pai (the villages chosen for the present study) also revolted against the administration and killed Dhulji Kamdar, a revenue clerk, and a couple of policemen. As reported by the people of Pai, Dhulji had become a menace to the people and used to harass them at the time of collection of the revenue. Tired of perpetual harassment and perhaps encouraged by uprisings in other parts of the State, the Bhils of Pai and Alsigarh killed Dhulji Kamdar. When the people heard that the army was being rushed to the area they blocked the road by felling large trees, and then retreated along with the women and children to the interior of the forest.

Fighting took place at various other places in these areas. In one encounter the army succeeded in killing about twenty to twenty-five Bhils. Later the battle took a more serious turn, and there were continuous exchanges of arrows and gunshots between the army and the Bhils. Reinforcements were sent from Udaipur to rescue the army.

Finally the truce was negotiated with the help of the priests of the famous Jain temple of Rikhabdev. The Bhils put twenty-four demands before the administration, which were forwarded to the king of the State. On 19th April 1881, the Assistant Political Agent of Mewar and Kherwara Cantonment and the Officer-in-charge of the Settlement Department, both British, arrived to discuss matters with the Bhils. The main demands put forward by them were : restoration of their past freedom, scrapping of the land revenue imposed by the administration, and suspension of census and land settlement operations. Their demands were partially conceded by reducing revenue

to half the existing rates, and assuring them that care would be taken that no inconvenience was caused to them by census and settlement operations. Peace was thus restored. Shyamaldas has vividly described the rebellion and the subsequent pacification of the Bhils in his book 'Vir Vinod'.

The fact of the Bhil absorption into the Rajput fold is mentioned by Tod, and also finds mention in the Bhil legends. It is believed by some historians that marriages between the Rajputs and the Bhils might have taken place when the former sought shelter in the hills of Aravalli after being driven away by the Bodhs, the date of which is not exactly known. There are several chiefs of mixed origin also who claim to be the Rajputs but there is no interdinging and intermarrying between them and the real Rajputs. These are known as the Bhomia but they also use Rajput appellations, such as the Chauhan, the Solanki and the Sisodia. The Bhomia were required to pay a fixed amount to the Darbar as a token of their allegiance. (These Bhomia were though more despotic and oppressive to their Bhil subject in order to assert their superiority over the Bhils). They also extracted very high rent for land and compulsory labour from the Bhils.

In 1840, the British raised an army manned solely by the Bhils, known as the Mewar Bhil Corps, for channelising the violent urges of this martial tribe, and for ending the perpetual unrest in the southern and western part of the province. The call to join the army received good response in the southern part but not in the western part. The formation of this force helped in linking up the Bhil country with the outside world by motorable roads. Since 1947, the Mewar Bhil Corps has become a part of Rajasthan Police while still retaining its original name.

The modern political processes began in the Bhil country in Rajasthan since the First World War when Motilal Tejawat, a Bania by caste, and a member of the Praja Mandal, the local version of the Indian National Congress, began feeding these war-like people with some explosive ideas, such as "stop rendering forced labour", "don't pay land revenue because this land is yours". Motilal enjoyed great popularity and regard among the Bhils for a time, till he made them confront the Mewar Bhil Corps. He assured them that he would turn the army's bullets into wax by his magic. But as soon as the army opened fire, the Bhils realized that their men were

dropping dead on the ground, and ran away. Motilal could never regain his lost position among the Bhils, though he succeeded in effecting certain changes in their life such as the partial ending of the system of forced labour, and the general awakening of consciousness of their rights.

The word Bhil, is believed by some to have been derived from a Dravidian word, vil or bil, meaning a bow, or a Bowman. "Bishop Caldwell advocates in his comparative grammar the derivation of Bhil from bil, arrow, as he says on page 464 : 'Bhillas, probably Billas, from the Dravidian vil, bil, a bow, Bowman' (Gustav 1893 : 84). However, there are also some other terms with which the members of this tribe are identified in Rajasthan. Three terms, *Palvi*, *Mina* and *Gameti* are often used in addressing or referring to the Bhils. The word *Palvi* is derived from *Pal* which is often used by the Bhils in certain parts of Rajasthan and Gujarat to refer to a village. The Bhil villages are referred to at many places as *Pal*. *Palvi* would be one who lives in a *Pal*, i.e., a village. Though *Pal* is used to refer to a Bhil village, its close similarity to a Sanskrit word *Pallava*, meaning leaf, indicates that it could have been derived from *Pallava*. Perhaps due to their association with forest and jungles, *Pallava* was made into *Pallvi* or *Palvi*, meaning leaf-clad.

In various census reports, the Minas are found to have been treated as another tribe. It appears that the Bhils, who have been living in the plains and have been in greater contact with the mainstream of the Indian culture, have come to be known as the Minas. Marriages between the Bhils and the Minas are quite common. It appears that from ethnic and cultural points of view they belong to the same group, but have experienced different degrees of acculturation with the neighbouring Hindus. Some people also try to differentiate the Bhils from the Minas by pointing out that the former are of relatively darker complexion, shorter build and with less attractive physical features. No scientific study has so far been made and such a study may have to face unsurmountable difficulties in isolating one from the other.

The third term *Gameti* is used more frequently as a term of address and is preferred by the Bhils. A glance at the circumstances of the Bhils is perhaps essential for appreciating their dislike for being called Bhils. For centuries the Bhils have been identified as

plunderers and lawless people living in the fastnesses of the forest. The Rajputs, as mentioned earlier, began to consider them human beings only very recently, before which they even did not mind oppressing them or killing them. Perhaps to erase this image, the Bhils have desired to be identified by some other terms, such as Palvi, Gameti and Mina. The traders have found it advantageous to address these people by such terms as would please them. The literal meaning of Gameti is the village-dweller, but in general usage, Gameti is the chief of the village or a section of it. In Bhil villages, only the Bhil chiefs are addressed as Gameti but in non-Bhil areas anyone of them, irrespective of whether he is a chief or a commoner, may be addressed as Gameti, though in their absence they are invariably referred to as the Bhil or the Mina.

Due to the wide distribution of the Bhils in different states and regions they show many local variations in their language, habits, customs, and so on. Often mention is made of Bhili as the dialect of the Bhils. In different linguistic regions they speak different dialects. The Bhils fall mainly into four distinct linguistic regions, namely, the Gujarati, the Rajasthani, the Marathi and the region of west Khandesh. Generally there is no overlapping of these languages and a superimposition of dialects of the areas in which the Bhils live. For example, the Bhils living in Dungarpur, Banswara, Galia Kot and Simalwara are greatly under the influence of Gujarati. But as we proceed to the north of these places, and further towards Rajasthan, the influence of Rajasthani becomes more evident. As regards the influence of dialects that are spoken in smaller areas, in Dungarpur, Banswara, Galia Kot and so on, the Bhils speak what is known as Vagdi, though with a strong influence of Gujarati, while in areas around Udaipur the greater dominance of Mewari, an offshoot of Rajasthani, is seen. There are marked differences in speech even at distances of fifteen to twenty miles. It is not completely different or wholly unintelligible at this distance but, as the distance increases, differences become more marked and gradually the ability to communicate is reduced considerably.

Writing in 1908 Erskine classified the Bhils in general into three categories : (1) the village Bhils, (2) the cultivating Bhils, and (3) the wild or the mountain Bhils. The village Bhils were those who from their ancient residence had become inhabitants of villages in the plains (though usually near the hills), of which they were the

watchmen, and had become as a part of the community. The cultivating Bhils were those who continued in peaceful occupations after their leaders were destroyed or driven away by invaders, to become desperate free-booters. The third category, that of the wild Bhils or mountain Bhils, consisted of those who preferred savage freedom and indolence to submission and industry, and who continued more or less by plunder. Their home was in the south of Rajputana. These were not at all closed groups; the number in each category increased or decreased depending upon the kind of government, weak or strong.

Since Erskine wrote this a number of changes have affected the Bhils. Now it is possible to talk only in comparative terms regarding their isolation. There are plunderers even today but their number has decreased considerably. Most of them are now settled agriculturists, though perhaps one should not forget that not long ago, that is, only ten to fifteen years ago the Bhils of Rajasthan in the south-west of Kota and Panarva still posed a serious threat to law and order. They had continued to levy taxes from travellers passing through their country, and refusal to pay endangered the latter's safety and security. This state of affairs continued for some time even in post-independence period.

The old autonomy is at least formally lost and the influence of government in many vital areas is clearly discernible. It is progressively being made clear to them that the forest lying around their villages is not their property, the land is no longer freely available, and it is not in the purview of their chiefs to allot land to them; rather an external force, the government, holds all the rights of allotment of land. Besides, the Bhil country is more and more being opened up to external influences with the laying of new roads and bridges, and improvement in transport and communication network. A large number of Bhil villages have been brought actively under the Community Development Blocks. The Bhils have also participated in four General Elections and some Panchayat elections. Formerly, the Indian National Congress dominated in these areas but since the 1962 General Elections Swatantra and Jansangh have also become active, and have gained influence.

But, by and large, people have resisted these changes. They have serious misgivings about the intentions of the government. Any move by the government is seen as a threat to the unity and

traditional authority of the village. Participation in the democratic institutions is believed to be useless resulting in greater harassment of people by the imposition of new laws and rules upsetting their way of life.

Setting

Udaipur, the famous historical city of Rajasthan is today growing fast into an important centre of education and industry of the State. It has a large complex of educational institutions, namely, a medical college, an agricultural college, a polytechnic, a railway training college, and a university. Explorations by geologists have confirmed the presence of deposits of many important minerals in this region. The zinc and lead mines of Jawar which were exploited for many years by the people of region and later by the British are now a Government of India undertaking. The Hindustan Zinc Smelter, an ancillary of the zinc and lead mines has put Udaipur on the industrial map of India. This city is also a good tourist centre, and known for its historical monuments and beautiful surroundings with large artificial lakes, hills, and wild forests, fairly rich in game. Besides, the place has allured archaeologists whose excavations have resulted in the unearthing of Mesolithic and Protohistoric civilizations.

Pai, the Bhil village selected for the present study, is situated at a distance of twenty miles to the south-west of this city, in the interior of Girwa valley formed by the Aravalli hill ranges. The village is about 2,500 feet above the mean sea level, and is bordered on the east and the west by parallel and elongated ridges, attaining an average elevation of 3,200 feet, and a maximum elevation of 3,433 feet. In the valley itself the surface is undulating with small hillocks. The rocks consist for the most part of schists belonging to the Aravalli system but granite is wanting, and the beds are almost as unaltered as the slates and limestones below the Alwar quartzite in the south-east of the District.

Flora and Fauna

Among the more common trees are mango, the 'babul' (*Acacia arabica*), the 'bar' (*Ficus bengalensis*), the 'dhak' (*Butea frondosa*), the 'gular' (*Ficus glomerata*), the 'jamun' (*Eugenia jamlocana*), the 'khair' (*Acacia catechu*), the 'khajur' (*Phoenix silvestris*), the 'khejra'

(*Prosopis spicigera*), the 'mahua' (*Bassia catifolia*), the 'pipal' (*Ficus religiosa*), and the 'runjra' (*Acacia leubophloea*). Some other trees which are found somewhat less frequently are : 'bahera' (*Terminalia bellerica*), 'dhaman' (*Grewia oppositifolia*), 'haldu' (*Adina cordifolia*), 'sagwan' (*Tectona grandis*), 'salar' (*Beswellia tomentosa*), and bamboos or the species which attain large dimensions only on the higher hills.

The smaller shrubs include 'akra' (*Calotropis procera*), 'anwala' (*Casia auriculata*), 'karanda' (*Caesalpinia carandas*), and 'thor' (*Euphorbia nerrifolia*). During the rainy season, grasses and sedges are abundant. On the higher slopes of the Aravallis are found some plants which cannot exist in the dry hot plains.

Panthers are commonly found in and near the hills but large game, such as tigers, black bears and sambar (*Cervus unicolor*) is found only occasionally in the Aravallis from Kumbhalgarh on the west to Kotra in the south-west of the District. Besides, wild dogs, pigs and wolves are found occasionally in the valley of Girwa.

The climate of the valley in which Pai is situated is moderate by Indian Standards, free from excessive heat as well as from terrific cold. Undoubtedly it is mild and healthy. The mean temperature, at the District headquarters during eight years, that is between 1897 and 1905 was recorded at 70°F, varying from 61°F in January to 89°F in May, the mean daily range being 24°F. The average rainfall in Pai and its surrounding areas is about 30" a year, most of which is received between mid-June and September.

The village is located on the Udaipur Jhadol-Palasia road, which has a regular bus service operating on it. It was not so about thirty years ago when there was no road. Before the road was built, travelling used to be mostly on foot, except for wealthy Rajputs and traders who used to travel on horseback. In those days, trade was not much developed, and whatever saleable items people wanted to take to the city were often carried on their heads. Occasionally big traders also used camels and donkeys for the transportation of goods. For a long time, even after the road had been built, the bus only twice a week, and during the rainy season this too would be suspended as rivers and streams often flooded the road. In 1958 the bus began plying on alternate days. Since the road was built by the Public Works Department of the State has always been trying to improve it by putting bridges and cutting steep climbs, but progress

has been slow. Due to hard rocks, hills and river, streams, the task of road building has been difficult. There are, however, at present quite a number of bridges ; many are still under construction and now even during the rainy season the bus service is not seriously affected. The daily bus service started in the year 1960. But so far, the road has remained unmetalled and narrow with several steep slopes; every year some bridges are washed away by flooded streams, and the road has to be repaired at the end of every rainy season.

As soon as a traveller gets down at the bus-stop of Pai, two tea stalls situated about a hundred yards apart from each other on either side of the road meet his eye. There is also a small cluster of houses by the road, and some sporadically built houses on either side of the road at some distance from it. The first impression would be, "Oh, this is a small village." However, on the contrary, Pai is a large, spread-out village. It is about five miles from east to west and four miles from north to south. The population of Pai is 1185, distributed in 217 households. Pai, like other Bhil villages, is a dispersed village though with some amount of nucleation. Its population lives in five different sectors which are further divided into sub-sectors ; both sectors and sub-sectors are known as 'phala'. Each 'phala' (sector or sub-sector) has a name, and the interaction among the members of a 'phala' is much more intense compared to what is found in the village as a whole. It needs to be mentioned here, however, that common leadership, joint celebration of festivals, observance of many village rituals, and many other shared experiences help in the integration of these small units into the village community. Such integration is not characteristic of all Bhil villages ; one also comes across villages whose leadership is weak and divided, and the unit for celebration of festivals and observance of rituals is the sector and not the village. But Pai enjoys a high degree of village unity and is rightly proud of it, though this not to deny the existence of pulls in opposite directions and some degree of tension. Tables 2 and 3 give sector-wise distribution of the people of Pai in general and the Bhils.

Settlement Pattern

Pai is set against the background of high hills and thick forests. The hills remain green with grass and other shrubs during the rainy season and winter, but in dry weather not much of this greenery is

Table 2
Sector-wise distribution of the people

S. No.	Name of the sector	Male children	Female children	Total	Adult male	Adult female	Total	Total male	Total female	Grand total	Total no. of families
1.	Nichla										
(a)	Gavadi	26	18	44	20	21	41	46	39	85 (26)	19 (6)
(b)	Nichla	40	34	74	27	28	55	67	62	129	21
(c)	Nalwat	21	27	48	24	23	47	45	50	95	17
2.	Vadla	47	51	98	52	46	98	99	97	196 (18)	38 (4)
3.	Hamli Pipli										
(a)	Hamli Pipli	25	18	43	27	20	47	52	38	90 (9)	17 (2)
(b)	Ratakot	18	14	32	11	11	22	29	25	54	9
(c)	Devda Kad	8	6	14	8	9	17	16	15	31	6
4.	Nala	25	25	50	34	29	63	59	54	113	20
5.	Mual										
(a)	Mual	57	59	116	53	59	112	110	118	228 (66)	39 (11)
(b)	Kemri	2	5	7	3	3	6	5	8	13	3
(c)	Doda Kad	15	12	27	13	12	25	28	24	52 (15)	10 (3)
(d)	Paba	24	30	54	23	22	45	47	52	99	18
	Total	308	299	607	295	283	578	603	582	1185 (134)	217 (26)

Note: The table includes both the Bhil and the non-Bhil population (the figures for the non-Bhil population are given in brackets).

left, particularly on low hills. The forest was pretty thick till some years ago but for the last six to seven years the forest contractors have been destroying it by injudicious felling and cutting of trees. Traditionally, the Bhil houses are built individually on hill tops or on the slopes of the hills. Each house is built at some distance from the other, and the land lying around it is the property of the person occupying the house. At a cursory glance, the houses may appear to have been built without plan or forethought but it is not so. The houses are so built that it is possible to keep a watch on the paths. This is necessary because of the nuisance of robbers and cattle-lifters. But Pai has somewhat drifted from the traditional pattern due to an increasing pressure on the land. The old people of Pai recall that in their childhood days there were neither so many people nor so many houses, and land was freely available. Though people feel the pinch of decreasing availability of land, they have not discarded their traditional settlement pattern. In Pai one finds a good number of houses built on hill tops or on the slopes of the hills and though house clusters are now more frequently found, there are no adjoining houses, such as found in peasant villages. All the houses have fields right

Table 3
Sector-wise distribution of the Bhil in Pai

<i>S. No.</i>	<i>Name of the sector</i>	<i>Number of families</i>	<i>Population</i>
1.	Nichla		
	(a) Gavadi	13	59
	(b) Nichla	21	129
	(c) Nalwat	17	95
2.	Vadla	34	178
3.	Hamli Pipli		
	(a) Hamli Pipli	15	81
	(b) Ratakot	9	54
	(c) Devda Kad	6	31
4.	Nala	20	113
5.	Mual		
	(a) Mual	28	162
	(b) Kemri	3	13
	(c) Doda Kad	7	37
	(d) Paba	18	99
	Total	191	1051

in front of them, on their sides and occasionally at the back also. They are in the right sense farm houses though the farms are small. The approach to the houses is mostly by tracks through the fields. The only street or road is bus-route that passes through and bisects the village. Some of the sectors (phalas) are contiguous ; they are Mual, Vadla, Gavadi, Nichla and Nalwat sectors, but others are quite apart and not contiguous with the main habitation. They are Paba, Kemri, Nala, Hamli Pipli, Doda Kad and Rata Kot. A new sector comes into being in the village when some individuals move over to a new site within the village seeking to explore fresh land for farming or for raising cattle. Paba and Kemri are two such sectors, which have come into being recently through intra-village migrations.

The two tea-shops that one notices on the road-side are popular gossip centres. About two hundred yards inside the road is situated the village primary school. To the west of the school is the village temple of Bheru and his ancillary deities. Twice in a week and on many other occasions during the year, people assemble at this place and many important decisions are taken here. A little further from the temple is situated another important shrine—that of goddess Malya Mata ; and just above Malya Mata, on a hill is the shrine of Magra Baba, the hill god. Though the village temple is believed to be the oldest, these two deities, Malya Mata and Magra Baba are also held in high esteem by the villagers. A stream that comes down from a hill on the western side of the village flows by the temple of Malya Mata. In 1965 a small dam was constructed by the State Government at an approximate cost of twenty-five thousand rupees, and now the stream is used for watering the cattle. About four to five farmers also benefit from this dam by using it for irrigation. The overflowing waters of the stream pass through the main habitat and ultimately merge into a river that marks the north-eastern boundary of the village.

The two houses of the village headmen (one *de jure* and another *de facto*) are also important public places. One headman's house is situated on a hill known as Sita Magri. By village standards this is a large house, and commands a good view of the

village. Many petty government officials, such as the Patwari, the V.L.W. or police constables, when they are on the tour of Pai, stay in one of the rooms of this house. The owner plays host to these visitors by arranging for flour, fuel and ghee for them.

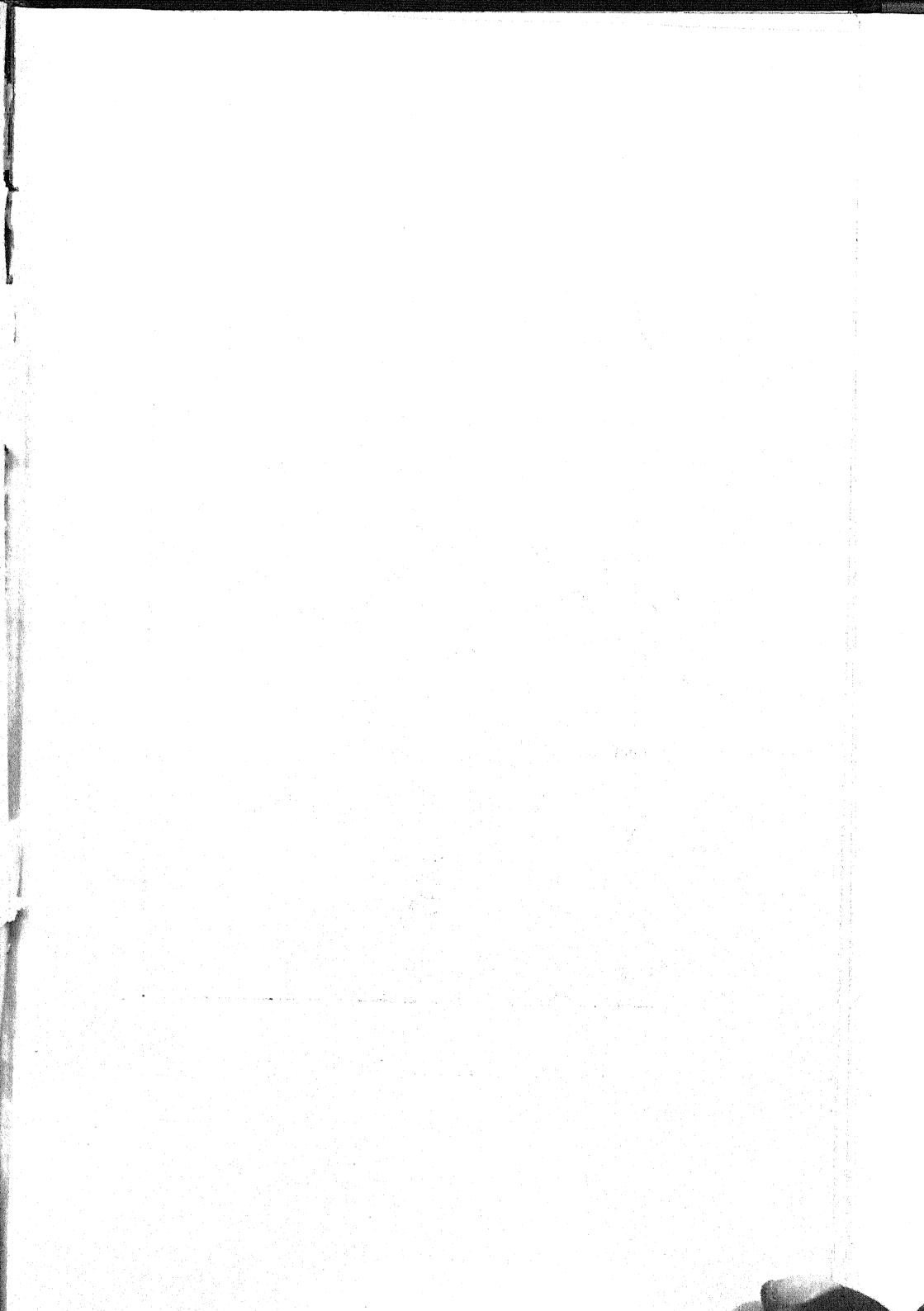
The other headman's house is situated at about two furlongs from the one on Sita Magri. More tactful and shrewd, this headman does not entertain any of the official visitors at his place but enjoys enormous power in the village.

Another place of public interest is a fort in the Rata Kot sector of the village. This is a very old fort built about 600 years ago. Though the history of this fort is not known to the people of Pai, it is believed that a great amount of wealth is buried around this fort.

Another place of some importance, the Firangi Ka Chontra, is situated on the peak of a lofty hill, perhaps the highest point in Pai. The British were locally known as Firangi, and 'chontra' means a platform, that is, the platform of the British. From here, on a clear day, the royal palace, lakes and many buildings of Udaipur are visible.

In Pai there was no post office till 1966, but now a branch post office is run by the village school-teacher with the payment of some allowance to him by the Government. The post office is proving a good link with the outside world. About ten boys of Pai who have gone to Tidi and Udaipur in the pursuit of higher education, send letters to their parents and receive communication from them through the services of the post office.

About one hundred yards from the school is a small round structure of stones. Associated with this are many memories. In the past, the land revenue used to be collected in kind with the help of the village headman. A clerk of the government used to come to Pai and sit near this structure of stones, keeping a record of those who brought 'bhog', *i.e.* the revenue, supposedly one-third of their yield, and deposited it at this place with him. As mentioned earlier, around 1890, Dhulji, a revenue clerk of the government, was killed by angry villagers who had been aroused by his malpractices.





SCENE OF A BHIL VILLAGE

Table 4

Distribution of Population

<i>S. No.</i>	<i>Number of households</i>	<i>Number of people</i>	<i>Percentage of the total population</i>
1. The Bhils	191	1051	88·69
2. The Bhil-Christian	10	64	5·40
3. The Sadhu (Tribal priest)	6	26	2·15
4. The Lavar	2	13	1·10
5. The Dholi	2	11	0·92
6. The Balai (Leather-tanner)	1	5	0·47
7. The Mussalman	2	9	0·86
8. The Brahman	1	3	0·28
9. The Bhoi	1	1	0·09
10. The Sindhi	1	2	0·19
Total	217	1185	

The Houses

The houses of Pai are simple. They are made of mud, stone, wood and bamboo. The walls of the houses are commonly made of mud and stone, but mats knitted from bamboo splints and plastered with a paste of mud and cowdung are also used as walls. Most of the houses are single-roomed with a covered extension ; however, when needed, a room or two may be added to them. Often a bamboo fencing is made to enclose the front of the house and giving more room for use by the occupants. A small construction of bamboo and wood is raised in the frontyard to be used as a cattle-shed ; the roof of this cattle-shed may also be used by the members of the family for sleeping on during summer. There are generally no windows and ventilators in the house, though, occasionally a small opening or a hole may be left on the wall to allow some light into the house. In the room may be found several large bamboo containers for storing grains and cereals, and a similar structure as in the frontyard to be used for stocking valuables of the family. The floor is made of mud, and is kept clean and in good shape by applying a paste of mud and cow-dung every now and then. The inside of a Bhil house is a real mess. It is dark and smoky, the bamboo containers covering a large area of the house. In one

corner of the house sits the hand-mill, and close to it is usually found the butter-churner. At night the cattle are also kept in this room where the members of the family sleep and rest. The room often smells of cattle urine and cow-dung. Very rarely do people have any lighting arrangements in the house, except for the light available from the burning hearth. In a Bhil's house are to be found all sizes of pots, some presently in use for storing water, milk and others saved for future use. A Bhil likes to use a cot but he is also quite comfortable on the floor. His mattress and quilt are made of old discarded rags.

Most of the utensils used in the house are made of earth and wood, and aluminium utensils are considered proud possessions of the house.

All houses irrespective of their size and quality of construction are known as 'gher'. Though no distinction is made between houses of different sizes and quality they certainly reflect the economic status of the occupants. Well-to-do and socially well-placed people tend to have larger houses, with more rooms and space.

The People

The population of Pai is 1185, of which the Bhils, 1051 in number, constitute 88·69%. The remaining population of 134 includes 64 Bhil-Christians (5·4%), 26 Sadhus (2·15%), 13 Lavars (ironsmiths) (1·1%), 11 Dholis (drum-beaters) (0·92%), and Balai (leather-tanner), Mussalman, Brahman, Bhoi (vegetable seller) and Sindhi, together making up twenty persons.

Christianity came to Pai roughly 30 years ago, about the same time as the road was being constructed through this area. Whatever might have been the strength of the first thrust of Christianity, later on it met with great resistance. No further conversions could take place. The village adopted an inflexible attitude towards the converts and refused to take them back into the fold of Bhil society. Most of these Christians live in Mual sector of Pai and form a common neighbourhood. All the Bhil Christians are cultivators of land, but are regarded as a poor section of the village community. The Bhil Christians still carry their respective clan names, but no longer visit the shrines of tribal deities and also do not participate in the village rituals; on the contrary they ridicule the Bhil faith. In Pai the Christians are looked at with suspicion, and any effort on

their part to popularize Christianity is vehemently opposed. There is not much social intercourse between the Bhils and the Bhil Christians.

The Sadhu. The Sadhus are the recognized priests of the Bhils who officiate at their marriage and death ceremonies. They share most of the habits of the Bhils. They eat meat, drink liquor, and participate in all the ritual activities of the village. As of the Bhils, their livelihood also mainly depends on agriculture though, more than any other section of the population, they are found to have taken to different economic vocations. At present, two Sadhu families sew clothes in the village, one Sadhu works as a mason, and one works as a mate in the Public Works Department. The Sadhus are considered as servants of the village and are paid in kind at harvesting and at many rituals and ceremonies. Economically they are slightly better off than the Bhils but socially the Bhils consider themselves superior to the Sadhus. They do not have much say in the village activities and abide by the decisions taken by the village leaders, who are all Bhils.

The Lavars (ironsmiths). These immigrated from Havinakheda, a village near Udaipur about twenty years ago. Though they own some land, their main source of livelihood is their craft of iron-smithy. They mend and repair old and broken agricultural tools, and also manufacture some agricultural implements, such as sickles, ploughs and arrow heads. For making new tools they get paid in cash but for routine repairs they are paid in kind at harvesting, and are treated as village servants. One of the ironsmiths is also licenced to manufacture guns. Politically this group has no influence.

The Dholis (drum-beaters). The Dholis have land but, being lazy and in the habit of living on others' income are the poorest section of Pai. Their main job is playing on the drum at marriage and death ceremonies and at the time of the celebration of the village festivals. They are considered to be very greedy and capable of stooping down to any extent for money. The Bhils do not consider them important or indispensable for the village, as they themselves are good drummers. The Dholis also get paid at harvesting. Both in the social scale and economically the Dholis are distinctly lower than the Bhils.

The Balai (tanner). There is only one Balai family in Pai. A Balai has the duty of removing dead cattle. He has also to make

shoes for his patrons, and the leather bags used for drawing water from the wells for irrigation. He is also the public announcer and messenger for the village. The Balai of Pai is most inefficient; he neither makes shoes nor water bags. In the traditional set-up of a Bhil village, a Balai has no real function as the Bhils have no aversion to removing dead cattle and skinning them. In Pai the Balai mainly plays the role of a messenger and announcer. If there is a death in the village he shouts from one hill to another conveying the news of death; he also announces public meetings and the prices of the commodities fixed by the village leaders. The Balai of Pai has a bad name for neglecting his work and asking for loans.

The other four groups which form a very insignificant portion of the population of Pai are not permanent inhabitants of this village. They are all staying in the village mainly for pecuniary reasons. Except for the Brahman whose family has been living with him in Pai since the last five years, others bring out their families only occasionally, perhaps for a change. The Brahman and the Bhoi run a tea shop each on the road but they also sell some essential items, such as bidi, tobacco, edible oil, and kerosene. The Brahman came earlier than the Bhoi, and is also better established. The two do not get along very well as their interests often clash. The Brahman has acquired some influence by giving loans and selling things on credit. The Bhils criticize both for their greediness and improper behaviour, and have even beaten them at times. According to the Bhils the Brahman and the Bhoi both violate their respective caste norms openly by drinking liquor and eating meat.

The two Muslim shopkeepers are affinely related. The older one used to come to Pai for selling vegetables and later on his son-in-law also joined him. For many years they ran a shop jointly but now they have separated; one has his shop in the Hamli Pipli sector, and the other has his in the Nichla sector. Both are unimportant for the village; however, the old man is considered to be an interesting person for he has a large stock of true stories about his experiences as a soldier during the First World War.

The Bhils. The Bhils are generally of medium height, ranging between five feet and five feet ten inches; the average man attains the height of five feet four inches. Women are slightly shorter than men. Contrary to the popular belief that the Bhils are extremely dark, the skin complexion varies between light wheatish and dark

brown but is rarely black. Their skin looks darker due to long exposure to the sun.

These people are wirily built, and very rarely does one notice a fat or very fat person. They are slim and quite agile, and can climb the hills with great ease. They can carry heavy loads on their heads for quite long distances without showing signs of much weariness.

Dress

The Bhils dress rather simply. Ordinarily a man wears a short dhoti, a short-sleeved shirt, and a small turban on his head. In hot weather they may even be seen moving around without shirts. During winter it is a common practice among men to cover the upper half of their bodies with bed-sheets. The women wear skirts of wide circumference, almost touching the ground, and small blouses leaving a large part of the abdomen and back uncovered. Some twenty years ago, short skirts, reaching just below the knees, was in vogue. The blouses also used to be much smaller than now. Their arms used to be covered with coconut or lac bangles. These days anklets have gone out of fashion, and the silver ornaments now worn around neck, arms and wrists have replaced them to a considerable extent. In the past men often went around without a shirt. The men do not shave regularly and even well-groomed beards and moustaches are not seen these days. In the past everyone walked barefoot but now at least some men wear shoes made by the local Balai or bought in the town. Many still go barefoot. No woman is ever seen wearing shoes or chappals.

Young Bhil boys and girls like to dress well. When they go to attend fairs, a large number of handkerchiefs, bottles of cheap scents and oils, small mirrors and combs are bought by them. Girls seem to have a fancy for those boys who keep their hair profusely oiled, tuck combs in the hair, tie colourful kerchiefs round the neck, carry small mirrors in their pockets and dress in bright new clothes. Of course talents for dancing, singing and talking well are additional qualities for making a favourable impression on girls. Both men and women are equally fond of jewellery. Besides, men pride themselves in being able to carry on their persons swords and muskets. The bow and arrow are gradually waning in popularity.

The Bhils are very fond of dancing and singing, drinking, hunting and visiting relatives. All their festivals are marked with rounds and rounds of dancing. It is not unusual to hear the sound of drums and music almost every night. They need only the slightest excuse for forming music and dance parties, and can do so at a very short notice. Men and women sing and dance together with great gust, without any feeling of embarrassment or shyness

Whether it is marriage, death or worship of a deity, drinking liquor is an essential feature. Even their deities seem to have great fondness for drinking. A Bhil appears somewhat disappointed if he realizes at the end of a ceremony that there is no liquor. People often quarrel under the spell of liquor, but after the quarrel has been resolved, the accused and the complainant would both drink together. In spite of Government legislation against distillation of liquor, most of it is locally brewed and distilled, sometimes right under the nose of a policeman.

The Bhils love to hunt and any opportunity to hunt rarely slips by them. But as the forest is becoming thin, the game has become scarce. At least on two occasions in a year, the whole community sets out to the forest in search of game. They generally get rabbits, foxes and wild cocks but when a cattle-lifter leopard is seen, there is great excitement, and people in large numbers armed with axes, sickles, swords, bows and arrows and some with muskets make a rush to the area.

Language

There is a marked dominance of Mewari, a dialect of Rajasthani, on the speech of the people of Pai. The dialect of Pai can be said to be a cross between Mewari and Vagri. Mewari is spoken in the plains of Udaipur, Bhilwara and Chittogarh Districts and is an Indo-Aryan language. Vagri is spoken in certain hilly areas of Udaipur, Dungarpur and Banswara Districts. It is a cross between Mewari and Gujarati, and is spoken by a large number of Bhils. In places near Gujarat, the greater influence of Gujarati is found. The influence of Gujarati is carried even further deep into Udaipur District in Rajasthan but as the distance increases, the influence becomes weaker. The Census Report of India, 1961, reports three tribal languages prevailing in the Rajasthan Hills Division—Bhili, Gilasia and Vagdi. It seems the language having

greater impact of Mewari has been termed Bhili, and the language showing greater impact of Gujarati has been termed Vagdi. The number of people speaking Gilasia is very small. If we accept the above criterion, we may classify the dialect of Pai as Bhili. In the districts of Dungarpur and Banswara which are under greater impact of Gujarati, the non-Bhil population also speak Vagdi. In these two Districts, by a rough estimate, respectively 62% and 68% of the population is Bhil. In the District of Udaipur, the Bhil population is about 11½%; though it is the single largest group in Udaipur District, it does not enjoy a decisive majority as in Dungarpur and Banswara Districts. From the history of migrations of some Bhil lineages in Pai, it appears that most of the people of Pai originally belonged to Vagdi speaking areas. Believing this to be true for other neighbouring villages too, Gujarati to some extent, and Vagdi to a larger extent may be believed to have filtered into Pai and its neighbouring villages. This explains the difference between the speech of the Bhils and that of the non-Bhils in Udaipur District. Though Vagdi has been modified under the influence of Mewari, it has not been completely assimilated in the latter and thus a new dialect has evolved. The speech of the Bhils and that of the non-Bhils, in the region in which Pai is situated, have many words in common.

The Past

The people of Pai believe that theirs is an old village; however none knows much about the past. Nara Katara, perhaps the best informed person of Pai, said, "People of Lakumbra, Sangalia, Dhoyat and Dhanyat clans of the Bhils were the earliest inhabitants of Pai. These clans were followed by the Rajputs of Sisodia branch, who were also known as Jagotra. The Vadera clan of the Bhils also arrived about the same time. Today, except the Vadera, none of those early inhabitants are found. The village temple of Bheru had been built by the joint efforts of the Vadera and the Sisodia." Besides the Vadera all other Bhil clans came to Pai less than 150 years ago.

The people of Pai remember their past with a mixed feeling of pride and misery. They enjoyed greater freedom with respect to the forests. Land was freely available, and there was little interference in their life by the government. Besides, things were cheaper. People could buy a shirt for eight annas and a 'dhoti' for two rupees. Cereals and ghee and other items also were very cheap. And there

was an abundance of everything. Pai, like other Bhil villages, also enjoyed the right to levy taxes on the wayfarers, passing through their village. They would sit for hours waiting for the people to pass through their village. The members of each 'phaia' sat in turn to collect this levy. Those who refused to pay the levy risked both their lives and properties, and those who paid would be escorted to the next village with assurance of their safety. This levy was stopped some time after Independence.

In the past, the majority of families carried on their heads bamboo, wood, wax, honey, and such other forest products, to Udaipur for selling. The Bhils did not like the treatment meted out to them in the city where they were often harassed and ridiculed.

Before the independence of the country, the king of Udaipur often came to Pai on hunting expeditions. It was obligatory for the headman of their village to make his people available for helping in hunting. It is recollected that though the king did not fail in his obligation of paying the Bhils, his subordinates were very greedy and cunning, and did not allow the payment to reach them. The Bhils of Pai were also employed as free labour for carrying the luggage of the visiting officials from their village to the next village. This they did not like as they would not be paid. Besides, they were required to collect grass and fuel for the use of the State and officials without any payment. They say the condition was even worse in villages which were under chiefs and not directly under the king.

At the turn of the 19th century, in 1899, the rains were scanty and hence the whole State was hit by a severe famine. When the famine was at its worst, cholera broke out and took a very high toll of human life. About 45% of the State population was lost in the famine. A few who survived the famine give a vivid account of those days. People who visited the town would by force be compelled to carry the corpses to the cremation ground.

In 1921 a kind of influenza, popularly known as Lal Bukhar, red fever, broke out in the State and caused many deaths. But this time, the loss was much less.

2

Getting a Living

Ecology plays an important role in shaping the life of a people, particularly their mode of livelihood. It is, however, ultimately the human beings who exploit the natural environment in order to sustain their lives. In a primitive society whose technological skills are few, a close impact of ecology on the economy is easily discernible. In other words, it may be said that the more technologically advanced a society is, the greater is the possibility of its taming nature to its benefit and of evolving a modern market economy.

In Pai, as in the Bhil villages in general, the environment has significantly influenced the economy. The dispersed nature of the habitations may be largely attributed to the physiography of the area characterized by hilly terrain and undulating land. The majority of the houses are built on hill tops or slopes, and the land lying around the houses is cultivated. The houses are built with the nearest available material, that is, bamboo, wood, earth and stone. Forest and agriculture have been two major sources of livelihood of the Bhils since the distant past. There have been, however changes in the mode and extent of their exploitation of their natural resources. At present the people of Pai and its surrounding areas are more or less settled agriculturists ; but not long ago shifting cultivation was very common among the Bhils (Erskine 1908 : 42-43). Besides, they enjoyed greater freedom in the exploitation of the forest. About one hundred years ago the forests of this region were beautiful and thickly wooded but injudicious felling of trees by forest contractors and burning of the forest for cultivation by the Bhils damaged the forests greatly (Erskine : 1908 : 52).

At present the cultivation of land is the single most important economic activity ; domestication of milk-giving animals and exploitation of the forest find a secondary place in the subsistence pattern.

Though farming occupies such an important place in the Bhil economy, the agricultural tools are primitive, and facility for irrigation is negligible. There is considerable dependence on rainfall. Wells are the secondary means of irrigation. In the year 1964-65 the office of the Community Development Block of Girva had on its record that out of the total cultivable land of Pai which was 805 acres, only fifteen acres were irrigated, and that the sixty-three acres which were under double cropping were all from the unirrigated land. These office records gave the total area of the village as 7468 acres, and provided detailed classification of 3966 acres as presented in the following table :

Table 5
Classification of land in Pai

<i>S. No.</i>	<i>Classification of land</i>	<i>Area (in acres)</i>
1.	Hills	1719
2.	Barren land	76
3.	Permanent pasture	729
4.	Not sown for rotation for the current year	41
5.	Not sown for rotation for 2 years	2
6.	Not sown for rotation for a long time	9
7.	Agricultural barren land	522
8.	Well-irrigated land	15
9.	Non-irrigated cultivated land	790
10.	Double cropping irrigated land	Nil
11.	Double cropping non-irrigated land	63
Total		3966

The Table above accounts for roughly half of the total land of the village. The unaccounted land which is 3492 acres may be treated as the land occupied by the forest, and used for habitation.

About forty years ago, there were only two wells in Pai, and these two were also not for irrigation but for drinking water. In the past people depended solely on the rains for irrigation. People,

however, claim that though there were no wells for irrigation and people used no manure, the crops used to be good. No authentic figures are available to confirm what people say, but it is possible that they got high yields due to the practice of shifting cultivation, the traces of which may still be seen in the practice of rotating fields for cultivation, and clearing of forest land for cultivation. Another reason why this impression of the past has persisted could be that the population was much less so that even what little was produced was perhaps sufficient for their requirements. Besides, people's habit of glorifying the past may also be partly responsible for this feeling. Table No. 6 will show how people are gradually becoming more and more aware of the advantages of irrigation, and hence sinking more and more wells in Pai. To some extent, the government policy of encouraging people to dig wells is also responsible for the rapid increase in the number of wells in recent years. Table No. 6 indicates that in Pai the total number of wells is twenty-five of which only seven had been sunk in the pre-Independence period while all the other wells were constructed in the fifties or sixties. In March 1968, thirteen wells were under construction. The wells are mostly worked with leather bags, locally known as 'chadas'. The number of Persian Wheels in Pai is only two. During the period between 1950 and 1968, many old wells were repaired and turned into *pucca* wells.

Besides wells, a streamlet that passes through the village is also used for irrigation by four or five farmers. This streamlet was bounded in 1965 with a small dam, and since then it has been possible to store the water which is partly used for irrigation and partly as drinking water for the village cattle. The dam was constructed at an approximate cost of twenty thousand rupees by the Community Development Block of Girva.

People have realized the importance of irrigation for crops, but nature puts obstacles in creating irrigational facilities. The hard rocky land, undulating land surface and hilly terrain make the task of well-digging very difficult and expensive. Many efforts to dig wells had to be abandoned as even after going twenty to thirty feet deep, the water level could not be reached. Near the streamlet, the water level is reached at twenty to twenty-five feet but some wells had to be dug up to sixty feet or even deeper to reach water.

The following Table shows the nature of wells in Pai, pattern of ownership and the year of construction :

1	2	3	4	5	6
16.	Hamli Pipli	1965	Pucca, for irrigation and drinking	Individual	Water drawn with leather bag
17.	Rata Kot	1963	Pucca, for irrigation and drinking	Individual	Water drawn with leather bag
18.	Hamli Pipli	1960	Pucca, for irrigation and drinking	Individual	Water drawn with leather bag
19.	Paba	1960	Pucca, for irrigation and drinking	Individual	Water drawn with leather bag ; made from govt. loan
20.	"	1960	Pucca, for irrigation and drinking	Individual	Water drawn with leather bag ; made from govt. loan
21.	"	1960	Pucca, for irrigation and drinking	Individual	Water drawn with leather bag ; made from govt. loan
22.	"	1963	Pucca, for irrigation and drinking	Individual	Water drawn with leather bag ; made from govt. loan
23.	Doda Kad	1960	Pucca, for irrigation and drinking	Individual	Water drawn with leather bag
24.	Nala	1956	Pucca, for irrigation and drinking	Individual	Water drawn with leather bag
25.	"	1953	Pucca, for irrigation and drinking	Individual	Water drawn with leather bag

Note :—In March 1968 13 wells were under construction.

The Land

Before 1947, in the State of Mewar there were four types of land tenure :

1. Jagir ;
2. Bhum ;
3. Sasan or Muafi ; and
4. Khalsa.

Jagir. Originally the term Jagir applied to land which was held as a reward for military service but later the term came to acquire a wider application, and grants of land for civil and political services or as a mark of political or personal favour also came to be known as Jagirs. This resulted in two kinds of Jagir-owners, the Rajput owners and the non-Rajput owners, such as the Mahajan and the Kayastha. The Jagir-owners or Jagirdars paid to the State treasury roughly one-sixth of the total income. Theoretically, the Jagir used to revert to the State at the death of a Jagirdar but a new lease would be granted to his successor. There were many ranks of Jagirdars, petty and big, and they virtually ruled in their Jagir territory without any interference from the State. They were, however, required to present themselves with *Nazrana*, the gift money, on certain specified occasions and serve with their contingents for a certain period every year. The non-Rajput Jagirdars were exempted from the payment of tribute but had to serve their chief when called upon, and were required to make gifts to the king.

Bhum. This tenure was generally held on the condition of watch and ward of the villages, guarding of roads, escorting of treasures, etc. The owners of *Bhum* tenure, the Bhumat and the Bhumia paid a quit rent in some cases and tribute in others. As long as they did not neglect their duties, they held their tenures permanently. They did not have to pay any fee at a succession. These were more or less like Jagirdars, only with somewhat less autonomy.

Muafi or Sasam. This kind of tenure was granted to persons of priestly castes and bards, such as the Brahman, the Gosain, the Charan and the Bhat. They neither paid tribute nor performed any particular service except in some special cases but miscellaneous taxes were sometimes recovered from them.

Khalsa. In this kind of tenure the cultivator was generally undisturbed in his possession of land so long as he paid the revenue

to the State coffers. The *Khalsa* tenure was directly under the control of the State. Under this system the government without any middleman collected the revenue. The rates of revenue varied in every district and even village for almost every crop and for particular castes. The real agriculturists had to surrender the major share of their produce whereas the Brahmans, the Rajputs, and the Mahajans were given more favourable treatment.

Pai was under the *Khalsa* tenure. At every harvesting, the clerk of the government would come to collect the revenue which used to be one-fourth of the total produce. Besides surrendering one-fourth of their produce, people were also required to render certain kinds of services, such as collection of fuel-wood and grass for the State's requirement, carrying the luggage of the touring officials from their village to the next village, and rendering assistance in the hunting expeditions of the king. All these services were rendered without any payment, and were known as *Beghar*, a form of forced labour.

In the past, exploitation of new land was comparatively easy. The person interested in exploring new land would be required to entertain the village headman with liquor and to pay him a small amount of money. In those days there was no dearth of land, and there was lot of forest area lying around Pai which could be cleared up for cultivation. Now the situation regarding the possibility of exploitation of new land has changed. Between the years 1961 and 1963 (when the major part of field-work for the present study was done) the exploitation of new land was not yet difficult but since 1964 gradually the situation has become somewhat unfavourable for the Bhils. At present a person interested in acquiring new land for cultivation can do so legally by paying the government in lump-sum an amount equal to seven years' revenue of that land. The land is still acquired through the headman of the village, who has to be entertained, though unofficially, with liquor and a sum of about twenty-five rupees. There is a general feeling among the people that as more and more people become interested in increasing their land-holdings, the headman and the Patwari have combined to take advantage of the situation and are making money. This suspicion has its basis in the fact that the receipts issued are for much smaller amounts than what were paid by the cultivators.

Land revenue is no longer taken in kind, but is collected in cash. It is realized at different rates depending upon the quality or category of land. On the rocky, unproductive land on which oil-seeds, pulses and grass are grown, the tax is between two annas (twelve paise) and six annas (thirty-seven paise) a Bigha per year. This kind of land is known as Rankad. The better quality land on which wheat, maize and rice are grown is known as Maja, and is taxed at Re. 1,25 paise per Bigha per year. Tax on the irrigated land ranges between two rupees and three rupees a Bigha for a year.

In 68% households of Pai the ownership of land was individual however about 26% of the households who owned individually also owned some of their fields, generally of poor quality, jointly. Only in 5% cases the units of consumption were independent but they persisted as common units of production.

The majority of the households of Pai (57.9%) had land-holdings between 6 and 10 Bighas while nearly one-fifth or 21.0% of the households had 5 Bighas or less, but there was none who was landless. Larger land-holdings, that is, those between 11 and 15 Bighas were held only by about 16.0% and very large holdings, that is, above 16 Bighas were held by an even smaller number of households, a little over five per cent. The ratio of good maize land to poor rocky land worked out roughly equal to 33 to 34.

Out of 19 households making the sample, in 13 cases (about 68%) ownership of land clearly rested in individual households, while in 5 cases (about 26%) most of the land belonged to individual households but one or two fields, generally of poor land, were held jointly by two or more households. Only in one case (about 5%), though units of consumption were separate, they persisted as a common unit of production.

Crops

Most people of Pai get only one crop in the year ; this is due to lack of irrigational facilities. According to official figures for the year 1964-65, out of the total cultivated land of 805 acres, only 63 acres of land was under double cropping. The main crop, that is sown during the rainy season, is maize which is also the staple food of the people. Besides maize, some other crops, such as millets, pulses, chillies, rice, and some oilseeds are grown during the rainy

season, but their exact proportion has not been estimated. The second crop or the winter crop includes wheat, barley and gram. The success of the second crop depends largely on winter rains, and the amount of irrigation one can afford. Even those who have wells cannot irrigate large areas of land, due to its undulating surface. Actually, people consider themselves lucky if in any year there are two crops, as the uncertainty of winter rains makes the prospects of a second crop very remote.

The people are able to produce mostly enough for their own requirements. Of the 19 households selected for intensive study, it was discovered that only two had to buy grains even in normal years; otherwise 17 (approximately 89.5%) produced sufficient for their requirements. In fact, the Bhils of Pai prided themselves on the fact that the crops in their village were better than in many other villages. Even when there were reports of crops failure in many parts of Girwa sub-district, according to the people of Pai, "It was not so bad here".

Agricultural Activities

The expected time for the arrival of monsoon is the third week of June. The ploughing of fields begins as soon as the first showers are received. Before the ploughing is commenced the manure lying near their houses is shifted by the people to important fields; the land newly brought under cultivation is not manured. When the ploughing session begins, the villagers work from the early hours of the morning till long after sunset, taking only a brief interval at noon to eat their lunch. The ploughing is done with the traditional Indian plough which is very light, being made from wood and only that end of the plough which digs the land is made from a piece of iron. It cuts hardly 4 to 5 inches deep into the soil due to its light weight and the character of the soil. There is no bar or taboo on the use of the plough by the women as found in some tribes of India; however, it is mostly the man who ploughs the field, his wife closely following him, planting the seeds. Among the Bhils the division of labour between the sexes, no doubt, is based on the general principle that heavier tasks are for the man and the lighter for the woman. It is, however, not unusual to notice a man performing lighter tasks which belong to the woman's domain, and vice versa.

For example, fetching water from the well and grinding wheat into flour are a woman's tasks but occasionally a man might be seen carrying water on his head and sitting at the hand-mill making flour. Similarly wood-cutting, digging of land, and ploughing may be done by the woman. When asked how he felt about it, Kanji Chapnia said, "Oh yes, cooking food, sitting at the hand-mill and carrying water are woman's tasks, but we do not mind doing them if necessity arises; when my wife is away, ill or in confinement and when my mother or sister or any such person is not around I naturally have to do everything." Not only during farming but on many other occasions also such interchange of roles is discernible. Besides, some activities are neutral, such as cattle-herding, or going to the forest to collect wood, bamboo, fruits and edible roots. Of course women's headloads of the items mentioned above will be smaller than those of men.

It is not uncommon for brothers to combine their efforts to plough their fields together. They take up the fields one by one moving over from one brother's to the other brother's land, not in the order of their seniority but just by turn. Though such cooperation among brothers is a normal kind of behaviour, it is not regarded obligatory, and not all brothers always behave in the same manner. Convenience is also an important consideration in such cooperative activities. If brothers are living quite apart, such cooperation will not be normally possible. It was noticed that when Vaka Katara's fields were being ploughed and sown, all his younger brothers and their wives worked together with him, except Havji Katara, who had moved over to Paba, a sector of Pai, about a mile and a half from Vaka's house. Moreover understanding and amicable relationship are also prior conditions for such cooperation. Dita Hirawat and his other brothers did not live very far from each other, but due to their tempers which flared up easily, they did not help each other much.

The Bhils do not believe in any inherent supernatural power of their tools for agriculture. However, they believe that god Ganesh, the deity of productivity, should be kept in good humour for ensuring abundant crops. In order to keep the god pleased, threads are tied to the tools, coconuts are broken, and some coconut pieces are offered to the fire. The concern for good crops is, however, shared by all and hence other deities, such as Bheru and Mata, are

also propitiated from time to time. There is one other deity, known as Khetlo or Khetpal, whose idol is kept by all lineages in one of their fields. The duties of Khetpal are those of watch and ward of the fields and for this at least one he-goat is offered to the deity once in a year. The specific functions of all these deities are described in the chapter on religion and witchcraft ; here it is sufficient to say that, with whatever function they are credited in general, their worship is believed to ensure prosperity to the devotees.

After the sowing operations are over the main things left to worry over are possible pests and unwanted vegetation in the fields. From time to time fields are weeded of the unwanted growth but the problem of pests is still to be solved. In 1962 the rains were adequate and the crop prospects appeared good. One morning, however, Kanji told us, "A black insect is eating the root of our maize". Later it was discovered that not only in Pai but in many surrounding villages also the black pest was causing great damage to the crop. Somehow, the State Agricultural Department came to know of it and they rushed a team of agricultural experts to the affected areas. The team halted at one of the tea-shops on the roadside of Pai and handed over to the shopkeeper a sprayer and some insecticide to be used on the affected crop, and left for the next village. The greedy shopkeeper realized that he could make some money if he sold the insecticide to the people, though he had been instructed to pass it on to people free of cost. The villagers bought some of it but did not know how to use it, in what quantity and with what precautions. There was, however, ample rainfall in three or four days following the putting of the insecticide, and people credited the elimination of the pest to the rains and not to the pesticide or agricultural experts. Of the experts they were critical for leaving them in quandary.

The Bhils show great patience by not eating the corn-cobs, which they love very much, till they have offered them to their deities. These offerings are made after the corn has ripened, and the grain starts hardening. This, no doubt, saves avoidable waste.

The harvesting of this crop takes place either in late September or in early October. As at sowing, at harvesting also brothers may combine their efforts. It is customary to provide food to the

workers and offer them tobacco or country cigarettes at sowing and at harvesting. Actually, it is not only at sowing or harvesting that the person benefiting from the help of his brothers or other fellow-men entertains them with food and tobacco, but on many other occasions also when people work for a person he is obliged to extend the same hospitality.

The winter crops in the Bhil country mainly depend on rains in October or November. Wheat, gram, and some varieties of pulses are grown. The sowing normally starts in November, and the harvesting is done in February or March, just before Holi, one of the important festivals of the Bhils and the Hindus alike. Both, during the rainy season and the winter, some vegetables are also grown but in a small quantity. The vegetables include ladies-finger, egg-plant, onions, garlic, ginger, potato, sweet potato, carrot, radish, gourd, and cucumber.

The Forest

The Bhils have been forest-dwellers since ancient times. It is undoubtedly true that in the past, they had been masters of these forests in which they lived, free from any external interventions in their affairs. But as time went on, their authority in the forest began to be questioned by the Rajput kings. In Mewar itself, out of three districts which were inhabited by the Bhils, two districts, Magra and Girwa, were clearly under the control of the Rajput rulers, but Kotda could not be won. Even in Girwa and Magra there were upsurges against the contemporary rulers, and the Bhils continued to realize taxes from the people passing through their territories. In Gavari, a popular Bhil masquerade, the theme of one of the sequences is an emperor's invasion on the Bhil king to take possession of the forest which results in much misery for the Bhils, but whose tough resistance ultimately makes the invader withdraw. This sequence points towards two facts, the eagerness of rulers to acquire sovereignty over the Bhil country, and the Bhils' anxiety to protect their forests. The Bhils' concern regarding the forest can be well appreciated in the light of the fact that in the past agricultural operations were simple and crude, and dependence on the forest for livelihood was very great. Erskine wrote in 1908 about the state of the forest with regard to the Bhils, ".....there

is no real conservancy, and the so-called reserves are kept chiefly for sporting purposes, and to certain extent for the supply of forage and fuel for State purposes. Elsewhere, the people are permitted to cut wood and graze their cattle at will, and the forest fires rage throughout the dry months of the year. Thirty-five or forty years ago, the hilly tracts in the southwest were beautifully wooded, but the Bhils and others have cleared the ground in every direction, and much mischief is being done almost daily. The Bhumia and Girasia chieftains ignorant of the real value of their forests, grant leases for a mere song to catechu and other contractors who came up from Gujarat and ruthlessly cut down trees. Reforestation is never thought of." (1908 : 52).

Though the Forest Department came into existence in this State long before Independence, it did not do much either in the direction of protecting the forest from being cleared up either by the Bhils for shifting cultivation or by the contractors. "A trained ranger was employed from 1880 to 1894, but was indifferently supported, and beyond the planting of trees along the sides of certain roads and starting of a nursery or two, little appears to have been done." (Erskine 1908 : 52).

Prior to the year 1947, the people of Pai cut bamboo, grass and wood and grazed cattle at their will ; they carried the loads of grass, wood and bamboo to Udaipur for sale. Their was neither any restriction nor taxes on any of the forest-produce, including wax, honey and edible and herbal roots. The Forest Post was established in Undri village during 1947 or 1948, and the Government began realizing taxes on the forest produce being taken to Udaipur for sale. But there was no rule which could restrain the Bhils from collecting the forest produce for their own use.

As mentioned earlier, in some of the Bhil areas, forest contractors carry their operations with the help of Bhil labour. The people often travel as far as forty miles to work for the contractors. Once a Bhil goes to work in the camp set up by the contractors—he stays away from his village for fifteen days to a month. After travelling so far to explore opportunities for jobs, these people generally return disappointed from these camps as the life there is hard and earnings are low. Besides, only menfolk go to work ; women always stay behind. A man makes between three to five rupees a

day by working for the contractor. But the drudgery of cooking, separation from wife and children, and the need and desire to be present in the village at a festival often cut short these adventures.

The years 1962 and 1963 brought tremendous worries to the lot of Pai. In September 1961 when I first visited the village I was struck by the fact that the villagers and their leaders often prided themselves over not having yielded to the pressure by government officials to become a participating member in the village Panchayat. The Girwa Community Development Block, in which this village was situated, had been covered by the scheme of Panchayati Raj. Under this scheme all developmental activities are planned by the Panchayat Samiti, District Level Council of the elected and co-opted members, and implemented at the village level through the village Panchayat. It was decided that Pai and Alsigarh Kotda, the two neighbouring villages should form a common Panchayat to implement the developmental programmes at the village level. The people of Pai, however, suspected this to be a trap which would do away with all their rights in the forest and bring on them a burden of new taxes. So they refused to be a party to this Panchayat and hence up to 1964, the Panchayat remained only a one-village affair, that is of Alsigarh Kotda.

To a great extent the people of Pai were right in believing that as soon as they chose to be the members of the Panchayat, new responsibilities will be forced upon them. Till now (1962), the people of Pai had succeeded in keeping away the officials of Forest Department either by bribing them or by scaring them. In 1962 when I went to meet the Divisional Forest Officer I found him sore towards the people of Pai. He said that the people of Pai were mistaken in believing that the forest near their village belonged to them. He made it quite clear that they might have succeeded in the past in keeping away the Forest Officials but this time his Department meant business. His Department had decided to auction the forest of Pai, and it was open to the people of Pai also if they also wanted to bid. The people of Pai and their leader realized the seriousness of the situation, and they now clearly saw that government could not be resisted much longer. Lots of thinking was done, the M.L.A. was consulted, and it was realized that the only course open to them was to form a coopera-

tive society and take the contract of the forest. The relations between Pai and Alsigarh Kotda had already been strained for a long time, and it was decided that, come what may, they would not allow the people of Alsigarh Kotda to enter their forest and if they forced an entry they would not let them return alive.

So in 1962 the Cooperative Society was formed. In all eighty shares, of the value of eleven rupees each, had been sold, and the amount was deposited in a bank. But when the time for taking the contract of the forest came, the leaders of Pai did not show enough courage. It was argued that they would not be able to trade and maintain accounts. The contract was, therefore, sold out to a contractor for Rs. 80,000. It was alleged by some of the villagers that their leaders had been bought by the contractors, and that they let the contractors take the contract at the cost of their own village. Although the contract related only to Number One and Number Two forests of Pai, the contractor got cleared Number Three forest also, and in order to make the maximum profit did not spare any tree or bamboo, green or dry. Actually, the village had evolved a code regarding the exploitation of the forest: the green and the not-full-grown trees would not be cut, and a certain portion of the forest would not be touched at all. The contractors and the government did not show any regard for the village code.

About 1966 or so, a contract for collecting royalty on forest produce was taken by the members of the Cooperative Society. The terms of the contract were that half of the money collected in the form of royalty would remain with the Society and the remaining half would go to the government. This contract brought them a profit of about Rs. 500 which was deposited in the bank. In 1967 again the forests of Pai were auctioned for Rs. 22,000.

In all these contracts the forests were worked out mostly by the Bhils of Pai and other neighbouring villages. Since these bamboo camps were situated close to their habitation, very few went to work at the camps in distant places. Though these camps offered the people of Pai job opportunities in their own village, they also had certain adverse effects on the economy of Pai. Some important consequences may be mentioned:

1. Much of the forest is now on the verge of exhaustion and, hence, it is only with great difficulty that people of Pai are able to fulfil their own requirements of fuel, grass and bamboo.

2. The people's confidence in village leadership has been shattered. They have begun to entertain doubts regarding the integrity and effectiveness of their leaders.

3. Till some time ago the people felt free to clear any strip of forest for cultivation, and there was no serious congestion of land ; but now in the changed situation they feel the pinch.

Cattle, Poultry and Other Animals

Since the Bhils are now by and large settled agriculturists, keeping cattle is a common practice. The bullock is a prime necessity in the agricultural operations of Pai. Its sole use is for ploughing. Cow, buffalo, and goat are the milk-giving animals ; their dung is also greatly valued as manure and may be used as fuel. The Bhils do not share the general Hindu belief in the sacredness of cow, but keep the animal for sheer economic utility. At the festival of Diwali, all the cattle are painted with a colour locally known as Hadamchi, and a ritual thread is tied around their necks. This is believed to bring prosperity in the matter of livestock.

There is not much demand for milk but ghee or purified butter has a good market. Goat's milk being poor in fat content is generally not turned into ghee but is consumed by the people. It is considered particularly good for children.

He-buffalo and he-goat are commonly bought for offering to the village deities, and the flesh is eaten with great relish. Besides being used as sacrificial animals, they are also killed on the occasions of big feasts.

Fowls are also often sacrificed as an alternative to he-goats. Eggs are believed to generate great heat, and hence not eaten during the hot weather, but during winter they are eaten or sold away. The price of an egg in Pai is normally ten paise which is less than half of what one has to pay in the town. Sheep are kept for wool which is sold in Udaipur. The Bhils are not acquainted with the art of weaving.

The animals are mostly of poor quality and inferior breed. The bullocks look weak and emaciated, and so do other animals. The milk-yield is low ; a cow gives hardly one seer of milk in a day, while the capacity of a buffalo ranges between two to four seers.

Distillation

Liquor has an important place in the life way of the Bhils. There is no social occasion of any significance when there is no drinking. They often laugh at the Brahman and the Bania who themselves refrain from drinking and also preach against it. There does not seem to be any considerable change in the drinking behaviour of the Bhils. What Erskine wrote in 1908 seems to be more or less applicable even today : "The principal failing of the tribe is an inordinate thirst for liquor, which is very much in evidence on all occasions, such as births, betrothals, marriages, deaths, festivals and panchayats. Their quarrels begin and end in drinking bouts, no feud can be stanchd, no crime forgiven but at a general feast. The common and popular fine for every offence is more liquor to protract their riotous enjoyment which sometimes continues for days." (1908 : 231).

Sometimes, however, under the impact of the Jains and the Brahmans a vow of abstinence may be taken but the temptation to drink is so strong that such vows are often broken. One interesting argument advanced in support of distilling liquor is that if the government does not want people to drink why does it allow the sale of Mahua, and why is it that even Rajputs who are so wealthy and so high in social status also enjoy liquor ? The Bhils often discuss among themselves the merits and demerits of drinking. Drinking makes a man short-tempered and quarrelsome, but it also fosters love and fellow-feeling among people. We often hear people say, "We drink to increase the feeling of love among ourselves. If I drink I lose all fear and then I can face anybody." The village people find the liquor sold at licenced shops expensive and poor in quality ; hence they mostly like to make their own liquor. As distilling of liquor without a licence is legally an offence, it is generally done secretly. Up to 1962 Pai had remained completely free from check raids by the Excise Department personnel, although some neighbouring villages had been raided by them. The residents of Pai credited this immunity to the unity of the village and the far-sightedness of their leaders. The village was, however, raided in 1963 and many persons were rounded up with their bottles and distilling equipment. All were set free after being fined or escaped with the help of bribes. This raid has not affected the distillation of liquor except that now it is carried on with greater precautions.

Liquor is made from Mahua flowers which are collected by boys and girls in large numbers during the summers. They go around 10 o'clock at night to the forest site where there are a large number of Mahua trees. They all sleep in the forest and get up the next day long before sun-rise, and collect the flowers that drop from the trees. Some also import these flowers from Udaipur. In 1962 Mahua flowers in Udaipur sold at Rs. 30 a maund, but in 1967-68 prices had almost doubled. In 1962 Mahua liquor sold in the village at one to two rupees per bottle whereas in 1967-68 it sold for three to four rupees per bottle. The licenced shopkeepers sold similar stuff for eight rupees a bottle.

Distillation of liquor being done secretly, it is somewhat difficult to know the exact number of people who are engaged in distillation at any particular time. Besides, the distillation is no one's sole occupation. However, some distill more frequently than others. When a person is in need of liquor he approaches one of those who, he knows, commonly distills it. Even if liquor is not available there he may at least get a clue from this man where it would be available on that particular day. It is, however, customary to have one's own distilling plant when large quantities are required. During marriages and festivals distilling is done on a large scale, as some pots of liquor would be consumed on these occasions. It generally happens that when a person has his own distillation plant he often has some extra liquor which he can sell to those who need it. Though it is difficult to estimate how much the activity of distillation of liquor contributes to the economy of individual households. It is more than clear that a considerable number of man-hours which could be put to productive use and a considerable amount of their earnings are spent on liquor.

House Construction

A person having made up his mind to have a house of his own starts collecting the material required for its construction, such as bamboo, wooden poles, tiles, etc. In this he is also helped by his brothers. Two kinds of house construction are common in Pai : one having bamboo walls and the other having mud and stone walls. The materials used in modern constructions, such as cement, lime, and steel girder are not yet popular. Bamboo and wood are brought from the forest lying around Pai.

After the preliminary preparations are over, one evening the person desirous to build a house pays a visit to the temple of Bheru in the village. The Bheru, through his medium, the Bhopa, tells him whether the site chosen is free from or is being haunted by some evil spirit. After the site is approved he tells the Bhopa, the priest, who is in a state of trance about his requirements of accommodation. The specifications suggested by him are generally accepted by the Bhopa with slight modifications, and he is told on which day he should start the work. The deity (speaking through the Bhopa) also assures him that it will again show up at the chosen site on the day when the foundation of the house is laid. On the appointed day the builder of the house (man building the house) reaches the proposed site along with certain offerings, such as vermilion, rice, jaggery, coconut, some thread and a silver coin. On this occasion he invites the members of his new neighbourhood. The audience present pray to Bheru to enter the body of the Bhopa. Meanwhile a part of the offerings is put into fire; this normally gets the Bhopa into a trance. The Bhopa, under divine possession, picks up one end of a rope and asks somebody to hold the other end. They then proceed to draw the outline of the house. The foundation for the house is dug while the Bhopa is still in a trance. A small flat piece of stone is marked with vermilion, and some thread is tied around it. This piece of stone, along with a silver coin, is planted at the foundation. During all these activities the people around have the palms of their hands placed on each other's; this symbolizes that the foundation was laid in their presence. The remaining part of the offerings is dumped on top of the flat stone and the silver coin. Everybody's forehead is marked with vermilion, and a thread is tied round the right wrist. This marks the conclusion of the foundation laying ceremony; the actual construction can begin from the following day.

There is no specialization of craft in Pai, and everyone does every kind of work. Though there is a lack of specialization of crafts, some persons are recognized as skilled in masonry, and some others in wood-work. An ordinary bamboo house may be completed by a person with the help of his brothers and father's brothers but construction of a house with stone and mud walls needs the help of some persons skilled in masonry and wood-work who may not belong to his kin group. In Pai there are eight persons who are recognized as skilled builders of houses. Seven of these are Bhils belonging to vari-

ous *gotras*, while one belongs to the caste of Nath or Sadhus. Here it should be made clear that though these eight men enjoy a reputation as skilled masons, with the exception of one person of the Nath caste, all depend for their living mainly on agriculture, domestication of animals and on what the forest can provide. The work of masonry brings them an additional income, but it is not a regular source. The persons working as masons are paid two rupees a day, and are also provided with country cigarettes during the work, and liquor after the day's work is over. Similarly, working in wood is neither the traditional occupation nor a whole-time job for any one. Jiva Khokhria, a Bhil, has a good reputation in wood-work, but others also manage to do it.

A person may also give a contract for a part of the house construction. The contract is generally given for masonry. These contractors are not outsiders, but among the Bhils themselves. The informal nature of such contracts will be evident from the following instance : Kanji Chapnia gave a contract for the masonry work of his house to some persons belonging to his own village for one hundred rupees. While the construction was still going on, the contractors brought it to his notice that the work being done by them was worth more than a hundred rupees, and hence the contract would need to be revised. As Kanji himself was in agreement with what his contractors told him, the contract was revised and the amount was raised to one hundred and fifty rupees. In some cases when the two sides cannot come to terms, a third party intervention is sought. The contractors may also say that they would like the contract to be terminated and that they should be paid wages instead.

After the house is completed, the owner pays a visit to the temple of Bheru to find out the auspicious day for moving into the new house. Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday are believed to be auspicious days for moving into a new house ; hence one of these days is suggested to him. The early hours of the morning are regarded as suitable for shifting ; the time when the first rays of the sun are to be seen, is preferred most. The first thing with which a family moves into the new house is a basketful of maize. Soon after their entering the house, the wife is required to go to the well and bring water in a pitcher on her head. To begin with, they make only a temporary hearth by arranging some stones ; the permanent hearth is made after one year. On their first evening in the new house, they

invite their neighbours to supper and also offer incense to god Ganesh.

Tile-making

The process of tile-making is such that if there are eight to ten persons working simultaneously, it is done efficiently. Suitable soil for making tiles is available about two miles from the main habitat. The whole process of tile-making is done in four stages : digging of soil, making a good plaster out of the soil, moulding the plaster into tiles, and finally baking these tiles. At the site where tiles are made a number of groups may be seen working, through different stages. Each unit for making tiles varies in size between eight to fifteen persons. The persons forming these units are generally neighbours, brothers or cousins. The workers are not paid in cash or kind ; the work is done on a reciprocal basis, "You work for me and I work for you". It is the duty of the person for whom the tiles are being made to provide the workers with country cigarettes during the day and food and some liquor after the day's work is over. It was, however, observed once that in a unit of workers making tiles for Kanji, there were in all eleven men but only nine ate their evening meal at Kanji's place; two persons left without eating. He even offered them some flour to take home but his offer was gently declined. I was later told that this was not due to any ill-feeling but was just a friendly gesture to lessen his burden.

Roadwork

Work as labourers in road building operations is a comparatively recent phenomenon. It was about thirty years ago that people began to be employed for the first time as road-builders. The first experience was, however, not very good, as the contractor wound up his operations without paying them their dues. But since those days, a new avenue for making money has been opened to the Bhils of this region. With the exception of a few years now, there is some work to be done for three to six months in a year. All able-bodied men and women, boys and girls now work on the road when they are not busy with their agricultural activities. In order to improve the road, such as by cutting high slopes to size and putting new bridges, the Public Works Department of the State has always some work for these people. The Bhils are employed mostly as labourers while super-

visory and skilled jobs are entrusted to outsiders. So far as the wages are concerned, they have varied from time to time. Not to talk of the past when it used to be six annas a day for a woman and eight annas for a man, the wages now vary between fourteen annas (88 paise) and one rupee eight annas (1.50 paise). If it is relief work during a drought, the wages are low but in normal times they are more.

The contractors and government officials often complain that the Bhils are not very hardworking. This seems to be only partially true. Under inspiring leadership they work hard and with efficiency but under poor leadership they often slow down. Actually, it is their habit to work quite hard for a while and then take a recess. Besides, it is found that prior to big festivals the Bhils are very keen to get employment but as a festival arrives they quit work whatever the other party may offer them. While they work they also sing to give rhythm to their work. Intermittently men also take off from work to smoke and relax. The girls are often disturbed at the sight of fairymerchants who sell bangles, mirrors, handkerchiefs, brass and silver ornaments and such other things. The young and unmarried girls generally hand over their earnings to their parents but if they spend a part of their earnings on their fancies and needs they are not criticized or treated harshly.

Occasional Work

The people of Pai also occasionally make money from kinds of work which do not yet show a patterning. Such work may include construction of a house for an outsider, digging of wells, collecting grass for a contractor, and bringing water for the shopkeepers. Payment for such occasional work is not fixed, and there is plenty of scope on either side for higgling and bargaining. Generally, when outsiders and some people of the village are involved, negotiations take place through the village headman. In 1961, when the investigator expressed his desire to have a house of his own the village headman offered to negotiate on his behalf with some contractors who were all Bhils. Actually, Nara Katara, the headman, already had some person in his mind; so he called them up to discuss the terms of the contract. They asked for three hundred rupees but after some discussion the bargain was made at rupees 160. When the house was still being made, one of the five persons who had taken the con-

tract told me that they were finding it somewhat difficult to complete the house within the stipulated amount. He wanted ten-rupee gift to each contractor when the work was complete. I agreed. Similarly, when an outsider took a contract in Pai to supply grass to the government he hired labourers through the village headman. It is believed that the headman gets some kind of a commission for arbitrating between his people and outsiders. The headman is critical of his people if they do not negotiate for jobs and contracts through him. His complaint is : "These people are monkeys. They do not appreciate my efforts. When I can get them work in the village, why should they go such a distance to get work " For occasional works like getting water for some shopkeeper or carrying luggage for a trader or an official there is no surety of payment. At heart, they despise those who take work from them without paying them or who pay them inadequately. Deva Katara once said, "See, that Shyam Lal will ask me to bring two pots of water for him and will pay me nothing but some Bhajia (a kind of snack)." One other person said, "This Bania will make me carry his goods to the bus stand but won't pay me a single paisa. He will just give me a cigarette, that's all." They generally do not refuse to work for these people simply because they would not like to annoy them. Some people may also be heard saying, "Oh that man talks nicely to me ; I work for love, I cannot refuse." It is, however, realized that there was more exploitation in the past than there is now. Now they can refuse without fearing a prosecution. But their own people, the Bhils, are very fair in payment. Whether they work at digging a well or putting a small bridge or constructing a house, they get a fair payment besides being supplied with country cigarettes, food, and occasionally some liquor. When Nara Katara got a small dam made on contract, not only did he pay Rs. 400 to his contractors but also looked to their personal convenience and comforts by paying them punctually and adequately, and providing them with generous hospitality, such as cigarettes and, at the top of all, showed a sympathetic attitude towards the contractors.

In 1965 one of the Bhils of Pai installed an oil-presser near his house and since then all the people of Pai bring their oilseeds to him for being pressed to get oil. Formerly, they had to go to Nai, a village about 12 miles from Pai for this work. As this man does his job efficiently and takes only a reasonable profit, people from neigh-

bouring villages have also begun to come to him with their oilseeds. During the season he is able to make about two rupees a day in addition to what he gets from his fields.

Trade and Money-lending

There are in all ten shops in Pai. The first shop was established about fifty years ago and all the rest during the last thirty years or so. The shops of Pai keep a very limited stock of things and hence people have to depend, for a large number of their requirements, on the traders of Nai and Udaipur. Since the place has now become accessible to the outside world because of bus service, many shopkeepers of Nai have opened shops in Pai in recent years. Many of these shopkeepers, however, leave the village when they find that the run of business is low and unprofitable.

The shopkeepers have come to live in Pai under varying circumstances. For instance, a Brahman shopkeeper who has been in Pai since 1952-53 had come with the intention of running a private school to coach Bhil boys. But soon, to his dismay, he realized that it was practically impossible to make money in a tribal village through teaching. So he turned towards business and began selling pop corn, parched gram and millets, and cigarettes and tobacco to those who worked on the road and to passengers travelling by bus through Pai. He has been greatly helped by the *de facto* headman of Pai who initially also lent him money to run the business. In Pai many people owe him money ; he too owes money to a few.

Three other shopkeepers of Pai formerly used to come to Pai to sell vegetables but now two of them run shops and one has a tea-shop. The first two are Muslim ; they are regarded as poor shopkeepers by the villagers. The third one is a Bhoi, the caste of vegetable sellers. Although he makes his living mainly by selling tea and snacks to bus passengers and villagers, he also sells items, such as salt, oil, tobacco, cigarettes, etc. The Bhoi and the Brahman shopkeepers are jealous of each other, and do not get along well ; on a few occasions they have beaten each other. Besides the villagers have also thrashed them for their misbehaviour. These shopkeepers are particularly afraid of the village headman by whose mercy they believe they are staying in Pai.

Four Mahajans—money-lenders and traders—have their shops in Pai, out of which three are relatively recent. They find it advantageous to have establishments of their own in Pai though they stay here only when the business is brisk. The Bhils have more or less permanent and traditional ties with Mahajans for trade and credit. Some have them with these Mahajans while some others have their Mahajans in Nai. At the death of a Mahajan his customers are equally divided among his male heirs and similarly after his father's death a Bhil remains attached to his Mahajan. The ties between a Bhil and his Mahajan have strengthened as the latter has begun to play a ritual role in the former's life. When a Bhil boy gets married it is his Mahajan who provides all the ceremonial dresses, items such as coconuts, scent-sticks, and money required to pay the bride-price. The prices of all these items are debited to the bridegroom's account and gradually realized with interest. So long as a person seems to have capacity to pay back a Mahajan never refuses credit; it is his effort to keep his customers tied to him for ever by extending them credit in cash and kind. When Vaka Katara's younger brother, Bhera Katara married, each of his brothers gave forty rupees which came to Rs. 200; even then Bhera had to borrow three hundred rupees from the Mahajan.

The following table shows the extent of indebtedness in Pai :

Table 10
Indebtedness

<i>Extent of indebtedness (in rupees)</i>	<i>Approximate % of the sample</i>
0	5.36
100-300	31.58
301-600	52.63
601-900	5.36
901 and above	5.36

When a man wants to take a loan he approaches the Mahajan with one or two of his friends. The Mahajan takes the signature of the prospective debtor and his friends in his account book before handing him over the money. The interest on a loan or credit purchases is charged at the rate of 25% per annum. In cash loans, however, an amount equal to 6½% is deducted from the original

amount but no entry regarding that is made in the account book. This means if a person asks for a loan of one hundred rupees, he gets only ninety-three rupees and seventy-five paise. The Mahajan usually comes during the harvest and also on some other occasions to realize his loan and interest. His tactics, however, are such that at the most only interest is realized and the amount of loan stands as it is or may even accumulate in the event of crop failure or death of cattle. As Kanji said, "When I give him wheat or maize he credits in my account the lowest possible price but when I buy from him he charges a much exaggerated price."

In 1962, the people of Pai took some drastic measures against the cunning ways of Mahajans by discontinuing all trade activities and by non-payment of loans. In the beginning, the Mahajans took it lightly but when one year passed they were alarmed. They tried to persuade the Bhils to give up these measures but with no success. When all indirect and informal negotiations failed all of them felt compelled to come to Pai to straighten out matters. The Bhils and their leaders showed stiffness. The tension mounted high while people from both sides sat around to discuss. The Bhils wanted that all the debts should be treated as half paid, and the rate of interest should be reduced; some even went to the extent of demanding that all old debts should now be written off completely as the Mahajans had already got much more than their due. The headman said, "You should not think that only you can get our sons married. If we want we can raise enough funds among ourselves. We can even ask for government's help in this matter." Many more allegations were made against the Mahajans by name, as ".....Mahajan took away my buffalo for my inability to return only three seers of corn," or "I have given you three tins of ghee (costing about Rs. 200) but my debt of two hundred rupees still remains unpaid."

The Mahajans played cool and apparently conceded many of their customers' demands.

The Mahajans have been able to thrive among the Bhils mainly due to their readiness to give loans for both productive and unproductive purposes. As one Mahajan expressed it, "We would never like these cooperative societies to succeed, for when they succeed we will have to roll up our beds." So far as the government is concerned its policies of giving loans are inflexible. It takes too long

to get a government loan and one has to depend on the mercy of many persons—the headman, the Village Level Worker and higher authorities. And when a loan matures the government can hardly wait or give reasonable time to the debtors to pay it back. About ten years ago many people got loans ranging between one hundred rupees and five hundred rupees to improve their farms, but these loans matured at a time when people had no money. Actually these loans had also been utilized mostly for buying grains as crops were very poor that year. Most of the people were able to pay off their loans only after borrowing from their Mahajans. Vaka reported, "We felt so bad about paying back these loans that now we would never take any loan from the government."

A mention should be made here of two Bhils of Pai who also ran shops in Pai (one of them died in 1965). In comparison to other shop-keepers these two shop-keepers keep very few items and their supply is also limited. Besides, these two persons run shops only on part-time basis, and they continue in their vocation of agriculture.

Internal Money-lending

The need for money may arise at any moment—to pay the revenue, to arrange and celebrate a marriage, to perform rituals and ceremonies, to pay a fine, to buy grains, and so on and so forth. Normally, money is borrowed from the Mahajan but sometimes a person may also borrow from his neighbour, acquaintance, friend or kin. Such borrowing is informal and does not require the parties concerned to enter into a written agreement. The purpose of such lending is to help one of "our men". The loan is generally interest-free, and if at all, only a nominal interest is charged on it. However, it must be kept in mind that there are not many people among the Bhils in Pai who can float loans of any considerable amount. It is no doubt a matter of prestige for a Bhil to be able to advance loans and help his fellowmen. A creditor normally does not bother the debtor to pay back his loan unless he is in genuine need. But if the creditor is in genuine need, the debtor is thought to be duty-bound to return his money, and failure on his part may spoil the relations between the two. These loans may vary between a few annas to a hundred rupees or so.

3

Structural Units

An analysis of the functions and the inter-relations of various structural units would be necessary for our understanding of the Bhils' social structure. The process through which these units come into being and/or are maintained, the bases for their formation, their typical forms and the roles they play in the maintenance of the overall structure of the Bhil society, mainly form the subject matter of this chapter.

The Bhils are divided into several exogamous clans which are known as Got. Most of the clans have their own goddess but some have a common goddess, and this fact is believed to point to their common origin. The members of a clan believe themselves to be the descendants of a common ancestor of the remote past, and are conscious of a sort of brotherhood. But for having a common goddess and a common name for identification, the members of a clan have hardly anything in common.

A clan among the Bhils consists of several loose clusters of lineages dispersed over a wide area. Segments of numerous clans may be found distributed over many villages but more often in a village members of one clan form the majority while those of other clans are in relatively smaller numbers. In certain areas a large concentration of particular clans is found ; these areas are believed to be the original homes of these clans ; for example, Bilak and Nathara ki Pal which have greater concentration of the Ayari and the Katara clans respectively are believed to be the original homes of the particular clans in this region.

It is difficult to ascertain the exact number of the Bhil clans as the number varies from village to village, region to region, and province to province. Venkatachar mentions the names of one hundred and twenty-two clans in the Central Indian Agency Area and Vanikar lists the names of sixty-four clans in Dohad and Jhalod talukas (quoted by Nath 1960 : 77-78). Erskine, writing about the distribution of various clans of the Bhils in different parts of Rajputana, mentions the presence of sixteen clans in Mewar Hill Tracts, twenty-six in the State of Dungarpur, thirty-seven in the State of Partabgarh and fifty-seven in the State of Jodhpur. He summarizes his information on Bhil clans in these words : The tribe is subdivided into a large number of clans, some based on reputed common descent, and others huddled together as a group by simple contiguity of habitation or by bending together of neighbours for plunder or self-defence...Some call themselves 'ujla' or pure Bhils but they are few in numbers ; others claim descent from almost every clan of Rajput and prefix the name thereof, e.g., Bhati, Chauhan, Gahlot, Makwana, Parmar, Rathore and Solanki." (1908 : 229).

There is no ordering of the Bhil clans. They are all of the same status, and the members of the different clans are free to marry each other except where a union is considered incestuous due to already existing relationship ; to be specific, ideally a person cannot marry into one's mother's brother's clan, father's mother's clan, and father's father's mother's clan.

Members of the following twenty-one clans are represented in Pai. The Table on page 55 gives a clanwise distribution of the Bhils of the village.

When a cross-section of the people of the village was asked to give its opinion on the origin and the functions of the Bhil clans, the following comments were received :

"Members of a clan are Bhai Bhagia (brothers and agnates)".

"Had all people been of the same clan, marriages would not have been possible. Clan system is very old".

"Clan system is very old. God himself created this system to regulate marriages".

Table 1
Sectorwise distribution of clans

S. No.	Name of the clan	Name of sector and sub-sector										Total		
		Gavadi	Nichta	Nalwat	Vadla	Hamti	Rata	Devda-	Neta	Mual	Kemri		Doda-	Paba
						Pipli	Kot	kad					kad	
		Number of domestic groups												
1.	Katara	1	12	7	23	3	8	3	1	6	—	1	71	
2.	Kharadi	2	—	6	—	12	—	—	2	1	—	1	24	
3.	Pargi	—	3	—	—	—	—	1	9	3	1	7	21	
4.	Bhangora	2	—	2	8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	14	
5.	Hirawat	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	5	—	1	10	
6.	Khokhria	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	2	—	4	8	
7.	Relath	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	2	7	
8.	Vadera	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6	
9.	Bodar	2	2	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6	
10.	Chhappnia	1	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	5	
11.	Damar	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	—	4	
12.	Ayari	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	2	
13.	Dhalovia	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	2	
14.	Kharwad	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	2	
15.	Sokaro	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	2	
16.	Dama	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	
17.	Sanio	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	
18.	Dungri	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	
19.	Tarvad	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	
20.	Kalava	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	
21.	Kapayo	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	
	Total	13	21	17	34	15	9	6	20	28	3	18	191	

"A clan is like a caste, it facilitates marriage. In the beginning all were one. The caste of drum-beaters gave us different names".

"Members of the different clans had one male ancestor but different mothers".

"In the beginning there was only one man and one woman. Their children came to be known after the jobs they took up".

"The names of different clans are after different places from where the people have come".

Besides these statements, the following two versions of the story of the origin of clans were reported :

1. In the beginning of human life there were some men and some women who lived as brothers and sisters of each other. God having been faced with the problem of perpetuating mankind wanted these early men and women to marry each other but they would not. So he devised a way. He placed at one place a great variety of implements and asked each of the males to pick up one implement of his choice. Each individual came to be known after the implement he picked up. And these names of implements became the clan names of the descendants of the original choosers. For example, a person who picked up a Katar or dagger came to be known as Katara, while another who chose a Karadi, *i.e.*, an axe, came to be known as Kharadi, and so on. A person who failed to get hold of any implement came to be known as a Bodar, *i.e.*, a weak man.

2. At a ceremony arranged to worship Mata, the mother goddess, a buffalo was earmarked for sacrifice. The person who was assigned the task of killing the buffalo failed to kill it in a single stroke and hence came to be known as Bodar, which means a weak man. After the ceremony concluded, each devotee took away something or the other that lay near the Mata and came to be known after that thing; later on the names of these things became clan names of their descendants.

These statements and stories may be regarded as people's own explanations of the segmentation in the Bhil society. Reference to caste or caste-like characteristics reflects their awareness of the Hindu caste system, but the Hindu castes and the Bhil clans are not exactly comparable. Roughly speaking, caste is an endogamous group res-

tricting the area of interaction of its members in matters of marriage, acceptance of food and other services and in the choice of occupation. It also prescribes a status, high or low, in relation to other castes. The clans on the other hand are of equal status and, far from acting as limits for the choice of marriage partners, they are exogamous groups which forbid marriage within themselves. There are no clan rules imposing any kind of restrictions regarding the acceptance of food from other clans. As exogamous units, the clans are similar in functions to the Hindu Gotra so far as regulation of marriage is concerned.

In our data on Pai, there is some positive evidence to suggest that at least some clan names have been derived from the names of places; Chhapania for instance seems to have been derived from the village Chhapan, and Sania from the village of Sania. Though stories and other statements apparently explain the origin of some clans, they do not take account of many others. There is reason to believe that the number of clans has multiplied due to the process of fission. Many clans are constantly going through this process, and the result is the emergence of new clans. The process is, however, so long that it is almost impossible for an outsider to observe it in a satisfactory manner. That some clans are a result of the process of fission may be concluded from the statements of some Bhils themselves and from the fact that some clans worship a common deity and, ideally, avoid inter-marriage. In the village under study, the Sania clan is believed to have emerged from the Kharadi clan, the Chhapania from the Pargi, and the Hirawat from the Katara clan. Each of these derived clans worships the same goddess as its parent clan, and claims to avoid intermarriage with the latter. However, some cases of marriages between the members of a clan and a sub-clan have been recorded; and it is seen that practically for all purposes a sub-clan acts as an independent unit in its own right.

Needless to say, the migration of a section of a clan does not always lead to fission in a clan. There are two lineages of the Kharadi clan in Pai. They have immigrated to Pai from two different villages, Chenavada and Dhemli, but they have not acquired new clan names as Chhapania and Sania have.

Lineage

A smaller unilinear unit is lineage—the patrilineage, to be precise, of varying generation depth. Its members are genealogically

Table 2
Lineagewise distribution of clans

<i>S. No.</i>	<i>Name of the clan</i>	<i>No. of families</i>	<i>No. of people</i>	<i>No. of lineages</i>	<i>No. of sublineages</i>
1.	Katara	71	407	1	3
2.	Kharadi	24	130	2	2
3.	Pargi	21	118	1	2
4.	Bhangora	14	79	1	2
5.	Hirawat	10	63	1	2
6.	Khokhria	8	41	1	2
7.	Relath	7	34	1	—
8.	Vadera	6	33	1	2
9.	Bodar	6	27	1	—
10.	Chhapnia	5	30	1	—
11.	Damar	4	25	1	—
12.	Dhalovia	2	9	1	—
13.	Sokaro	2	9	1	—
14.	Dama	2	9	1	—
15.	Kharwad	2	8	1	—
16.	Ayari	2	6	1	—
17.	Kalava	1	7	1	—
18.	Tarwad	1	6	1	—
19.	Dungri	1	5	1	—
20.	Sanio	1	3	1	—
21.	Kapayo	1	2	1	—
	Total	191	1051	22	

related and describe themselves as 'of one house' ; and so long as at least a few members can trace the relationships of all the living members up to a common ancestor, its identification remains. A lineage is characterised by active cooperation among its members although it has no common name to bind its members. It is identified as a functioning group, and is generally characterised by active cooperation within the village. When sublineages emerge, the lineage may be only formally recognised as 'one house'. It is actually on the way to losing its identity in the process of fission. When some members of a lineage disperse through migrations, beyond the first or second degree of collaterality, it becomes difficult to retain the lineal ties. Among the Bhils, the size of such a unilinear group whose members can trace genealogical relationships remains small. The factors responsible for this seem to be : relatively short life span, infant mortality, relative infertility of women, migrations ; and, in the absence of documented genealogies, failure to retain the memory of genealogical links, fission is an indispensable feature of Bhil lineages.

There is no tradition among the Bhils of documenting the genealogies as Hindus in this region do ; the latter have a caste of genealogists (Bhat) whose job is to maintain the records of family trees. Among the Bhils, rarely does anyone remember the names of people of two generations above him. Even when some people claim that they are genealogically related, most of them cannot establish it. In such instances people often say, "We are of the same house." After some lapse of time such a situation is bound to lead to fission. The process of fission is responsible for shrinking the size of a lineage as well as for the creation of new lineages. The fission in a lineage may be precipitated because of famine, drought and epidemic conditions in a particular place leading to forced migrations. People may also migrate to new places fearing the witchcraft of someone, or due to fear of prosecution by the government. The Katara, the Chhapnia, the Hirawat and many other clans are believed to have immigrated to Pai during famine conditions in their earlier home villages. The Khokhria are believed to have migrated to Pai from a village near Idur in Gujarat, having killed a Muslim trader and being scared of the police. Migrations due to fear from police were perhaps more frequent in the past as is evident from such reports on the state of this tribe : "The Bhils, as a

whole, have always been lawless and independent, fond of fighting, shy, excitable and restless. Believing themselves to be thieves and plunderers, they were confirmed in their destiny by the oppression and cruelty of their rulers." (Erskine 1908 : 230).

A great number of migrations seems to take place in search of better economic prospects. A few migrations, to and from Pai, have been to one's wife's village. When a person does not have a son he may ask one of his daughters' husbands to come and live with him and help in his work. If a person is poor and has many brothers to share in the land of his father and if he is hopeful of better economic prospects in his wife's village: he may be inclined to go to live with his in-laws.

With migration, the links of a man with his family of orientation and other members of his lineage are weakened. About fifty years ago, Limba Kharadi emigrated to the village Bani Nal (ten miles from Pai) where he had been married (see genealogy of Kharadi). Limba Kharadi's brother's son, Bhera Kharadi who lives in Pai said, "My uncle is dead. I only have information about the sons of my uncle but I have no idea regarding his grand children. If there is any important occasion, such as a death feast or a marriage only one or two of my uncle's sons come but not his grandchildren. Now my uncle's sons and his grandsons have their own ancestral rocks (Bhomia) in Bani Nal."

The total break from one's lineage leading to the formation of a new lineage is a slow process. Bhera Kharadi's elder brother's son, Kubera, who emigrated about five years ago to the village Parevi, eight miles from Pai, still maintains fairly close relations with the members of his lineage who live in Pai. Besides being present at the yearly worship of his ancestors, he also comes two or three times in a year to see his kin and friends.

According to Bhil custom, some time after the marriage of a younger brother, the elder brother is required to move out with his wife and children (if any) and set up a new home. In this task he is helped by his brothers and father. Normally he constructs his house close to his father's. Because of this custom, it is noticed that a neighbourhood of unilineally related persons comes into being. We also find one other kind of neighbourhood, *i.e.*, of people not related by unilinear kin ties. This kind of neighbourhood comes

into being when unrelated persons start living at a common place. Like intervillage migrations, intravillage migrations may also be motivated by fear of witchcraft and in search of better economic prospects. What happens is that initially a person may build his house close to his father's but later on he may abandon his house and move over to a new site in order to have more land, or because of fear of witchcraft. For instance, Kanji Chhaphnia and Kamla Kharadi were encouraged to migrate to Gavadi sector to explore more land, whereas Havji Katara and Bhera Vadera migrated to Paba sector because of fear of witchcraft. In Pai we notice three kinds of sectors :

1. Wholly or mainly inhabited by the members of a particular lineage ;
2. members of several lineages living together in one sector with the tendency for the members of a lineage to form a sort of neighbourhood ;
3. people living together irrespective of their lineage affiliations.

There is no well defined authority of the lineage. The Elders' Council of the village is the deciding body. Land also belongs to the individual but it is recognized as the lineage land. When a man dies leaving behind no son, the closest male kin of the person gets the land with the approval of the Elders' Council. Spatial contiguity is important for cooperation among people. In certain areas there is more of lineage cooperation, such as in ceremonies of marriage and death, but in day to day life neighbourhood ties may supersede those of lineage.

Neighbours may also accuse each other of the practice of witchcraft. When somebody falls ill or when cattle of someone die, the immediate suspicion is on one's neighbour, even sometimes a brother, who is believed to be motivated by jealousy or by some ill-feeling.

Cooperation among lineage members is largely due to their territorial unity. By living together they share so many experiences and have so many occasions to renew their loyalties to each other. If one member of the lineage is to be married, the cooperation of all

members is forthcoming. If one of them dies, all mourn and refrain from recreational activities and all male members, as a mark of mourning, get their heads shaved.

If there is cooperation among the members of a lineage there can also be strong rivalry and hostility over political power and distribution of land, and such other things. For instance, after Hukla's death his widow remarried Phojo, her deceased husband's father's brother's son. Since Huklo's widow married Phojo, her two sons also moved over with her to her present husband's house. Phojo took charge of his wife's children and their parental land with the understanding that when they grew up they would be handed over their land. This was however not liked by Huklo's elder brother, Nano, and on his persuasion the Elders' Council of the village ordered Phojo to hand over Huklo's land and children to Nano. However, as children had now got used to Phojo and did not want to separate from their mother, only their land was transferred to Nano. But it is expected that when Huklo's children are sufficiently grown up to look after themselves and their property, the land will be restored to them. Struggle for power is generally found among the members of ruling lineage. Nara Katara and Megha Katara both of the same lineage became worst enemies of each other mainly to wrest the powers of the Headman of Pai, who had died issueless.

In a large lineage, there may be a couple of persons who would know all the links—most do not. After some time, with the loss of such knowledge, ground for fission and splitting of lineage into sublineages becomes ready. All Kataras of Pai are the descendants of Khema who had immigrated to Pai with his three sons Deva, Ajba, and Lakhma. Though for Nara Katara it was possible to connect all domestic groups of the Kataras in the village, most others were satisfied just with the knowledge that they all belonged to the 'same house'. There are to be found now three sublineages of the Katara lineage. The unit that is characterised by cooperation is the sublineage and not the lineage. If there is a death, only the members of a sublineage get their heads shaved as a mark of mourning, not the entire lineage.

On the other hand we do not call the two lineages of the Karadi clan as sublineages, as they are not subdivisions of one common lineage. Both lineages of Kharadi are aware of the fact of

their forefathers' migrations from two different places, Dhemli and Chenawada. Such distinction is important from the structural point of view. Sublineages may forge a unity and manoeuvre a political front as the Kataras do in Pai but, on the other hand, two lineages of the same clan, but not regarded as subdivisions of a common lineage, cannot foster such unity.

Domestic group

Domestic group as a familial unit provides human society with socially sanctioned channels for the satisfaction of sexual and procreative urges. Children are born and reared to adulthood in the congenial atmosphere of this group. It is the primary unit of economic cooperation of a small number of people having close kinship ties. It is also the chief agency for socialization and social control. With very few exceptions, in all human societies, the elementary conjugal family invariably characterizes the domestic group although it may only form a part of the latter, in its later stages of development.

From the point of view of composition the domestic group in Pai can be classified into the following main categories :

1. Incomplete conjugal family units :				
Hu-Wi	12	
2. Conjugal family units :				
Hu-Wi-Child/Children	94	} 101
Hu-Wi-Child/Children	...	...	7
3. Incomplete conjugal family units with adhesions/dependents :				
Hu-Wi-Mo	2	} 6
Hu-Wi-BrSo	...	...	1
Hu-Wi-Br/Si or both	...	...	3
4. Conjugal family units with adhesions/dependents :				
Hu-Wi-Child/Children-Fa	4	} 23
Hu-Wi-Child/Children-Mo	...	...	7
Hu-Wi-Children-Mo	...	...	1
Hu-Wi-Child/Children-Br/Si or both	...	...	4
Hu-Wi-Child/Children-Br/Si or both-Mo	...	...	3
Hu-Wi-Children-BrDa	...	...	1
Hu-Wi-Children-SiDa	...	...	1
Hu-Wi-Children-SoChildren	...	...	2

5. Extended family units with vertical extension.				
Hu-Wi Children-So-SoWi	26	} 33
Hu-Wis-Children-So-SoWi	...	...	5
Hu-Wi-Children-BrSo-BrSoWi	...	...	1
Hu-Wis-Children-BrSo-BrSoWi	...	...	1
6. Extended family units with lateral extension :				
Hu-Wi-Children-Br-BrWi	1	} 2
Hu-Wi-Children-Br-BrWi-Mo	...	...	1
7. Domestic groups with one partner lacking, and single member units :				
Mo-So/Sos	6	} 13
Fa-Sos	...	...	2
Fa-Sos-FaMo	...	...	1
Fa-So-FoSi-FaMo	...	...	1
Widow	...	...	1
Two minor brothers	...	...	1
Widower-SiSo	1	}

The classification above gives rather a static picture of the society. A close analysis, however, reveals that the various units are actually at the various phases of development. As mentioned earlier, among the Bhils the new bride and the groom begin their life in the domestic group of the groom's parents. They continue to be the members of this domestic group till the marriage of the husband's younger brother. There is a very distinct tradition among the Bhils that when a younger brother gets married the elder brother should move out of his father's household and set up his own independent home. Ideally, with this separation the separating son establishes his own production and consumption unit. Full-fledged division of land, however, may take some time. But in the Bhil society, parents of a son do not have to go back to a conjugal family household. It is expected that an only son or the youngest son of a couple would not move out of the father's domestic group but would continue to live there along with his wife and children. Under certain unusual circumstances, we find a break in the pattern. Megha Katara's only son, Nana, separated from his father as the former had a very bad reputation as a practitioner of witchcraft. In another instance, Kubara who was the youngest of all the brothers, migrated to the village of his maternal uncle and so one older than Kubara continues to live in the domestic group of his parents.

This pattern is being followed in Pai, and is clearly illustrated through the diagrams of domestic groups on pages 63-64.

The separation of the elder brother is generally brought about between six months to a year of his younger brother's marriage but in some cases it may be accomplished earlier while in certain other cases it may be delayed even up to three or four years. In Pai, at the time of our census, there were only domestic groups which included three conjugal units, each comprising a man, his wife and unmarried children, and two married sons and their wives and children. This points to the fact that a married man breaks away rather quickly from his family of orientation at the marriage of his younger brother.

Normally it is expected that the separating son will be given his share of parental property—land and cattle—at the time of his separation, but it is found that the actual division of property is generally delayed. So long as the property is not divided, the separating son is given by his father some fields and cattle regarded as sufficient for his requirements. Occasionally when the concerned parties are not satisfied with the division, they may approach the Elders' Council for justice.

Interpersonal relations in a domestic group may be judged from their content, strength and intensity. By content is implied, ".....definition of the type of relationship that is to exist and the members between (or among) whom it is to exist." (Levy 1952 : 350). By strength is meant the relative power or lack of power or capacity to take decision. Intensity implies 'the state of affect involved in the relationship'. While analysing the content, strength and intensity of interpersonal relationship in a domestic group, the fact of its composition should not be lost sight of. For example, relationship between a husband and a wife is markedly different at different phases of the development, *i.e.*, when they are part of the husband's father's domestic group and when they are living in a domestic group of their own. Other relationships are also bound to be influenced by these situations.

So long as the husband and the wife live with the former's parents they continue to be dependent on them. The father represents the domestic group in social affairs, and takes decisions in important matters. Both the son and the daughter-in-law have to be respectful

to him. The husband abides by his father's instructions, and the wife covers her head and face and avoids any direct contact with him. She covers her face from her mother-in-law also but compared to that in relation to the father-in-law, the degree of avoidance is less. She has to take instructions from the mother-in-law regarding all household work. If the son is the youngest or the only son, he and his wife continue to stay with his parents. This is not to deny that there is no problem of adjustment between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law. As the parents grow older, and become physically weak, there is a distinct decline in the attitude of dependence and subservience on the part of the younger couple. The situation radically changes when one of the parents dies; the remaining parent particularly if he/she is very old, becomes -dependent on the son and daughter-in-law. It is now considered the son's duty to provide at least two meals to the old parent and to show formal respect to him or her. There are good sons and bad sons, and in the house of a bad one the parent may not even be properly fed. On the contrary an old parent may even be criticised, particularly by a daughter-in-law: "She does not do any work but she wants meals both times. She can at least keep an eye on the children, but who is there to tell her?"

During the phase when the husband and wife are living in the husband's parents' domestic group, the husband has a slight edge over his wife who has no one to look to for support, if she has any trouble with her husband; her husband may even go against her if she has trouble with her mother-in-law. During this phase, a daughter-in-law has no direct control even over her own children who are somehow more attached to their grandparents.

After their separation from the husband's parents, a couple gradually become independent and at least in internal matters do the decision-taking themselves. They can, on their own, decide what is to be cultivated in the fields, how to improve their farm, whether they should buy new cattle or not, or whether the children should be kept at home for cattle-herding or sent to school, and so on. But they continue to participate in the ritual activities organized in the parental home of the husband's father and in the homes of his brother, and are also expected to contribute their time and money when something of importance takes place in the original domestic group, such as a marriage feast or a death feast.

At this stage the relationship between the husband and the wife is intimate and, more or less, one of equality. If living together becomes difficult, either of them can seek a divorce. The two do not address each other by their personal names. They can both refer to each other as Jodat which means 'one attached to me', or the husband may refer to her as Gherwali and she may refer to him as Gherwala, both meaning 'the man of the house' and 'the woman of the house'. They both show tolerance and respect for each other, and recognize privileges such as those of entertaining their respective kin, visiting fairs and participating in community dances with members of the same sex and also of the opposite sex. Public show of affection for each other is not considered in good taste. In the economic sphere, the Bhil woman cooperates actively with her husband. People credit their prosperity to their own capacity for hard work as well as that of their wives; if only husbands are hardworking and wives shy away from work, they cannot be prosperous.

Following the patrilineal principle the Bhil society recognizes that the husband has greater right over the children. Even after a divorce or the husband's death, children continue to belong to his extended family group. However, in disciplining at the early stages of life, the wife plays a significant role. When they are somewhat grown up, the daughters come to be more attached to their mother, and the sons to their father. The mother trains her daughters in domestic skills such as cooking food, grinding wheat or maize, and churning buttermilk. The father trains his sons in ploughing, hunting, wood-cutting, making ropes, cots and so on. The children also learn from their parents the art of singing and dancing, and various other roles which they have to play later in life. It is generally said that the husband takes most of the decisions regarding what clothes and ornaments are to be bought for himself, for his wife and children, wherefrom to raise funds to celebrate a festival or arranging a marriage, what is to be cultivated in their fields, or whether to send children to school or not. It was, however observed that though the wife cannot generally impose a decision on her husband, she can certainly influence her husband's decision by arguing with him or through tactful persuasion. As will be seen in the next chapter, Bhil parents are indulgent. Children address their father as Ata and mother as Aai. Parents address their children by their personal names. There is no discrimination in the treatment of children on

the basis of sex. Male children are valued mainly for the perpetuation of the line and for support in old age. But girls are not frowned upon or discriminated against. A girl is a help to her mother and fetches a substantial brideprice. It is however true that after marriage, gradually the daughter has less and less contact with the parents. For a year or two she comes somewhat more frequently to visit her parents but after this period she comes only on special occasions such as marriage or a death ceremony or some other ceremonial and ritual functions. If she loses or leaves her husband at a young age she can find asylum with her parents or brothers till she is married to some other man. In the case of her husband's death, the first claim on her is of her husband's younger brother and if he is not willing or if there is no younger brother, one of his paternal cousins may lay claim on her ; if she does not marry her husband's younger brother or a cousin of his but wants to marry someone else, her new husband would be required to pay some amount, one or one hundred and fifty rupees, to the right claimant. If she becomes a widow in her old age, the question of her return to her parental home does not arise.

Brothers and sisters grow up in the same house in close association with each other. An elder brother is addressed as Dada and is to be treated some respect. Similarly an elder sister is to be treated with respect, and is addressed as Bai. Of course the attitude of respect comes gradually as they grow. Segregation between the sexes becomes distinct after the ages of eight or ten years they play together and perform many activities together. After marriage a sister gets to see her married and unmarried brothers and sisters only occasionally. The loyalties to her father's domestic group are renewed by her taking gifts of clothes and ornaments on certain occasions such as on the birth of child to her brother. On her brother's or father's death she is required to take a turban for her brothers.

DIAGRAM-1 RUPQ $\triangle = \circ$ PARGI

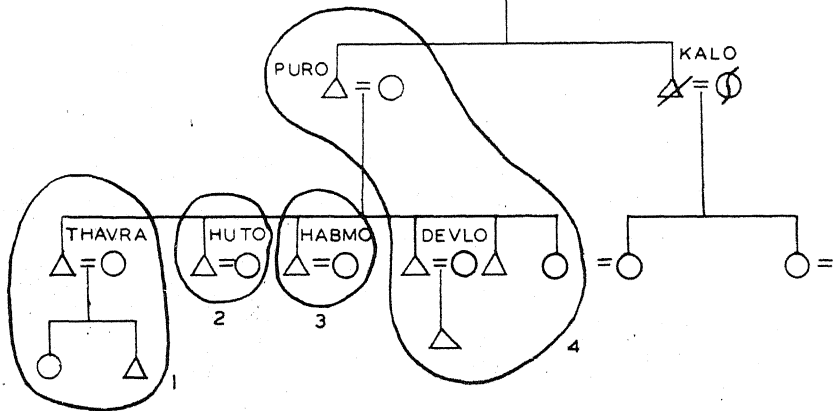
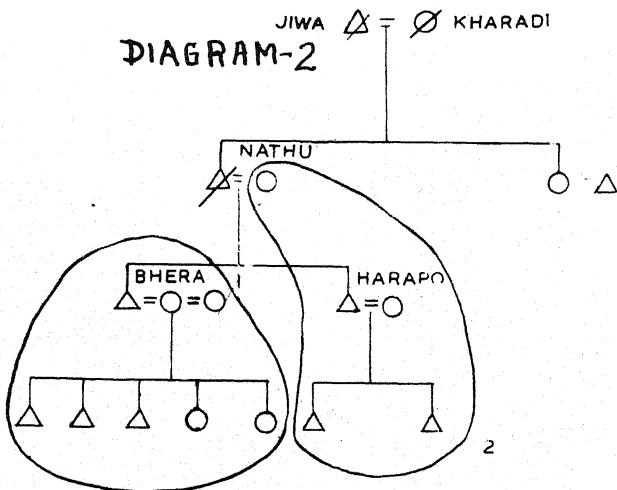


DIAGRAM-2 JIWA $\triangle = \circ$ KHARADI



Diag. No. 5 : 1. Nania separated three months after Devia's marriage. The property was also divided at the separation.

2. Devia separated six months after Shankar's marriage. He was given a share of land and cattle at the time of separation.

3. Kauga separated six months after Rupa's marriage, and Rupa after one year of Thavra's marriage. Property was divided at the time of separation.

Diag. No. 6 : Thavra and Huta were married at the same time. They continued to live together with their parents for five years even after their marriage. But when 'Hakma got married, Thavra and Huta moved out almost at the same time. The division of the property took place at the time of their separation. Hakma separated from his family of orientation six months after his younger brother, Devla's marriage.

Diag. No. 7 : 1. Kanji got married twenty year ago.

2. Eight years after Kanji's marriage, he and his father decided that he should move over to Gavadi where they had some fields. Kanji, with the help of his father, constructed a house and began living in it with his wife. But no division of property had yet taken place. Kanji continued to help his father, however for all practical purposes they were two independent household units.

3. When Kanji's father died he had to return to his father's household as his brothers and sisters were very young and needed his help.

4. When Kanji's younger brother got married Kanji again separated from his family of orientation. The division of property took place six months after their separation.

- Diag. No. 8* : 1. Mava separated from his father's family one year after his younger brother, Jiwa got married. But he continued to farm jointly for two years even after his separation.
2. Jiwa separated from his family of orientation within one year of his younger brother, Joyta's marriage. Jiwa got his share of land and cattle as soon as the separation took place.
3. Joyta also separated within one year of his younger brother, Dharma's marriage. He got his share of property one year after their separation.

4

Crises of Life

Birth and Growing Up

The Bhils recognize the complementary roles of the two sexes in the creation of new life. It is, however, believed that mere physical union of a man and a woman is not sufficient for conception, for the blessing of the deities is also essential. They believe that some malevolent deities and spirits can also frustrate a couple's efforts to be blessed with offspring. There is also a belief that if a pregnant woman moves about in the open during an eclipse of the sun, she may suffer an abortion.

Children are greatly valued, and the desire for parenthood is strong. A great number of people may be found engaged in appeasing the concerned malevolent deity or spirit. It is common for women to wear an image of Gadava, a deity subservient to the god Bheru, who is believed to be responsible for the birth and the well-being of children. In case of childlessness, it is generally Bheru, their chief deity, who is approached by the Bhils to find out the reason and also the remedy for infertility, abortions, and loss of children.

The state of childlessness is despised by the Bhils. It is believed that childless persons, more particularly those who are without sons, cannot prosper. As may be expected, the frequency of miscarriages, abortions and deaths in infancy is considerable due to prevailing unhygienic conditions of child-birth and due to a complete lack of medical facilities. Under such circumstances supernatural aid is resorted to.

It is believed that a woman is most likely to conceive as soon as her menstrual period is over. The menstrual period of a woman is thought to last two and a half days after which she should clean herself by taking a bath, and prepare herself for sexual intercourse. Irregular menses and menses lasting over long periods are suspected to be caused by the wrath of some malevolent spirits and witches and it is feared, may result in infertility.

There are no rites to be observed between the period from conception to the birth of the child. A Bhil woman continues to work hard till some days before her delivery, and in certain cases, till a few hours before the child is born. At the critical time of child-birth, one of the old women of her neighbourhood may be called to her help. Though it is not compulsory, in a difficult case of delivery it may become necessary to sacrifice a fowl or a he-goat. For instance, Kanji had to sacrifice a fowl and a goat in order to appease Sikotra, a malevolent deity which, his uncle thought, was causing trouble to his wife in the delivery of her child.

The naval cord of the infant is cut with a sharp instrument, such as a knife or a dagger, and is buried in a hole near the house. The mother-in-law of the woman in child-birth, unless she lives in the same household, usually arrives some time after the child has been born. The birth of a male child is announced by beating a metal plate, and that of a female child by beating a winnowing basket. This is a regional custom and it indicates that the status of a son was considered superior to that of a daughter.

As the mother is confined to bed for some time after child-birth, her household duties may be taken over by her husband's mother or one of his unmarried sisters, and if none of them is available, for any reason, a neighbour's wife may come to help. But quite often the husband himself may have to do the domestic work, such as cooking, grinding at the hand-mill, looking after children, if any, bringing water from the well, doing dishes and sweeping the floor. This he does along with his usual activities. If he has older, more or less grown up children, his task is rendered much easier.

Within three or four days of child-birth, the father of the newborn visits the temple of Bheru to find out an auspicious day for giving a ritual bath to the mother and the child. This purificatory bath which is given in about a week's time after child-birth is known

as *Suraj*, which means the sun. This is a Hindu custom. Both the infant and the mother are first given a massage with a paste of oil, turmeric, and barley flour. The mother is seated on the wooden platform facing towards the east, and the baby is put in her lap. A lighted earthen lamp, as also some fire on a tile, is placed in front of the mother. A coconut is broken, and some of its pieces along with purified butter are offered to the fire. Then the child's father pours near the fire some liquor from a bottle. All these offerings are supposed to be for the clan goddess of the new-born and for Bheru, the chief Bhil deity. Someone may get possessed, but it is not an invariable feature of such an occasion. Sugar-drops are distributed to all attending the ceremony.

The *Suraj* ceremony is not regarded as a big community event, and is attended by only a small number of people, such as one's neighbours, the husband's brothers, unmarried sisters, father, mother, father's brothers and their wives and children, brother's wives and their children. Generally not all but some of the above mentioned people attend the *Suraj* ceremony. For instance, when the *Suraj* ceremony of Kanji's wife and child took place, he informed all his neighbours and all his kinsfolk about it but only his neighbours—except one his father's brothers and some of their children and his own brothers and unmarried sisters came to attend the ceremony (his father was not alive). Except for one neighbour's wife who had helped Kanji's wife in the delivery of her child and later in domestic work, wives of other neighbours stayed back in their homes. There is no exchange of gifts on this occasion. This small ceremony seems to indicate the recognition of the child and its incorporation into the life of the people immediately surrounding it.

Following the birth of a child, on the festival of Holi, the husband's married sisters and wife's brothers bring presents of clothes and ornaments for the new baby, its mother and father. These presents are known as *Dhundh*, and are also customary among the Hindus of this region. All those persons in the village who have been blessed with children during the year preceding Holi are visited by the villagers at their houses. The village people dance in front of their houses, an honour otherwise generally reserved for the village headman and the members of the elders' council. The villagers are entertained with liquor, and also offered five rupees if a male child has been born and two rupees if a female child has been born.

For the father and the mother of the child, the child-birth is a major event of their life. The mother runs the risk of life in the process, and the father runs the risk of losing his wife who is also an economic asset to him and to the community at large. A safe delivery indicates that the possible danger has been averted, and a new life has been added to the community, that would contribute towards its perpetuation. The child-birth ceremony, bringing of gifts by mother's brother and father's sister on 'Holi' following the child-birth, and the visit and dancing of the villagers may be viewed as activities by which the kin, the neighbours and the community reaffirm their solidarity with the couple.

A few days after the birth ceremony, the child and the mother visit the temple of Bheru either on a Saturday or a Sunday. Dressed in bright gay clothes, the mother carries on a plate 'churma' (a sweet prepared from purified butter, wheat flour and jaggery), a coconut and purified butter to offer to the deity. This is done, as it is believed that on these two days Bheru is sure to possess the Bhopa of the temple and speak the deity's mind and give his blessings. The Bhopa of Bheru who is in a state of trance gives blessings to the mother and the child when their turn to bow before him comes, and then utters a name for the baby. The inventory of available names is small. A baby may be named after the day on which it is born, as a baby born on Homwar (Monday) may be named Homli if a female child and Homa if a male child; or a baby born on Punam (the night of the full moon) may be named Puna if a male, and Punki if a female. Babies may also be named after certain animate and inanimate objects of nature such as Hura (parrot), Dhulia (dust), Nara (tiger), Phulio (flower), Megho (cloud) and so on. Generally all male names end with the sound of a *o* and female names with the sound of *i*.

The period of confinement ranges between a week and a month. A brief confinement fits with the family pattern and with the poor economic conditions of the Bhils. During pregnancy a woman does not receive any special care regarding her food; it is nevertheless recognised that healthy parents tend to have healthy children. During confinement the mother has to consume a lot of til oil, jaggery and gum. The value of milk for the mother is not known; it is, however, common to feed goat's milk to those infants

who have lost their mothers or whose mothers have an insufficient supply of milk.

The child grows under the loving care of his parents, and such relatives as grand-parents, father's sisters and brothers, depending upon the stage in the developmental cycle of the domestic group. It is, however, true that in the majority of cases, a child's longest experience is that of staying in the nuclear family, *i.e.* with his father, mother and siblings. During its formative years a child is generally the centre of love in the family. The behaviour of the Bhils parents is very different from that of the average Hindu parents in rural Rajasthan, inasmuch as they do not think it improper to fondle and play with their young children in the presence of their own elders, such as their own mother and father. The Bhils may be called over-indulgent, even to the extent of spoiling their children.

So long as the child is not able to talk or walk of its own accord it may defecate and urinate anywhere. Nothing is wrapped around the child to prevent the child from spoiling the bedding or clothes of those who handle it. The mother learns through practice to guess when the child wants to urinate or defecate and helps it to do so, but it is just as possible that she may not notice or may not be around. When the child is about two to three years old, the mother shows it the place where it should answer the calls of nature. But if the child defaults she does not bother about it, and just directs it to the proper place. In point of fact even if a fairly grown up child does not show judiciousness, he may just be teased and jeered at in the hope that it will be all right within a reasonable period of time. Bhil children—even the poor ones—tend to get spoilt as their parents cannot bear to have them crying, and hence fulfil even their unreasonable demands. A mother said, "When a child cries you have to make him quiet by giving him something to eat, such as a bread or jaggery". Once in a while, however, parents may be seen to get suddenly mad at their children if they break something or lose something. A grown-up child may even be slapped by an enraged father who would cool down in no time at the mediation of his wife and begin to be reasonable about it. One father remarked : "To discipline a child you must first tell it the correct ways of doing things and only when he disobeys should you

show anger and disapproval." On the whole Bhil parents are sympathetic and understanding to their children and do not use much coercion. Though sons are prized a little more, sons and daughters both get more or less the same kind of treatment. A son is considered important for the perpetuation of the line but a daughter is also not a burden as she helps the mother in various household duties, fetches a brideprice at marriage, and even after her marriage she and her husband are not mere liabilities but are helpful in many ways.

Older children are required to look after the younger once when their mother is occupied with cooking, doing dishes or working at the farm. The process of socialization is smooth and spontaneous. Girls take up the roles of their mother and boys their father's, and in several respects many of them appear miniatures of their parents. Vaka Katara's eight-year old daughter projected in every bit of her activity the image of her mother. Similarly Kanji's four-year old son appeared to be a replica of his father in many ways. It is obvious that the prime influence on the personality of children in societies like that of the Bhils is of their home and immediate surroundings.

When the children are slightly older, they are sent for cattle herding, initially to short distances and in the company of older boys and girls, but soon independently and to longer distances. It is not unusual to come across a five- or six-year old boy armed with a stick, more than his own height, watching his fields and keeping away the cattle. Boys and girls between the ages of twelve and sixteen, and sometimes even older ones, often go out at night to collect Mahua berries and flowers. During these nocturnal visits to the forest they get ample opportunities to learn about sex.

Enthusiasm to send their children to school is not shared equally by all parents. In general a solitary son is not much likely to be sent to school as he is needed at home. Families which have more than one son tend to send only one son to school while the others are retained at home to help in various economic activities. Girls are not sent to school at all. The arguments advanced for not sending the girls to school are as follows: "It is difficult to get educated husbands for girls; and what use would this education be to girls who have to stay home, cook food and sweep the house?"

Though at any time fifty to sixty names are found enrolled, the actual attendance at school varies between ten to thirty depending upon the period of the yearly economic cycle.

While teenage boys work at the farm with their fathers, girls help their mothers in the house in cooking, doing dishes and fetching water from the well. But this division of labour is not rigid, and a boy may be seen fetching water from the well and the girl working at the farm.

Girls and boys in their adolescence frequently indulge in amorous affairs. Girls would stick out their tongues to boys, scream with laughter without any known reason and enjoy themselves with long sessions of dancing with members of their own sex and of the opposite sex. They are neither shy nor embarrassed in the company of the opposite sex. There is, however, some degree of caution in their approach to opposite sex as they do not like to be seen and reported about to the elders' council in regard to their intimate movements. There seems to be some amount of discrepancy in their ideal norms and actual behaviour. The ideal norm is the village exogamy and a forged kinship of brother and sister between the two sexes within the village, but an analysis of seventy-one marriages showed that about eight per cent of the marriages were intra-village. The amorous affairs of boys and girls are overlooked until they result in something serious, such as, pregnancy or elopement. Normally these intimacies come to an end with the marriages of girls and boys in other villages in conformity with the ideal norm of village exogamy.

Marriage

Bhil parents are conscious that if they fail in their duty to find spouses for their grown-up sons and daughters, they can't be stopped from finding life partners on their own. Sometimes parents may—out of affection—think that their children are too young and dependent to begin their married life, and may be taken by surprise when they find them acting on their own and taking a plunge into conjugal life. In some cases the parents may keep on postponing the marriages of their children under economic stress. Kala Katara, in spite of direct and indirect indications by his friends and neighbours, remained obstinate and did not get his daughter married in

time. One day the daughter took off with a boy with whom she had been carrying on an affair. Similarly, Nathu Katara who was not tired of referring affectionately to his daughter several times a day, did not know that one day she would take a fancy to a boy and leave him. It is true that adventures of their children leave the family in a state of embarrassment, confusion and anger but this is only a temporary state. The family quickly takes a realistic view of the situation and does not allow a lasting scar to be made in their relationships.

Arranged marriage is the most common form of marriage among the Bhils. There are eight or ten marriages in the village in one year and about half of these are arranged marriages. An arranged marriage is negotiated by the parents or guardians of the boy and the girl. The initiative is generally taken by the boy's family. Friends and relatives generally help the parents in looking for a prospective bride for their son. Before proceeding to finalize a marriage the boy's parents inquire about the girl—about her looks, character and nature. The most important thing to be considered is whether there is already a claimant to the girl; for in such circumstances it is best to abandon the proposal. Besides, both the parties make sure that the girl or the boy under consideration is amicable and hardworking, and that the families are economically sound. Possession of sizable cultivable land and cattle by the boy's family enhances his prospects for a good marital alliance. The boy's personal appearance, unless he is deformed or unduly ugly, does not matter much.

When both the parties have satisfied themselves through secondary sources of information, that is, through their common friends and relatives, the boy's party sets out for the girl's village. It is considered inauspicious to start on such a mission on a Wednesday or on a Punam, on the day of the full moonlit night. The boy's party which usually consists of the boy's father, father's brothers and neighbours, goes to the house of the person who is acting as a middleman between the two families. The middleman, Vadalio, who is generally a common friend or a relative of the two families, leads the boy's party to the girl's house. The girl's father comes out to receive the daughter's prospective in-laws and offers the visitors cots to sit upon, and 'bidis' to smoke. The middleman

then announces, "I have brought relatives for you. Would you and your daughter drink liquor with them?" In reply, the girl's father makes some such observation: "I have no objection to drinking liquor with these people. But what I want is a good and helping man. I do not like a quarrelsome person. I want that my daughter should be happy and well-fed. If my daughter goes to dance or goes to attend fairs she should not be suspected. Her mother-in-law, father-in-law, husband's brothers and sisters should not quarrel with her. If she works properly in the house nobody should say anything to her." Drinking liquor is a symbolic act implying the end of resistance and hostility, and willingness to be friends. The boy's father shows his agreement to what the girl's father says by giving him five rupees. After the money has been accepted, the boy's father offers liquor to the girl's father. Besides the girl's father and brother, her father's brothers and their sons, and his neighbours join in drinking. The girls and women of the family and the neighbourhood are offered jaggery by the girl's family. Girls and women dance on this occasion. All these activities take place generally at night. The next day or so, the boy's party is seen off up to some distance from the girl's house. Afterwards neighbours are entertained with food and drinks and 'bidi' by the girl's family.

Nearly five to six months after the betrothal, a message is sent with someone going to the girl's village that the boy's mother would be visiting the girl's family on a certain date. The boy's mother leaves on the specified date along with one or two male escorts, to ensure safety of the journey. She takes with her some presents, generally some clothes, for the girl. The boy's mother and her other companions go to the girl's house where they are warmly received. The boy's mother presents to the bride the gift she has brought with her. Both the bride's and the groom's people treat each other with extreme politeness and courtesy. The hosts offer the guests liquor and a goat to be killed and eaten in a feast. At night both the hosts and the guests dance and sing together and enjoy themselves.

Next morning the guests are again entertained to food and liquor. The guests pretend that they have lots of work at home and so would like to leave, and the hosts show courtesy by insisting

upon their staying for some more time. The guests are seen off by the hosts up to some distance from their house.

The betrothal and the visit by the groom's mother bring the two families into a formal kinship relationship. On three festivals in the year—Novarta, Gavri and Holi, if they fall before the marriage—the groom's family has to send gifts of clothes and sweets to the bride's family. Failure in this may provoke criticism from the bride's family expressed in such words: "What is the use of having such relatives who do not remember you even on such occasions?"

The bride-price is fixed at the time of betrothal. It may be paid before the marriage or on the occasion of the marriage; or it may be paid in part between betrothal and marriage, some part being paid even afterwards. The amount of bride-price is fixed in terms of rupees but it may be paid fully in cash or partly in the form of cattle. The bride-price ranges between three hundred and six hundred rupees. It has shown a continuous tendency to rise over the years. In the past it used to be as low as sixty to eighty rupees; many of our old informants recall that they had paid a bride-price amounting to one hundred and twenty or one hundred and forty rupees.

The bride-price is refundable when a marriage breaks up, as when the wife leaves her husband to go to some other man or returns to her parents permanently, or when her infidelity is proved beyond doubt and she is turned out of the house by her husband or when at the death of her husband she refuses to marry her husband's real brother or his father's brother's son younger to him, and returns to her parents or marries a man of her own choice.

The following comments by Gluckman adequately explain the nature of the bride-price among the Bhils: "...He is not purchasing a woman to be concubine or a slave: a wife's rights are very different from those of such a person. He is validating the transfer of certain rights over the bride from her kin to himself and establishing a 'friendship',—in-law relationship—, with those kin. The

marriage gifts also signify that he accepts the obligations of his status as husband, and that his own kin, who contributed to the payment, accept obligations to their new daughter or sister-in-law and the rest of her family" (1965 : 47).

Nath mentions about the Bhils of Ratanmal : "the marriage payment is made not so much to her natal family, as such, but for distribution among certain categories of her cognates and the local community" (1960 : 137). He further mentions rather specifically the ideal share (in percentages) of the various cognates of the bride. His observations do not correspond with the present data. It is true that the groom presents certain gifts of clothes and cash to the bride's relatives, such as her sisters, her father's brothers, and her mother's brothers but they are neither a part of the bride-price nor do they involve any significant amount in terms of cash compared to the actual bride-price. He mostly offers these kin pieces of cloth roughly of the size of a bedsheet. Similarly, what is paid by the groom to the local community of the bride is not part of the bride-price ; it is rather an insignificant amount (usually eight annas and a coconut) compared to the bride-price.

A major portion of the amount to be paid as bride-price and spent on the marriage is borrowed from the family money-lender, the repayment of which is mainly the responsibility of the groom. The groom and his father and father's brothers, elder brothers also contribute towards the expenses of the marriage with specific customary understanding that when his younger brothers or his father's brother's sons get married, he too would reciprocate the contributions. In the marriage of a girl, all the expenses are borne by her parents, and all the contributions and gifts made on the occasion will have to be reciprocated by the girl's parents or guardians on appropriate occasions. A sizable portion of the bride-price is spent by the parents on ornaments and clothes of their daughter.

Marriages are mostly celebrated during the hot months of May and June when there is considerable leisure. The date for marriage is fixed by the two families in consultation with each

other. Once the date for marriage has been decided upon, there are hectic activities on both sides to make arrangements for liquor, maize-corn, rice, edible oil, purified butter, a goat for the feast and so on, and also for clothes and ornaments. Besides a loan from the money-lender and contributions from relatives mentioned earlier, small amounts may be borrowed from kin and friends.

There are three important ceremonies prior to marriage. About ten days before the day of the marriage, both at the bride's and the bridegroom's places, their respective clan goddesses are invoked at a ritual ceremony to get blessings for the person to be married and his or her family. The ceremony is attended by the neighbours and members of the related families. The groom is cleaned with 'piti', a paste made from barley flour, turmeric and til oil, by women dressed in ceremonial attire. Two to three boys and two to three girls of the neighbourhood, some of whom may be relatives of the groom, are selected to remain in the company of the groom all round the day. These boys and girls of his age have informal relations with the boy. His male companions are addressed as Adamla and female ones as Adamli. From this day to the day of the departure of the groom's party to the bride's village, Adamla, Adamli and the groom stay together at the place where this ritual is performed. When the groom has to move around in his own village at the invitation of the relatives, neighbours or close friends of the family, or when he is required to visit various village shrines, he is accompanied by his Adamla and Adamli. The clan goddess is invoked everyday till the day of departure for the bride's village. Cleaning of the groom with 'piti' is done everyday but he is not given a bath till the day they set out for the bride's village. At the bride's place also, the same customs are observed.

The ceremony which starts about ten days before the wedding is the beginning of a long chain of activities which continues till the day of the wedding and is known as Jawara. Jawara plays a more or less vital role in the life of the groom and his people. The groom, by being the centre of these activities, is psychologically prepared to face the final crisis of marriage. The boys and girls who are

selected to spend their time in his company prove to be a help to him in easing the tension that he may feel before the change of status. The invoking of the clan deity on these occasions is a characteristic way of meeting a tension in most tribal societies. She is believed to clear all hurdles in the way of marriage. The invitations by his relatives and neighbours are a symbolic assertion of solidarity in the crisis.

The second important ceremony before the marriage is known as Gugri Nakna. It is done at the bride's as well as the bridegroom's place. All the heads of extended families assemble at a common place with loads of maize-corn, as part of their contribution to the marriage feast. Even those who cannot make a full contribution are required to be present on this occasion with their token contributions. The headman of Pai, remarked on one such occasion : "You see this is a village affair. Today Vaka's brother is getting married, tomorrow my own son might get married. If I do not contribute today, who will contribute when my turn comes." He said further : "See, Nana Katara is very poor, and does not have enough to make a full contribution. But nobody minds it as he has brought whatever he could manage." What is important is that a person should bring something. It was observed that people who could afford to bring their share did not fail to do so. They had to fear public criticism and the displeasure of their leaders. The driving force in this respect thus seems to be : "If we do not contribute now, who will contribute when our turn comes ?"

Finally the day arrives when the groom and his people have to set out for the bride's village. The tempo of activities increases. The groom is first massaged with 'piti', given a bath, and is dressed in his formal dress to the accompaniment of songs by women. His companions of the last eight days, Adamla and Adamli, honour him by doing 'arti, (waving of a lighted lamp in front of the person) to him. The clan goddess who is invoked appears through a medium to bless the groom and the people, and assures them that she would see to it that everything will go all right. The

groom finally bows down before the image of the clan goddess, and is then escorted, quite close to the house, to a small structure of bamboo and wooden poles decorated with leaves, known as 'manda'; where an important ceremony, Perawani, or gift-giving, is to take place. The groom stands under the 'manda' in between his parents. Where parents are not alive, as was the case with Bhera Katara, the elder brother of the groom and his wife take on the role of the parents on this occasion. Soon a formal announcement is made, to alert the people assembled there, that the Perawani ceremony is to start. On this occasion gifts, in cash as well as in kind, are brought for the groom's father and mother. In particular, the groom's father's sister and the groom's mother's brother customarily bring a coconut, a handkerchief and a jacket for the groom, a sari for his mother and a 'dhoti' (a cloth wrapped by a man around waist) for his father. The groom's father gives a 'sari' each to all the married sisters of the groom. As noticed in Bhera Katara's marriage, such gift-giving is customary with classificatory cognates and agnates also.

Apart from one's own kin, the heads of all the households in the village also bring gifts of money, generally a rupee or two each. These monetary gifts are strictly on the basis of reciprocity. For instance, Kanji Chapnia gave a gift of two rupees when Hura Katara got married. He explained that this was an unending process, for when his daughter or son would be married, Hura would have to reciprocate by bringing him a gift of two rupees or a little more. It is considered graceful to give a gift of slightly more value than what one had received in one's own case, but it is usual for people to give at least a gift of an amount they had themselves received. The gift so received eases a lot of economic stress for the groom's and the bride's families. As mentioned earlier, it also promotes the solidarity in the community.

Before the groom's party actually sets out for the bride's village, the groom's sister stops him on the way and lets him proceed only after she is promised or given some substantial gift. Bhera had to promise a small buffalo to his sister for letting him proceed.

Contrary to the custom of high caste Hindus of the region, the marriage party of the Bhil is formed both by men and women. All along the way men and women go on dancing and singing. Generally at least one person from each household or extended family goes with the groom, but if the village is celebrating more than one marriage on the same day, the closeness of kinship ties and the nature of actual relationship determine whose marriage party one would join.

From the time when the groom and his party are received on the outskirts of the village till the time when the groom is required to tip certain kin of the village, every now and then, an attitude of hostility is apparent in the behaviour of the bride's people. At the outskirts the marriage party is halted by some representatives of the village. They have to be given a coconut and half a rupee before they are allowed to proceed. After some time when the marriage party reaches near the bride's house, it is again required to give two coconuts and three quarter of a rupee to a member of the bride's family, and only then is it allowed to settle down. At night one of the bride's unmarried sisters comes with a pot on her head, and collects in it a rupee coin from the groom. On the same night, the bride's family arranges a feast for the people of its own village, and only after the village has been feasted is the marriage party asked to eat. This is obviously in affirmation of greater solidarity with one's own kin and members of the local group than with the groom and his people who are strangers and outsiders.

Next morning some representatives of the bride's party visit the groom and his party to collect the gifts of clothes and ornaments. In some cases there may be an argument between the two sides over the adequacy of these gifts. After they have been received a male kin of the girl gets possessed by the clan goddess and utters her blessings : "I will take the responsibility for their well-being."

Later the groom's father holds a bottle of liquor in his hand and pours liquor seven times, in small quantities, in the palm-fold of the bride, who lets it spill in a plate kept below. Immediately after the bride's acceptance of liquor from the groom's father, there is a visible change in the behaviour of the two parties. Now they appear

somewhat less hostile to each other. The bride's father gives five bottles of liquor and twelve 'rotis' to a member of the groom's party and requests the groom's party to eat and drink. While the groom's party is eating and drinking, the bride is formally dressed by the women of her side. When the bride is ready, the host asks the groom and his party to come for the marriage.

The groom and his party march in a procession to the bride's house, and wait outside for people to receive them. At this time the groom holds a sword or a dagger in his right hand. The bride's mother and other women come forward and perform 'arti' to the groom. He is required to drop one rupee and four annas in the plate with the lighted lamp that the bride's mother is holding in her hands. The bride's mother then marks his forehead with vermilion, and the groom touches the 'toran' (a special wooden frame) with his sword. Touching the 'toran' with the sword and the act of being marked on the forehead with vermilion signify the victory of the groom.

With the act of touching the 'toran' with his sword by the groom, the remaining hostility of the bride's party almost completely vanishes. The marriage is solemnized by a priest of the Sadhu caste, on the same pattern as that of a Hindu marriage, that is, by going round the fire seven times. The bride and the groom are then escorted to a place in the house where the clan goddess has been established. When they enter the room of the clan goddess, the sister of the bride bars their way till the groom pays her eight annas. While sitting before the clan goddess of the bride the groom and the bride feed a piece of 'roti' each to one another. Soon the bride and the groom are escorted by one of the groom's men to the place where the groom's party has been staying all this time. One of the male members of the groom's party is chosen to be made the ritual brother of the bride. This man comes to enjoy a special status in relation to the bride. If something goes wrong between the husband and wife, the wife can always go to this ritual brother and ask him to intervene or give her shelter for some time.

Before the groom and his party return to their village with the bride, the family of the bride gives a feast in honour of the groom

and his people. The groom also makes gifts of 'saris' to the bride's younger sisters, and pieces of cloth are ritually presented by him to her mother's brothers and father's elder brothers. The eldest brother of the bride, real or classificatory, is made to sit on the lap of the groom and is offered a gift of a turban and one rupee by the groom's people. A few coconuts are broken, and the pieces are distributed among all.

On the return of the groom and his people with the bride to their village, some rituals are performed most of which are much in the form of play and fun. The bride and the groom are required to untie the threads tied around each other's wrists and anklets; both are asked to pry into a small vessel filled with water and compete for a ring dropped into it by someone, and whoever of the two gets it, keeps it. The bride is sent to the well bring water in a pitcher on her head and the groom is asked to help her put it down when she reaches the entrance of his house. All these acts are symbolic of the complementary roles of the two in life, and of competition and co-operation between the two.

After a week or so the bride's brother or one of her close kin comes to take her back. In the next fortnight or so the groom goes accompanied by his friends to bring the bride back. The bride's visits back and forth continue for nearly a year but gradually her stay in her husband's home tends to be longer and longer.

The rituals of marriage ceremony clearly mark a strain and conflict engendered by the breach of solidarity in the natal community of the bride. It is the boy's family which has to approach the girl's family for a spouse for its son. The way the girl's father puts his terms, it is obvious that he bargains from a position of superiority. It is also clear that it is the girl's family, lineage, kin and community whose solidarity is being infringed upon and hence needs to be compensated by the groom's people who stand to gain from the situation. The extraction of gift in money and material from the groom and his people reflects the hostile attitude of the bride's family which gives way only after being duly appeased. For the groom and his people it is rather a test of nerves. The rituals and other activities prior to marriage play mainly the role of keep-

ing up the morale of the groom and the bride and ensuring the desired end of the activities. The rituals of marriage can also be viewed as a way of smoothening the acts of separation of the bride from her parents and natal community, and a sort of incorporation of the bride into the community of her husband. They obviously accord a social sanction to the new relationship.

Besides arranged marriage there are some other forms of marriage also which are prevalent among the Bhils. In order of frequency, marriage by elopement comes next to arranged marriage. The status of eloping persons may differ from case to case; they may be an unmarried boy and an unmarried girl, a married man and an unmarried girl, a widow and a widower, a boy and a girl of the same village or different villages, so on and so forth. Most commonly, however, elopement is resorted to by an unmarried boy and a girl of the same village or of different villages. The attitude towards elopement becomes explicit from the following statement made by one of the Bhils of Pai: "Two young people desiring to run away cannot be held back. They get to see each other at marriages, festivals, and fairs and on several other occasions. If you try to prevent them from meeting during the day they will meet at night. You just can't help it." People also subscribe to the idea that certain women are more vulnerable to temptations of various sorts and so run away, not once but many times. A score of village girls were named by people who had changed husbands two or three times. In the words of a villager: "Champa, Nani and Devli—all these are roaming types who always hang on boys."

When it becomes known that a boy and a girl have eloped, it is for the girl's parents to begin enquiries in the matter. But if a married woman is involved, it is for her aggrieved husband to initiate an inquiry. The inquiry may have to be postponed if the village is going through an important ritual ceremony as happened in the case of Nathu Katara, whose daughter, Devli, had taken off with some boy during the celebration of Gavari festival. It is normally expected that the eloping boy and the girl would go to the boy's

relatives. Sometimes, it also happens that when a girl goes to visit one of her relations in some other village she may fall in love with somebody or may be helped by a common relative of the boy and the girl to take to elopement. When Kanji Chapnai's sister, who had gone to attend a fair in Vambari, did not return even after five or six days, he suspected that something had gone wrong. Accompanied by his father's brother's son he went to Vambari where his father's sister's daughter had been married. But this woman said that Kanji's sister had not come to see her, and that she did not know where the girl might be. Kanji returned after threatening her : "You tell me where she is or I will report to the police. And if the boy is good I won't object even to their marriage. But if he is not good I'll take back my sister and make the boy pay a sum equal to half the bride-price." Later Kanji accepted the fact of his sister's marriage, and realized four hundred and fifty rupees as bride-price from the boy.

The situation becomes somewhat more complicated when a married woman runs away with another man. In this case three parties are involved—the aggrieved husband, the present lover, and also the girl's father, who may sometimes be held responsible for the elopement of the girl and who is customarily called to straighten out the situation. The aggrieved husband is entitled to get back the bride-price that he had paid, and some extra amount as compensation for the loss of prestige. The overall expenses in this kind of marriage are much higher than in any other kind of marriages. The lover has not only to pay a bride-price and compensation for the loss of prestige to the woman's husband but also he has to appease the headman and elders of the girl's village.

In some cases the boy and the girl may not know each other but the girl on being persuaded by a middleman may decide in his favour. Champa, who had been married in Madri was the junior wife of her husband. Some people convinced her that a rich boy of Undri village was interested in her, and persuaded her to elope. These people then helped her in marrying the boy of Undri, who, as she realized later, was not at all rich. After sometime she made

made a dash to her father's village, and refused to go to her second husband. But after a long row, ultimately she had to give in.

When a boy is not in a position to pay a bride-price, his parents may agree to give their daughter in marriage in exchange for their son. The simple formula is as follows: "You provide a bride for my son and I will provide a bride for your son." Thavra Chaniya of Pai who was poor got his wife in exchange for his sister. Such marriages are performed with the least of ostentation though both sides have to spend some money on food and drink in entertaining a limited circle and on payment to their respective headmen.

A slight variation of the above form of marriage is seen when the father of a girl just takes his daughter and leaves her to live with the man who agrees to pay him the bride-price but does not insist upon his spending anything on the marriage. This is described as a 'poor man's marriage'. Kamla Kharadi got his daughter, Kesri, married in this manner. He took his daughter accompanied by some of his neighbours and the village headman, and left her in Kumaria Kheda to be the wife of a young man. The headman and some other villagers on both sides were entertained by the boy's family with food and liquor, but Kamla Kharadi got the bride-price without spending much on entertaining his villagers. He, however, had to pay some money to his village headman through whom the marriage had been negotiated.

There is no restriction on widow remarriage. It is preferred that she marries one of the husband's younger brothers or a paternal cousin of his. However, if a woman decides not to marry her husband's younger brother, she is free to make her own choice. When a widow has children, it is convenient for her as well her children that she marries the younger brother of her deceased husband. One old woman whose son had died and whose widowed daughter-in-law had married an unrelated person of some other village complained: "See, she has left these three children with me. I do not know how to rear them when I have nobody to help me." It is believed a sensible widow and mother would prefer to marry her deceased husband's brother for her own sake as well as her children's.

A man can have more than one wife if he chooses so, however, the restricting factor on polygyny is the general poverty. It is sometimes remarked: "A man who does not have enough food cannot keep two wives." It is believed that only a rich man with plenty of land and cattle has the real use of two or more wives. No one was found with more than two wives at a time; and the number of persons having two wives was fourteen. It is customary to provide co-wives separate rooms, if not apartments.

Frequency of divorce is high in the early years of marriage but as the years go by, and as children are born and the storm of youth has settled down, marriage tends to be a lasting relationship. A man seeks divorce mainly for the following reasons: (1) Wife's unduly long stays in her parents' home and reluctance to stay with him and his people, (2) her laziness and unwillingness to participate in the economic pursuits of the household, (3) his misgivings regarding the wife's fidelity, and (4) his suspicion that she practises witchcraft to harm his prosperity.

Women seek divorce for the following reasons: (1) If the husband is cruel and beats his wife frequently, (2) if he is not economically competent to satisfy her basic needs of food, clothes and other necessities of life, (3) if he is too young or physically weak for her, (4) if he is unduly suspicious and interfering in all her activities, (5) if she finds it impossible to get along with a co-wife, (6) if she develops a fancy for someone, and (7) if she is pressurized by her parents to leave the husband. There is also a belief among people that if a Sikotra, a malevolent deity, is after a woman, her marriage would not be stable.

Generally a man tries to make the marriage work. He tends to overlook minor lapses on the part of his wife. Men are often heard remarking: "If you are too unreasonable and very exacting in your ways you can't retain your wife." But there are others who say: "If your wife often runs away to her parents, you need to be strict with her."

Death

Like the Hindus the Bhils also believe in the continuity of the soul, emphasizing the cyclical order of birth, death and rebirth. It is believed that the soul may take different forms, being born as sometimes a man, other times as a woman, still other times as an animal, and so on and so forth. The seat of the soul in human beings is believed to be the human chest. The soul takes off temporarily when a man goes to sleep and permanently when he is dead ; it is beyond human control.

Though Mahadev is the ultimate authority who regulates birth and death, he is believed to have vested his powers in Bheru, his most trusted and powerful assistant. For Bheru the reality of life is no greater than winding and unwinding a series of pictures for his own recreation. It is, however, held that after a person's death his/her soul immediately reports to God's court, where Bheru has complete records of all human beings—of their good and evil deeds—to decide about the forms which they have to be given when they are sent back to be reborn.

The Bhils have a very vague notion of heaven (Swarg) and hell (Nark). Many of them might say that heaven is a place of great pleasures and luxuries and hell is the place of discomforts and miseries but these conceptions rarely come up in discussions, and there is no fear of hell or desire for heaven. Hindu ideas seem to have penetrated to a certain extent but there is an overall confusion in their minds. The concept of Moksha or salvation held by the Buddhists, the Jains and the Hindus is not at all known. Many of the rituals relating to the event of death would be found conflicting with the views expressed above.

It is believed that a man dies when his 'period is over' or when his 'time comes'. Even when people die prematurely, as victims of certain supernatural forces such as Sikotra (a malevolent deity), Bhut (ghost), Chudel (female ghost) and Dakni (witch), or in accidents, such as by drowning, falling from a tree, being burnt and even in an automobile accident, people often say, "It had to

happen, for God desired so." It is believed that person dying an untimely death may not reach God's court nor would he be reborn but may become a ghost.

When a person dies the news of his death is broadcast by the Balai of Pai, who goes round the village shouting from one hill to another (where there is no Balai, an agnate of the deceased has to do this job). One woman and one man from each family generally go to the house of the house of the deceased. Each man carries with him a large log of wood or a moderate head-load of wood to serve as fuel for the cremation. If a man feels that he is too late to reach the deceased's residence, he may directly reach the cremation ground. The corpse is carried on a bier, four men holding the ends, with the chief male mourner walking ahead of the bier wailing at a high pitch and beating his chest. The funeral procession is formed only by men ; women stay back. At the cremation ground, the corpse is laid on the funeral pyre which is lit by the chief mourner. Some categories of people are not cremated but buried. There is, however, generally no difference in the rituals to be observed after one's death whether he is buried or cremated. Following categories of people are buried :

- (i) Children below the age of seven
- (ii) Insane persons
- (iii) Epileptics
- (iv) Persons who have died of small-pox and
- (v) Professional ascetics with yellow robes.

In the funeral of a father, the chief mourner is the son, in that of a woman it is the husband, and if he is not alive, then the son, and in that of a child, it is the father. An unmarried daughter and an adolescent or newly married son are also cremated by the father. If a man has no son or if the son is not old enough to light the funeral bier, than his brother or brother's son would act as the chief mourner. If the person is not survived by anyone of the close agnates, then the nearest male member of his lineage for the man and her husband's lineage for the woman will perform the role of chief mourner.

When the pyre is ablaze, all the mourners pick up two or three small pieces of wood and throw them into the fire. This is considered to earn them merit. People then bathe in the river, and return home in a great hurry each taking a different route to confuse the soul of the deceased which, it is believed, may return to the village if all came by the same path.

The death-feast takes place on the 11th or 13th day after the death. If, however, the day is not convenient for the deceased person's family or the community, it may be put off by a month or so. For instance, Lalu Katara's death-feast was held after a month of his demise whereas Dhanji's wife's death-feast was arranged on the 13th day of her death.

Contributions for a death-feast are made by the village but the family of the deceased is required to arrange for the fuel for cooking and if it wants to, it can make some more contributions as purified butter, pulses and cereals. In Lalu Katara's feast, the host family mainly contributed fuel and pulses but in Dhanji Katara's wife's death feast, the host family contributed two maunds of wheat and barley, purified butter and pulses. The contribution by each household of the village is to be roughly five seers of barley and wheat, but if a person is known to be not in a position to contribute the whole amount, less than the specified amount is accepted. A person who cannot make a contribution in kind may give an equivalent amount of money.

Women relatives approach the house of the deceased wailing and as they get close to the house, their pitch goes up. The women of the deceased's family also start wailing when they notice their relatives drawing near. It is customary that the hosts should first stop wailing and try to calm down the visitors.

The chief mourner has to be on a fast for the whole day ; at night he eats after everybody has eaten. All male members of the lineage or sub-lineage, as a mark of mourning, get their heads shaved. The priest officiating at the ceremony makes an idol from dough and wraps it with grass, and puts 'roti' and hands it over to

the chief mourner who throws it on the ground with full force breaking it into many pieces. All these activities take place in the first few hours of the night. The remaining part of the night is spent in gossiping by some, and in preparing food by others. All the cooking for this feast is done by men.

Next day, early in the morning, a ceremony of giving in charity known as Dharam ro Patlo is held. This ceremony may be conducted in a closed room or some where near the house under a bamboo structure. The commencement of the ceremony is announced with the beating of a drum and wailing of close female kin and relatives of the deceased.

An earthen lamp filled with purified butter is placed at the place fixed for Patlo. Close to this lamp are laid four small pots ; the mouths of all these pots are covered with 'rotis' of maize and an arrow is made to stand amidst these pots. A small brass plate containing water and a bunch of leaves of wood-apple tree (locally known as 'bil') are placed beside the pots. The priest sits by these objects, taking a convenient position to conduct the ceremony. The drum-beater and a man with a bottle of liquor stand by his side ready to do their respective jobs at the appropriate moment. Being asked by the priest, the drum-beater begins playing on the drum, and people come one after another to make their offerings to the departed soul. First the relatives and kin who have come from other villages take their turn and then the members of the local community. The person coming forward to make an offering squats near the priest, throws an anna (six paise) before the priest and then quickly grabbing the bunch of leaves in his right hand dips it in the plate containing water, between two to seven times and offers water near the pot and the lamp while the priest keeps on throwing small pieces of 'roti' near the pots and lamps. After the guests and villagers have made their offerings, the daughters of the lineage of the deceased come to make their offerings. Besides offering an anna and water, they also offer some maize flour.

The ceremony is concluded by covering the arrow with a piece of cloth and removing it to the house, and by giving away the

'rotis' covering the pots to the drum-beater. Then the liquor is served to everybody in small quantities. Soon the food is served, first to the relatives and kin who have come from other villages, and then to the people of the village. After the feast is over, the turban tying ceremony begins. The chief male mourner is seated on a blanket and tied with turbans brought by all his sisters, father's sisters and father's father's sisters from other villages. In one ceremony it was found that about one hundred small turbans were tied, on two sons of the deceased. Those who come from other villages are again fed in the evening. Contributions go into the main feast while a second feast has to be given by the family of the deceased.

These rituals are believed to bring peace and happiness to the departed soul.

5

Religion And Witchcraft

Living amidst forests and mountains, the Bhils are greatly exposed to the hazards of nature. Crop failures, famines, droughts, diseases, epidemics are common occurrences, and the mortality rate is consequently high. Their simple technology and their meagre knowledge of the forces of nature can hardly stand up to these challenges. It is no wonder that there is great reliance upon unseen objects and supernatural forces believed by them to be in control of their destinies. In our discussion of the religion of the Bhils, we will present an analytical description of their beliefs in unseen objects and supernatural forces and related practices, the religious functionaries with their status and role in the community, and the impact of these various beliefs and practices on their social structure and vice versa.

The Bhils, being in continuous contact with the Hindus, talk about the supreme God, Bhagwan, but bother least about him and believe him to be rather inconsequential in their lives. But lesser gods and goddesses are required to be kept favourably disposed, and frequently appeased with offerings and sacrifices. There are a great number of such deities, and these rather than being named individually are denoted by a collective term 'Nav lakh dev', literally meaning nine lac (9,00,000) deities but implying the whole complex

of all known and unknown deities. The main deities are however, three : Bheru, Mata and Magra Baba. It is believed that the Supreme Being or Bhagwan, who is referred to by many as Mahadev also, is the creator of this universe. Originally Mahadev was personally responsible for regulating the affairs of the universe by creating new lives and removing the old ones. Mahadev found himself much too simple to run this business of life as he was easily pleased and persuaded to confer boons for longer life and even immortality on his devotees. (In Gavri, a Bhil mosque, there are a couple of scenes depicting the gentlemanliness of Madadev by whose blessings the dead are brought back to life.) Realizing that his nature would cause disorder, and upset the equilibrium of the universe, Mahadev retired from active life vesting all his powers in one of his assistants, Bheru. Since then Bheru has been regulating the events of the universe with the assistance of his associates.

All deities are believed by the people to have the good of people at their heart ; they grant prosperity, bless them with children, keep them in good health, promote goodwill and amity between the people and their leaders. Besides these some of them also have some specific functions ; these will be described when these deities are individually discussed.

Bheru. Bheru, who is also known as Bhairav in the region and other parts of the country, is the chief deity of the Bhil pantheon. This deity is mostly represented by the figure of a warrior mounted on a horse. In Hindu villages and towns it is, however, also represented by crudely-shaped stones painted with zinc-oxide, and mostly covered with red aluminium foil. Among the Bhils as well as the Hindus of the region, two versions of Bheru are known : Kala (dark) Bheru and Gora (fair) Bheru. None from among the Bhils could explain the significance of having two versions of the same deity. In their propitiation and prayers, however, the Bhils do not distinguish between the Dark Bheru and the Fair Bheru and refer to the deity by a common term, Bheru, and address him as Bavji, a term commonly used for all male deities in this region. Bheru is propitiated on all important occasions, and invoked by his priests on all

festivals and life-cycle ceremonies. In the month of Ashwin (September-October), a ritual known as Nobarta is observed for nine days to propitiate Bheru and his consort Mata, the mother goddess. Besides this, on two days in a week, Saturday and Sunday, the devotees assemble in the temple, and get blessings mainly for the cure of their ailments and also to overcome their personal difficulties. He is appeased with the offerings of sweets, cereals and liquor, and with sacrifice of cocks, goats and buffaloes. Though he accepts both kinds of offerings, vegetarian as well as non-vegetarian, the sacrificial animal is not killed inside the temple. The reason given is that Dharam Raja, a fellow deity who is a close friend of his, is a strictly vegetarian god and would feel insulted by having to witness the act of killing, which is, therefore, avoided. Besides his all-pervasive beneficial functions, he is also regarded as a war god who brings victory to his devotees.

Mata. Another important deity of the Bhil pantheon is Mata, the mother goddess. She is assigned an ambiguous kinship relationship with Bheru; some say she is his sister, others say she is his wife. Each Bhil clan has one Mata (and some have a Mata in common) each with a different name, such as Dharal, Ambav, Lemash, Maliya, Karel and so on, but all of them possess the same attributes, and appear to be the manifestations of one Mata. It is only when matrimonial alliances are entered into that the clan goddesses are referred to, since marriage is to be avoided between those who belong to two different clans but have a common goddess. Like Bheru, Mata is also offered both vegetarian and non-vegetarian offerings. The occasions of celebration in honour and functions of this goddess are the same as those of Bheru.

Magra Baba. Magra means "hill" in the language of the Bhils and as the name indicates, Magra Baba is the deity of hills and forests. He bestows prosperity in forest produce and makes their hunting expedition successful. He is represented by irregularly-shaped stones, and his shrines are situated mostly on hills. About thirty years ago the Bhils used to undertake a yearly sacrifice of a cow, but at the intervention of the king of the State, this was

substituted with the sacrifice of a male buffalo. Every alternate year a nine-day-long ritual, Nobarta, is observed in honour of this deity.

We may now describe some other deities of the Bhil pantheon ; these are not quite as important as the trio of Bheru, Mata and Magra Baba, but are worshipped by the Bhils.

Dharam Raja. This name which may be literally translated as 'virtuous king', refers to a deity of softer habits. He is believed to be a close friend of Bheru but with entirely different attributes. He is purely a vegetarian god and hence offerings made to him consist of sweets, saffron and vermilion. He is represented by the idol of a snake. There is no particular occasion for his worship, and he is worshipped any time the other two deities, Bheru and Mata, are worshipped. He does not have any specific functions other than the general beneficial ones.

Rebari Baba. The Rebaris are a Hindu caste, who traditionally keep camels for transporting goods as the means of their livelihood. This deity is represented by the idol of a man mounted on a camel. He is considered to be an assistant of Bheru. In the past, when Rebaris passed through Bhil villages they were required to give a he-goat to the Bhils for offering to this deity for a safe journey. The deity seems to have symbolized the Bhil-Rebari relationship in the past. There is no specific occasion for his worship but he is also worshipped along with Bheru and Mata. He is regarded as a deity of way-farers, responsible for their safe journey.

Polio. The word 'Pol' means "gate" in Mewari, so Polio would mean 'of the gate' or a gateman. The idol of Polio is found just outside the temple of Bheru and Mata, and he is believed to be a watchman of the temple. Sometimes when it is difficult to invoke Bheru, Polio is invoked to clear the hurdles in the way of establishing contact with Bheru. He is not offered any kind of sacrifice ; purified butter is however burnt in fire before his idol when he is to be invoked to contact Bheru.

Raqtio. He is not represented by an idol ; however a small piece of silver worn around the necks by all married women represent him. He grants good luck in begetting children, and ensures their well-being. When a woman does not conceive even long after her marriage, she and her husband arrange for the sacrifice of a cock or a goat to please this deity. There is no particular occasion fixed for worshipping him.

Khetlo. The idols of Khetlo, also known as Khetpal in the village, are to be found on the boundaries of fields. As the name indicates, this deity is believed to be a protector of fields from pests, animals and thieves. At every marriage, a goat is sacrificed to him. The goat is made to stand before the idol of the deity and is killed only when it shakes its head, which is taken to be the sign of the acceptance of the sacrifice by the deity.

Some natural objects and elements such as the sun, the moon, the earth, fire, air, clouds are also believed by the Bhils to be gods and goddesses, but there are no idols representing them nor are they worshipped on any occasion.

A few Hindu deities such as Ganesh, Hanuman, Shitla Mata (goddess of small-pox) and Dasa Mata also receive veneration from the Bhils, though in varying degrees. In most of the houses of Pai, a crude image of Ganesh is to be found, and the god is offered purified butter (by burning it in fire) on ritually important occasions, particularly when one moves into a new house, or when sugarcane crushing is to begin. Hanuman is popularly known as the 'Lord of Lanka' but there is no awareness among the Bhils of the famous Hindu epic story of Ramayana. The idol of Hanuman is to be found in the outer parts of some temples of Bheru. This deity is neither regularly venerated nor is it assigned any particular attributes or functions. Shitla Mata or the goddess of small-pox is worshipped by only a very small section of the Bhil women. She is believed to bring prosperity to her devotees and to effect cure of small-pox. Dasa Mata or the goddess of luck, is also worshipped by a handful of Bhil women in company with the women of Sadhu and Brahman castes. She blesses her devotees with wealth and children. All these

deities—Hanuman, Ganesh, Shitla Mata and Dasa Mata are important Sanskritic deities of the Great Tradition.

The divine world of the Bhils seems to be modelled on the same principles as their own social world. All their social biases and attitudes are projected in their theological formulations. There is a similarity in their attitude towards Mahadev and the ruler of the State in the past and high government officials and ministers these days whom they believe, are interested in the people's well-being but both are not approachable. In viewing Bheru and his assistants their ideas regarding their own headman, their secondary leaders, and the petty government officials are reflected, as they are conceived of as gods who have to be appeased for winning their favour. As their headman is pivotal in regard to decision-taking and action in their community, so is Bheru among the supernatural beings. Bheru becomes a sort of super-headman by being taken up to a mystic plane and attributed with qualities of blessing people with children, warding off evil powers, ensuring good crops and so many other things. Dharam Raja, exhibiting the Sanskritic traits of deities, actually symbolizes the Bhils' attitude towards the moral principles of high caste Hindus. By allowing his idol to be kept in their temple along with their own deities, Bheru and Mata, and by the practice of not allowing the sacrifice of animals in the temple fearing Dharam Raja's embarrassment, they project their own relationship with and attitude towards the Hindu and their ways, showing how two contradictory moral systems have come to adjust with each other.

“Supernatural beings and whole theologies are then conceptual expressions of things in man's universe that importantly affect his life” (Norbeck 1964 : 215). It is not sheer coincidence that Rebari Baba (the camel god) is represented by the image of a camel rider, Dharam Raja by a snake, and Bheru as a soldier. These are in fact expressions of their hopes and fears and anxieties cast into these forms. “As expressions of social experience, theologies are conditioned by habitat, techniques of gaining a livelihood, the manner of ordering society and the whole of culture.” (Norbeck : 215).

The temple that houses the idols of Bheru, Mata, Dharam Raja and Rebari Baba is known as Deora. The word Deora is made by combining two words, 'dev' meaning the 'deity' and 'ora' meaning the 'room'; hence Deora means the room of the deity. In any Deora there are a number of idols of these deities arranged in a row on a slightly raised platform. The idols are made of clay, and have to be bought from the village, Molala, near Nathadwara, an important pilgrim centre of the State, about fifty miles from Pai. Each idol costs around three rupees and people going to get these idols have to remain in a state of ritual purity by abstaining from liquor and women.

There are nine such Deoras in Pai. The ownership of a Deora may rest with an individual, a lineage, a ward or a sector of the village or the village itself; however, depending upon circumstances, the nature of ownership may change. For example, the village Deora known as Kamdiwala Bavji had originally belonged to the members of lineages of Jagotra and Vadera clans of the Bhils. Similarly the Deora of Mota Nera Bavji in Paba Ward belonged to an individual, Homa Katara, but now it is considered to belong to Paba Ward. Here it may be clarified that the term owners is used in a special meaning, that is, those who habitually visit the Deora, bear the expenses of its maintenance, and from whom the functionaries of the Deora are usually drawn. The devotees of a particular Deora may casually go to other Deoras also if they believe it will be useful to them. Occasionally a Deora may also be removed to a new place or may even be deserted altogether. This happens when the proprietors of a Deora migrate to a new place or when people come to believe that a particular Deora has become ineffective in curing people and cattle and in other respects. When the main functionary of a Deora, the Pat Bhopa, moves away to a new site within the village for exploiting land or due to some other reasons, he may quit his old Deora and build another close to his new residence. In such a case, the old Deora may fall into disuse, or someone else may start looking after it. When the Pat Bhopa of Godlawala Bavji Deora of Nichla Ward moved over to Nalwat Ward, he acquired land there and built a new Deora.

in Nalwat ; and his old Deora is lying in ruins. In some cases, however, both the Deoras may thrive well. The proprietorship may also change hands, particularly when members of a lineage emigrate or die out due to infertility or high rate of mortality. Nalwat Bavji Deora originally belonged to a lineage of the Kasotia clan but since its disappearance from Pai, a lineage of the Kharadi clan took over the charge of that Deora and now, for the last forty to fifty years, all its expenses are being borne by it. Three brothers of this lineage are among the main functionaries of this Deora.

Deoras come to acquire different names due to their association with a particular place, site, tree or some other object. For example, the Deora situated in Mual, Nilvo Bavji, is known by this name as there is lot of greenery surrounding it. Nalwat Bavji is known by that name as it is situated in Nalwat Ward. Gadiwala Bavji is situated by a 'Gadi' which means a fortress ; Mota Nera Bavji is situated by a Nera which means a brook. One peculiarity of all Bhil Deoras is that they are all built facing the east.

A Deora houses Bheru, Mata, Dharam Raja and Rebari Baba ; in many cases these deities are represented by more than one idol each. Other deities are not housed in the Deora but have their own shrines. The village also has a temple of Mahadev which is situated near the cremation ground. Besides, in a hole on one of the walls of the veranda of the village Deoras, a crude rock also represents Mahadev. Mata is found in all Deoras but there is also an independent temple of hers in the village ravine. The idols of Polio and Hanuman are to be found not in the Deora but right in front of it. Ganesh's idols can be seen in almost all households. Magra Baba's main shrine is located on the top of a hill which is a part of Pai ; other small shrines of this deity are also found on the hill tops.

Functionaries of Deoras and other shrines

All Deoras and important shrines (of Magra Baba and Mata) have some functionaries attached to them. There are always some aspirants for positions in important and popular Deoras ; however, the positions of functionaries of Deoras and shrines low in popularity and importance attract few people and, consequently, some of the

positions may not be filled at all or one or more persons may have to perform simultaneously the roles of various functionaries.

Following are the categories of functionaries of Deoras and other shrines of important deities :

1. Pat Bhopa,
2. Kotwal,
3. Pujara, and
4. Other Bhopas.

Pat means seat ; Pat Bhopa would thus mean the Bhopa in the seat. He is the overall manager of the affairs of a Deora. He acts as a medium between the deity and his or her devotees. On appropriate occasions he is required to invoke the deity in a state of trance. When he is in a state of trance it is believed by people that he has completely lost his self-consciousness, and that his body acts as the deity wants it, and the words uttered by him are not his own but of the deity.

The choice of people from whom a Pat Bhopa is chosen is limited by certain factors. The position of Pat Bhopa normally rests in a lineage but, if an appropriate man is not available, the range of choice may be broadened, and even of a different clan may be favoured. To enable him to become a Pat Bhopa a person should have certain qualifications. He should have been promised to serve the deity some time during his life, must be capable of invoking the deity in him, and the deity should like to speak his mind through him. Usually those males are dedicated who suffer from some severe illness and recover only after being promised to serve in the Deora of the deity. The dedication ceremony is known as Vinti, the ring ceremony, and the person who has gone through the ceremony is believed wedded to the deity. It is true that all dedicated persons do not become Pat Bhopa nor are they capable of invoking a deity but a person is favourably considered if he fulfils other qualifications of the Pat Bhopa and is also dedicated. It was however noticed that if a person was favoured to be a Pat Bhopa he could even be dedicated later after becoming a Pat Bhopa, obviously even without having fallen ill and been promised.

A case study of transfer of religious authority, Pat Bhopa, in the village Deora is being presented here :

The village Deora of Pai known as Kamdiwala Bavji is believed to be very old. Long ago the lineages of the Vadera and Jagotra clans of Bhils provided the Pat Bhopas to the village Deora at different times. But in the known history of Pai, that is to say about eighty years ago, Kalyo, a member of Ayari clan was the Pat Bhopa of the village Deora. At the time of his death, his son was too young to become the Pat Bhopa. He had no younger brother either and, under such circumstances, the choice fell on Mangla of a lineage of the Hirawat clan. But he also died leaving behind no male issue, and once again the people were faced with the problem of succession. There are two stories of Dita Hirawat's succession : first, that Dita's father was a functionary, a Pujara, of the village Deora and so could push up his son to the position of Pat Bhopa; second, that all potential candidates, all belonging to the Hirawat clan (of which there was only one lineage in the village) assembled before the deity at the village Deora, and that the choice fell upon Dita. Dita had been till then an ordinary Bhopa of Hamli Pipli Bavji ; his ring ceremony had taken place when he was fourteen years old. Besides he had proved that he was a proper medium of the deity, Bheru, and that the deity preferred to speak his mind through him. In 1965, Dita who was still in the late thirties was made to bow out of the office of the Pat Bhopa, and replaced by another man of his own lineage. There was some evidence to suggest that Dita did not get along with some of the important leaders, particularly the *de facto* headman. There were some complaints of negligence of duty against Dita. Dita, however, stated in a private conversation with the investigator that leaders did not like his habit of plain speaking regarding their behaviour. One day when Dita had gone to visit one of his relatives in a nearby village, the leaders presented Daula Hirawat before the deity. Daula was found acceptable to the deity and hence Daula officiated at the annual ritual of Nobarta. Dita quietly accepted this change as he was not strong enough to oppose the leaders. Dita and the leaders, however, later gave it out that Dita had quit the office of Pat Bhopa of his

own accord. He said that it did not suit him ; it had brought many misfortunes to his family ; he had two wives but only one son, that too in ill-health. He also said that this position had suited no one and could suit none. All the earlier Pat Bhopas of the village had died issueless, and even their lines became extinct.

Occasionally when some lesser functionary of a Deora moves to a new place and builds another Deora on his own initiative and at his own expense, he would have little difficulty in becoming the Pat Bhopa of the newly built Deora. Ratna Khokhria, who is now dead, was originally a lesser functionary of a Deora in the village Khedia but when constructed Nilva Bavji in Pai he automatically became its Pat Bhopa. Similarly Homa Katara who was a lesser functionary of Nilva Bavji in Mual (a Ward of Pai) is now the Pat Bhopa of the Deora of Mota Nera Bavji, which he has himself built.

Kotwal and Pujara. These two positions are also filled in more or less the same manner as that of Pat Bhopa. The position of Kotwal is, however, less significant than that of Pat Bhopa, and that of the Pujara even less. When there is a major ceremony at a Deora, the Kotwal has to take the responsibility practically for every detail of the ceremony as the Pat Bhopa is kept completely occupied during the ceremony, being in a trance. The Kotwal is assisted in his task by the Pujaras of his Deora, who may number five or six in an important Deora, while in Deoras of much less importance, the same person may have to perform the duties of Kotwal and Pujara. In the Deora of Himlawala Bavji, Kanji Chhapnia plays the roles of both Kotwal and Pujara. In Deoras owned by a group of lineally related persons, these positions are generally held by members of the lineage. All the three positions, namely those of Pat Bhopa, Kotwal and Pujara of Nalwat Bavji Deora are held by Bado, Nano and Virko respectively, all of the same lineage of the Kharadi clan. On the other hand in a Deora of the community or that of a Ward, these positions may be held by members of different clans and lineages. For instance in the village Deora, the Bhopa and Pujara are of a lineage of the Hirawat

clan, and the Kotwal is of a lineage Katara clan. The Kotwal and the Pujara are jointly responsible for the cleaning and sweeping of their Deora and, if needed, Pujaras may also be asked by the Kotwal to collect fuel needed to warm the place where the ceremony is to be conducted. When the ceremony gets going, Pujaras tie belts of camel bells around their waists to produce the rhythmic sound needed to help the Pat Bhopa to get possessed. The Pujaras are also required to go around the village to collect contributions of maize, ghee, etc. from the people affiliated to their Deora. These alms are needed during the course of a ritual ceremony.

The offices of Pat Bhopa, Kotwal and Pujara hardly lead to any financial or material gains to these functionaries. It is done with faith and zeal. Only the Pat Bhopa of the village Deora gets a long piece of cloth as a gift in recognition of his services.

Other Bhopas. The term Bhopa is vaguely used for a variety of people. It is used for any one who is believed to have some kind of supernatural link ; for example, a person capable of falling into a trance, a person who can effect cure by chanting some mystic formula or by performing a magical rite, and a person dedicated to the service of a deity whether he is capable of spirit possession or not. Relevant to the discussion of the functionaries of a Deora, the term Bhopa refers to all those persons who are either dedicated to the service of a deity (whether capable of possession or not) and those who are not dedicated but are capable of possession. This category is important particularly from the point of view, that these persons form a body from among whom the three important functionaries, namely Pat Bhopa, Kotwal and Pujara are chosen. Limits are, however, imposed on how high a person can travel up the hierarchy of functionaries by his affiliation to a particular clan, lineage or even a pressure group.

The Bhils have been exposed to different religions and also to reform movements, some of which had been initiated by the more enlightened of the Bhils themselves. We may divide these movements into two main categories : (1) movements that mainly tend to isolate the Bhils from their original faith, and precipitate fissiparous

tendencies in the community, and (2) movements that do not lead to their isolation from the original faith but only provide some additions to it.

Christianity, Kabir Panth and the Bhagat Movement fall in the first category, and Kamdia Panth in the second category. There are ten households of Bhil Christians in Pai. They believe in one God, and forbid any kind of social inter-course with all non-Christians. They do not participate in the village rituals and festivals, but even denounce the Bhil deities. Some of the converts tried to return to their original faith but could not due to the inflexible attitude of the village leaders. Further conversion could not be achieved due to stern measures adopted by the Bhil leaders in Pai. Among the Christians in Pai, a rift was noticed in 1967 when one more church came up, and they were split into two camps. The Kabir Panth and Bhagat Movements have been able to attract devotees in large numbers from among the Bhils of the southern districts of the State. There are to be found in those areas some villages whose entire Bhil population has been converted. Kabir Panth derives its principles from the moral verses of the well-known saint, Kabir, who worked for the religious unity of all sections of people including Muslims. Followers of this saint are also to be found among people of the lower castes in many parts of Central India. They believe in the one God theory, denounce the existence of all other deities, and teach non-violence and abstinence from liquor. There is no following for Kabir Panth in Pai. Some Bhil youths who have travelled down south, returned with some impact of Kabir Panth. This has, however, been limited only to the singing of Kabir Panthi prayers and hymns. This has met with opposition from their leaders, and has kept in check the spread of this sect in Pai.

There are no Bhagats in Pai but it will be worthwhile to refer to this Movement here. The Bhagat Movement was started by Govindgiri, a member of the Banjara nomadic tribe of Rajasthan, around 1914. The teachings of this Movement comprised a few ascetic principles and observances such as abstinence from liquor, vegetarianism, not stealing, seclusion of women during menstrual

period, observing fasts on certain days of the month, and so on. It incorporated into its preaching certain economic reforms also, such as digging of wells and fencing of the fields. Followers of this sect are allowed only limited social intercourse with outsiders. The spread of this movement has also remained confined to the southern districts and areas contiguous with Gujarat State.

In Pai, the movements which have made considerable impact are those that did not aim at isolating the Bhils from their original faith, but rather provided some additional faith. The original faith of the Bhils centres round the propitiation of Bheru, Magra Baba and Mata and the appeasement of ancestral and other spirits. This original faith is known as Panch Nami. During the last twenty-five to thirty years, a large number of Bhils in Pai and many surrounding villages have been brought into the fold of a new faith known as Kamadia Panth, which is also known as Dasnami. To become a Kamadia one is not required to renounce his faith in his own gods and deities. He can be a Dasnami and also continue to worship his own deities, Bheru, Mata and Magra Baba. This new faith forbids killing of animals and drinking of liquor, though rather weakly. When people were asked what made them become Dasnamis, they most often replied: "In the pursuit of deeper knowledge." The reply looks philosophical though one wonders whether it means anything serious to the Bhils. The Dasnamis worship Ram Deoji who is symbolized by metal horses. The priests of Ram Deoji belong to the caste of Sadhus (ascetics) whose food habits approximate those of the Bhils but who claim that they do not eat buffalo flesh, which the Bhils eat without any inhibition. The Bhil version of Ram Deoji is known as Jargaji—and the Bhils themselves act as priests of Jargaji. A Bhil priest of Jargaji said that Jargaji and Ram Deoji were the names of the same deity. He also occasionally referred to the temple of Jargaji as the temple of Ram Deoji. The Sadhus are not happy with the Bhils for worshipping Jargaji and for claiming that deity to be Ram Deoji, as this has adversely affected their clientel, causing them some economic loss. According to Sadhus, "Jargaji is not a real god, but an imitation of our god, Ram Deo." The Bhils assign Jargaji (also Ram Deoji)

a status lower than Bheru, Mata and Magra Baba. "He is one of many deities assisting Bheru to regulate the course of this universe." The Sadhus, on the other hand, claim that Ram Deoji "is the supreme being and all other deities including Bheru, Mata and Magra Baba are his assistants."

There were clear indications that though the position of Bheru remained unchallenged among the Bhils, the Sadhu priests of Ram Deoji succeeded in attracting a considerable number of devotees from among this tribal group. Their success may be attributed to the greater persuasiveness of the Sadhus, and their willingness to adapt their faith to the local conditions and popular demands. There was a general agreement that Jargaji and Ram Deoji were similar in many respects but one important difference was in the nature of the offerings that they accepted. Ram Deoji accepted only sweets, whereas Jargaji accepted offerings of meat also. It was, however, observed that people participating in a ceremony of Ram Deoji also partook of the flesh of a buffalo that had been sacrificed by the family which hosted the ceremony. On being asked about it, the priest, a member of the Sadhu caste, said that the buffalo had been killed not at the place of the ceremony but a little away from it. He was, however, embarrassed to admit that he also got a share from this meat. Perhaps due to this spirit of adjustment the Sadhus have been able to attract a larger clientele from among the Bhils than the Bhil priests of Jargaji.

The Dasnami or Kamadia Panth has posed no serious threat to the faith of the Bhils. There are no restrictions on social intercourse between Dasnami and the non-Dasnami Bhils. There are persons who are priests of the Dasnami as well as the Panchnami faiths. The Dasnami fair is a big social event, and is attended by both the sections of the Bhils. There is no spirit-possession at these Dasnami ceremonies, no forecasting of events and no cures for diseases, though promises and vows are made to the deity that if a particular desire is fulfilled, a fair would be held in honour of the deity. The fulfilment of such a promise generally coincides with the sudden prosperity of the man who then spends lavishly "so that the event is remembered for a long time."

The widely venerated pair of legendary figures, Sita and Ram, around whom runs the story of the Hindu epic, *Ramayana*, popularized by Tulsidas through his *Ramcharita Manas*, does not have a place in the religious world of the Bhils. Since Ram is believed by the Hindus to be an embodiment of God, a few Bhils have also begun to subscribe to the idea, although there is no systematic following for Ram.

Worship of Ancestors

Even a casual visitor in Pai or in any other Bhil village of this region is most likely to notice the stone images, in gray and white, of men and women on slightly raised platforms of varying sizes. Men's images are shown armed with guns, swords, bows and arrows. They are shown either mounted on horseback or standing. The names of the persons whom these images represent are generally inscribed at the feet with some personal details such as the date on which they died, their clan affiliations and so on. Deceased women are represented only by foot impressions carved on slabs fixed vertically on the platforms, with inscriptions furnishing details about the persons these represent. These images of men and women are known as *Bhomia* and *Matlok* respectively. They are regarded as guardian spirits of their village, whose function is to ensure the perpetuation of the line, the safety of their descendants and the creation of amity and goodwill between ordinary people and the people in authority. *Bhomia* and *Matlok* are installed for those persons whose spirits are believed to be restless after their death and hence need to be settled. The descendants become aware of the restlessness of their ancestor's spirit when someone from among them suffers from cold, fever, headache or some other kinds of mild ailments. This suspicion is, however, confirmed at the temple of Bheru where the Pat Bhopa, possessed by Bheru, tells them the cause of these troubles. For instance, Anda Chhapnia became convinced of the necessity of installing a *Bhomia* for his elder brother when he was told at his lineage temple of Bheru that his troubles were being caused by the spirit of his deceased brother, and that he should arrange to settle it. Similarly Nathu Katara

had to install a Bhomia for his brother since he suspected that the shortness of breath from which he was suffering was being caused by the spirit of his brother, for whom a Bhomia had been installed but had been broken and damaged by someone. Only Bhomia, *i.e.* images of men, are installed ceremoniously, the installation of Matlok, the images of women (wives) not being marked by any such ceremony. (This seems to be due to the patrilineal nature of the society.)

The participants in a Bhomia ceremony are all Bhils, though the presence of an interested visitor is not minded. The ceremony is attended by both males and females of all ages. No formal invitation is extended to anyone in particular in the village, and all are welcome, but the host does remember to invite his married sisters and daughters living in other villages. If their husbands and children also wish to come, they may do so but it is not binding on them. Care is also taken that if two agnates with important place in the lineage are not on good terms, they are required to straighten out their relations before the ceremony takes place. The number of people attending a particular Bhomia ceremony largely depends upon two factors: (1) how many ceremonies there are in the village on that day, and (2) the people's estimate of the person arranging the ceremony. If they expect that the host is going to spend lavishly, there are likely to be more people. The number of participants also varies at different points of time in the duration of the ceremony. When the Bhomia ceremony commenced at Nathu Katara's place, there were about twenty-five people but as time went on the number of people also increased. At the conclusion of the ceremony, there were about one hundred men and women present.

The Bhomia ceremony takes place on the 13th or 14th day after the Diwali festival (October-November). The image of Bhomia is brought from the town of Rikhabdeo, about thirty miles from Pai, where they are made and sold by some non-Bhil people. The Bhils are the only buyers of these images. Four to five days prior to this ceremony, a trip to Rikhabdeo is undertaken by the host and two or three other members of his lineage and neighbourhood friends. As soon as they arrive at Rikhabdeo, they make up their minds

about a particular image, and mark its forehead with vermilion, which is believed to arouse the necessary power in the image. The price of a Bhomia with a single image is two rupees, while that of a double-imaged one is four rupees. The charges for inscription of details are four to eight annas. After returning to their village, they hide the image somewhere near the house to take it out only on the day of its installation.

A Bhomia ceremony starts around 10 o'clock at night. The place where the ceremony is to be conducted is swept clean, and treated with a paste of mud and cowdung. A lot of fuel is deposited near the house for keeping the fire alive throughout the winter night. Young men and women arrive about an hour before the ceremony commences, and engage in dancing and singing. Those who do not want to dance make themselves comfortable near the place of the ceremony. Wrapped in their bedsheets and quilts, they warm themselves by the fire, puffing leaf-cigarettes and indulge in gossip.

About a kilogram of maize is piled at the site chosen for the ceremony, and a lighted earthen lamp is placed on this pile. On either side of the maize-pile are placed two large tiles with some fire. Things like a comb, sugar drops and a preparation of maize and jaggery are deposited close to the maize. A line about a foot long, is drawn on the wall with the paste of ghee, curd and vermilion, and is covered with a piece of cloth of the same size cut in such a way as to look like a trident. This is followed by singing of songs and beating of drums by one or two persons who are skilled in these arts. Soon one of them breaks a coconut, and throws pieces of coconut and some ghee into the fire. The scent of burning ghee and coconut and the rhythm of music gets one of the media into trance. The medium who is of the same lineage as the host (in case there is no medium in the lineage some outsider may also be called in) is at this time believed to be under the possession of some soul of the host's deceased male agnate or cognate. If, however, it is found that the medium is having difficulty in attaining the state of trance, one or two of the active participants request their chief deity, Bheru, to be kind to them. Contrary to the usual spirit-possession in which the medium acts violently and appears to

be under great strain, on this occasion the person under possession appears humorous and jovial and all the participants are also in a light mood. The arrival of every soul is cheered with loud clapping and whooping. The Bhopa or the person under possession, is believed to behave in the same fashion as the deceased when he had a corporal existence. The soul immediately after its arrival asks the participants to fulfil one or two of its whims or desires that it supposedly had during its corporal existence. These desires may be of varied kinds, for example, to get a drink of liquor, or to have a hunt arranged, to drink a glass of milk, to get married and so on. Some of these demands such as those of liquor, milk, etc. are actually fulfilled while others are fulfilled only symbolically, through a mockshow. In one ceremony one soul asked for a loaded gun. The gun was brought to the Bhopa who fired it, and everyone felt happy. In one instance the gun did not fire but the soul spoke through the Bhopa, "I am happy that you have satisfied me. I do not care whether the gun really fired or not." In another instance the soul expressed a desire for getting married. A mock marriage was performed ; everybody enjoyed the situation and the soul left highly pleased. Sometimes people having difficulty even in identifying some souls. In such situations they satisfy themselves with such remarks as "Oh, this fellow must have lived long ago, so we don't even know him." It is customary for these souls to announce their identity at their arrival and to bless the participants, before leaving, for recovery from illness, good luck in crops, prosperity of the forest, well-being of children, and such other things. After ten to twelve souls have made their appearance, there follows an interlude of an hour or so during which the participants may go to sleep, gossip among themselves or dance for a while. The special Bhomia music is also discontinued during the recess. The ceremony is again resumed by starting the Bhomia music, and breaking a coconut and offering its pieces and ghee to the fire. This goes on till about two hours before the sun-rise, when finally the Bhopa is possessed by the soul of the person where Bhomia is to be installed. The arrival of this soul is applauded with tremendous clapping and whooping. The soul generally makes such pronouncements through

the Bhopa : "I was very eager for a union with my people. In order to meet you I sent those warnings.....you suffered from cold, the milk in the udders of your cow dried up. What could I do when you did not understand my indications quickly ? Now I am happy I'll set everything all right. I'll protect you from diseases ; I will not let your cattle die ; the headman will be amicable to you." After this the soul orders its image to be brought in, and then taken for installation. The image is then handed over to one of the daughters of the lineage, who stands waiting on the eastern side of the house. The procession is led by the Bhopa and the older members of the lineage and is followed by the girl holding the image, along with her friends and other participants. Even those who could not be present during the ceremony may join this procession. After they arrive at the place where the Bhomia's image is to be installed, one or two members of the lineage get busy with digging a hole for installing the image. The girls and women keep themselves occupied with singing. Again the special Bhomia music is commenced. The Bhopa once again goes into a trance. Pieces of coconut, maize flour, ghee, etc. are put in the fire as offerings to the Bhomia. While this goes on, the Bhopa smoothly slips the image into the hole dug for it. He then begins filling the cupped palms of people with liquor which is drunk by all men, women and even children. Men and women come one by one and squat before the Bhomia for his blessings for their personal welfare. By now the sun is quite high in the sky, the participants whose number has swollen many-fold return to the place where the ceremony had been held. They all receive coconut pieces, sugar drops and a share from a preparation of maize.

Once a Bhomia has been installed, every year on the 13th or 14th day after the Diwali festival, coconut and ghee are offered to him by burning them in fire. At every marriage in the lineage, the groom and bride are required to pay their homage to their Bhomias.

The old often complain about disregard of their opinions by young people. Custom demands that young people should show respect for and dependence upon elders. "The inevitable changes in the

structure of a group which result from the biological flow of a human population through a set social structure is productive of conflict, in which men and women come into dispute where they are both, by different rules, in the right. A man should acknowledge his father's superiority ; a man is entitled equally to his own measure of independence. Brothers should remain united ; each brother has his independent interests. This conflict between social principles is obscured from the society's members by the raising of the axioms of kinship to a mystical plane where they are beyond question. There the principles are separately validated by ancestral power. But the ambivalence remains." (Gluckman 1965 : 228)

The Bhomia ceremony draws together all kin living in the village, the neighbours, members of the Ward and the village at large. It has a solidifying effect at various levels of kin and territorial groups. It provides an occasion for recreation for the community. At the level of the family the occasion can be conveniently used for the elevation of status by spending lavishly. One important function of the ceremony lies in the perpetuation of Bhil cultural values, which often come under fire from the orthodox Hindus in the region. It is now a common practice for Hindus to take the Bhils to task and embarrass them over many of their customs and practices such as sacrifice of animals, drinking of liquor, hunting animals, free and uninhibited expression of sex, and so on. I often heard Bhils discussing with concern the implications of certain laws enforced by the government regarding distillation and about sacrifice of animals. They are not in the least convinced of the good intentions of the government, and the misplaced zeal of orthodox Hindus and missionaries perturb them.

Black magic

Witchcraft. Witchcraft is regarded in Pai as degrading and undesirable, but people are believed to practise it very frequently against each other. It has not been attempted to find out exactly how much of their income people spend on witchcraft or counter-witchcraft as none actually admitted the practice of witchcraft against someone. However, people did often talk about how much

expense was incurred by them on counteracting somebody's witchcraft. From the information available, we can divide the beliefs concerning witchcraft into the following categories :

1. There are people whose gaze can adversely affect one's fertility, health, beauty, crops, cattle and so on. Even ordinary people can cause harm to other people, if such feelings are aroused in them, "Oh how healthy he is". "Oh, he is so handsome", "His cow gives so much of milk" and so on. These people are not conscious that they have caused harm by merely allowing such ideas to occur in their minds. Such harm can even be done, for example, by a mother, without her knowledge, to her child just by having the thought, "How handsome my child is ! It has such a nice appetite." This is, however, not so serious, and the victim recovers in no time just by being treated with commonly known techniques, without calling in an expert.

2. There are some women, who are known to be witches, Dakan in the community. These are believed to have spite against all people, and hence always on the lookout to destroy everything that is highly prized in the community, such as fertility of women, good health, good crops, healthy cattle and so on. They harm people in two ways : by gazing intently at them or by using the powers of evil spirits who are believed to be under their control, and whom they could use according to their will. They are believed to enjoy eating the insides of any person and turning him hollow and finally taking his life. A woman becomes a witch because she has hatred for people. She is believed to train herself by spending during the darkest night of the year (on Diwali) long hours at the cremation ground, by offering sacrifices of flesh and liquor to the evil spirits. They are even known to travel long distances in order to acquire power to harm their fellow-beings. Besides they also go through many other ordeals to attain the power by which they could harm others.

These witches are greatly feared and people try to keep away from their sight, their children who are believed to be highly susceptible to such influence. The women believed to be witches are treated with utmost courtesy, and nobody dares to tell them that they are

witches as this may arouse their wrath. There is no definite way of recognizing a witch except that they are believed to have blood-shot eyes and their movements are such as would arouse suspicion. Some of these are widely known in the community and others are only secretly known to small groups—as neighbours, members of wards and so on. Eight women, whose names were given as witches, did not permit a generalization of the definite characteristics with the help of which a woman could be said to be a witch. Two of these witches were non-Bhils. Among the Bhils one witch had no children, another witch was the senior of the two wives of a man, and had four daughters but no son. Most of these were above forty, but one was young. One thing common among all these witches was that they were all married and were in their husbands' village. None of the daughters of the village was suspected of witchcraft.

3. The third category, and by far the most common form of black magic, is the use of a malevolent deity, Sikotra, against others. There is no one in Pai who has not fallen a victim to Sikotra at one time or other. Almost all households have a place reserved for this deity. People generally say: "Sikotras have come from Gujarat. Twenty-five years ago there was no Sikotra in Pai. Megha Katara is still alive but he has been forced to keep himself aloof from public life. There are, however, several other men who are also now believed to be in actual control of this deity. The services of these people could be bought by laymen for taking revenge upon their enemies or even for harming someone out of jealousy. A few cases of the use of Sikotra may be cited here :

Case 1

Kanji Chhapnia's father, Khuma Chhapnia, had to abandon his land and other property when he immigrated into Pai, being much bothered by a Sikotra who, he believed, had been put against him by his neighbours, of the Holki clan. The Sikotra caused the death of members of his household, his cattle and the destruction of his crop. Before arriving at the decision of emigration from Kotda, he had tried a number of people reputed to be skilled in warding off the influence of the Sikotra but without

any success. After he left Kotda, his land was taken over by the Holki and by one of his own younger brothers. It is some years since Khuma died and now his younger brothers and two sons are settled in Pai. Khuma's younger brothers, Anda, Vela and Lakhma, and his sons, Kanji and Modiyo, have spent a considerable amount for getting rid of the Sikotra, but they have succeeded only partially.

A Sikotra is believed to have under him from one hundred to one hundred and twenty-five assistants known as 'Vir'. The more 'Vir' a Sikotra has, the more difficult it is to get rid of him. In Kanji Chhapnia's case, they (he and his uncles) have been able to drive away most of the 'Vir' but still a few have not left. Though he hired two or three Bhopas of Sikotra at different times, it was only the last Bhopa—a Rajput—who got any success. Kanji and his uncles had to pay him one hundred and fifty rupees but even when told that four to five 'Vir' were still there, Kanji said, "Now leave these five if you cannot get them out. I will reserve a corner for them in my house and appease them from time to time." Besides paying him one hundred and fifty rupees, they also incurred an expense of fifty rupees on offerings of liquor, clothes, goats and cocks to the Sikotra.

Case 2

Nara Katara, a headman of Pai, had to spend around one hundred and fifty rupees to get rid of a Sikotra that Megha Katara was believed to have put against him. Nara believes that it was due to that Sikotra that his first wife ran away from him and many of his cattle died in a short time. Nara has engaged Bhopas on a number of occasions to save him from the wrath of the Sikotra. It is estimated that he must have spent in all about a thousand rupees. Megha Katara, who was alleged to have put the Sikotra against him, it may be recalled, that he was also at one time his political rival. Nara's allegation made Megha Katara very unpopular in the community, and whatever chances he had to attain power were completely forfeited.

Case 3

When Kala Vadera and Havla Vadera, two brothers, died, their sons were very young. Kala Vadera's son was removed to Alsigarh Kotda where he grew up under the care of one of his lineage members. Havla Vadera's son stayed on in Pai, and grew up under the care of Lachhu Vadera, one of his close kin. While these sons were still very young, their land was allotted to some other persons, Jiva Khokhria, Dita Hirawat, Havji Katara, Kanji Chhapnia, Kana Nath Sadhu and Amar Nath Sadhu. Normally if a person is survived by no male heir, the right over his land passes to the members of the lineage. If he has sons, even minors, the land is temporarily allowed to be used by one of the members of the lineage, who is also their guardian, and when the sons come of age, their parental land is restored to them. In this case, it was, however, thought that the members of the Vadera lineage in Pai had already plenty of land and hence it had better be allotted to more needy persons.

When the Vadera boys came of age, they felt bitter that their land had been allotted to others by the Elders' Council. The Elders' Council met their grievance by allotting them some other land in Paba, a sector of Pai. About four years ago Havji Katara, one of those persons who had been allotted the land of the Vadera brothers, deserted the land and his house, and moved over to Paba sector where he became a neighbour of Bhera Vadera, one of the two boys. It is alleged that before Havji moved over to Paba he engaged Bhera Vadera (who had legitimate grievances against Jiva Khokhria and others) to put a Sikotra against Jiva Khokhria. Jiva Khokhria and Havji were neighbours, and Jiva believes Havji must have done so out of a feeling of jealousy that after he left nobody should be able to enjoy the fruits of his land. Bhera Vadera should have agreed to put Sikotra on Havji's behalf as he too had a strong grudge against Jiva Khokhria for enjoying his (Bhera's) land. When Jiva Khokhria reproached Bhera Vadera for this act, he said he had done so at Havji's request. Finally Jiva Khokhria requested Bhera to remove Sikotra from his house, and also agreed to bear the expenses.

Jiva Khokhria said he had lost a buffalo and that his wife did not keep good health while the Sikotra was in his house.

Case 4

Kanji Chhapnia's wife had great difficulty at her last delivery. Formerly she had suspected that the trouble was being caused by a Chudel (A witch becomes a Chudel after her death, and it is very difficult to get rid of her). She suspected this Chudel to be her father's brother's deceased wife. Later, however, Kanji Chhapnia and his uncle began believing that the trouble was being caused by a Sikotra put by Bhera Vadera. Bhera was believed to have put the Sikotra in order to displace Kanji Chhapnia from his land. Bhera Vadera had the grievance that Kanji was enjoying the benefits of the land which had originally belonged to him (Bhera Vadera). Kanji thought that this feeling must have motivated Bhera to put Sikotra in his house.

Case 5

Kamla Kharadi's senior wife is known as a witch in the village. Dita Hirawat feared that his wife's infertility was due to Kamla Kharadi's wife's witchcraft. Dita's wife is Kamla's elder brother, Vaisa Kharadi's daughter. Their marriage was against the norm of the village exogamy.

From the cases above (and so many others which could not be given here), it appears that people often attribute their difficulties and calamities to supernatural causes. There is clearly strife and conflict in social relations. So people are ready to believe that others might harm them, out of jealousy or enmity, by covert means such as the practice of witchcraft. Where two persons are seekers after the same political office, and one fails in his efforts, he can attribute his failure to the practice of witchcraft by his opponent. And at the same time a person can also black-mail his rival by accusing him of the practice of witchcraft, which is considered undesirable in the community. Women are believed to be witches perhaps due to their dubious status in the community. Their loyalties to their husband's kin are often questioned. They are believed to initiate the process

of disintegration in the husband's family of orientation. There is little strength in their character. They may leave their husbands and children without bothering even a bit about the latter's prestige and convenience. When the husbands are away they may even have affairs with some other men of their choice. The idea is they can't be trusted. However, their productivity and fertility make them most desirable. To a great extent the doubts of witchcraft are also purely accidental. When a woman is noticed gazing at people and if by chance there is some illness, then people may suspect her. It is also possible for a woman to have blood-shot eyes and be identified as a witch. It is often heard that Sikotra came to Pai about twenty-five years ago from Gujarat, and before that the incidence of witchcraft was very low. This belief may be due to increased tension in the community due to increased mobility of people. Those who go out more frequently are suspected more often of witchcraft; this indicates nothing but distrust for outsiders, distrust for those whose loyalties might be divided between their own people and outsiders. When we see how much people spend to get rid of Sikotra, we may wonder whether the people who have come to be known as experts in countering witchcraft are not really manipulating things for their personal gain.

Besides, if a person feels that someone has some reason for grievance against him, he may attribute all his troubles to this person's witchcraft, as it appears from the case of Jiva Khokhria and Bhera Vadera. If a person is doing well, financially, socially or otherwise, and if he suddenly has some setbacks, then it is natural for him to believe that those who were not doing so well are jealous of him and have used witchcraft against him.

Bhil Religion *Vesus* Local Hinduism

A cursory view of the lists of deities and the festivals of Bhils and Hindus of the region gives an impression that there is a considerable sharing in this sphere. Some deities of the Bhils, which have been described earlier, are also known to the Hindu population of the region. Similarly the names and occasions of the celebration

of the festivals also correspond with those of the Hindus. A closer look, however, at these aspects of religion would convince us that the Bhil religion and Hindu religion are two different systems, though enjoying a high degree of mutual exchange. These two systems have existed side by side for such a long time and with so much mutual exchange that the task of isolating Hindu traits from the Bhil religion and Bhil traits from the Hindu religion, if not impossible, is at least difficult.

At the level of deities, we find that the Bhil deities mostly correspond to the Hindu deities of the lower rung. One problem of comparison of the two systems is the great diversity and complexity of the Hindu religion, and a lack of consistency and uniformity in the Bhils' religious beliefs in different parts of the country. Local influences have played a significant role in moulding and shaping the Bhil religion at different places. Presently the only thing that is feasible is to compare the Bhil religion of the region with the local or regional Hinduism.

Mahadev is believed both by Hindus and Bhils to be the creator of this universe. They attribute to him more or less the same qualities and functions. However, Hindus being privileged with literary and intellectual traditions are capable of greater rationalization of their relations with him than the Bhils. Mahadev has also been the chief deity of the royal clan of the Rajputs, traditionally a caste of warriors and rulers. The Bhils also perform special worship and sing devotional songs of this deity when they perform Gavari, a Bhil masque.

Bheru, the chief deity of the Bhils, believed by many writers to be a manifestation of Mahadev (Carstairs 1957, McCim Marriott 1955) is locally recognized, both by the Bhils and the Hindus, as a different deity from Mahadev. Hindus believe Bheru to be one of their several deities, whereas the Bhils believe it to be as the chief of the God's court who is now in charge of both creation and destruction of human life. The shrines of this deity are found in Udaipur city and other villages of the region, but the way of propitiation of

this deity as well as of Mata (the mother goddess) differs—high caste Hindus make offerings of things that do not involve killing of animals, whereas animal sacrifice has an important place in the propitiation by Bhils and the people of low castes. Considering Bheru's important position in the Bhil religion and this deity's attributes of aggressiveness, Chauhan identifies this deity as belonging predominantly to the Bhils (Chauhan 1967). What supports Chauhan's position regarding Bheru's tribal affiliation is the class of people from which the priests of Bheru are drawn, even in mainly non-tribal villages. The priests of this deity mostly belong either to the tribe of the Bhils or to the castes in the lower rungs, as Gadri, Jat, and Nai, and it rarely happens that a Brahman is the priest of this deity or of his consort Mata.

Sanskritic values have been constantly knocking at the doors of Bhil religion and their value system, but these have not been internalized. The worship of Ram Deoji, the presence of Hanuman (the monkey god), and the impact of Kabir Panth and Christianity have only been superficial, and people constantly tend to fall back upon their own faith. On the one hand they have hatred and distrust for the Hindu whom they recognize as their exploiters and, on the other, they are highly appreciative of the Hindus for their elaborate and dignified ritual ceremonies and their political and economic superiority. Since they have come to contact with the Hindus, some of them have developed an ambivalent attitude towards the dominant pleasure motif of their own culture, and any advancement towards Hinduisation is characterized by ambivalence towards their own distinct tribal traits, such as sacrifice of cows, buffaloes and goats, the offering of liquor to their deities and consumption of it by themselves, uninhibited expression of sex, and so on.

There seems to have been borrowing and emulation by Bhils in their celebration of festivals. But here again there is a similarity in the form but the contents are different. The Bhil festivals are dominated by a strong theme of pleasure. Below is given a list of the festival cycle of Bhils in Pai and of Hindu peasants of a village, Ranawaton Ki Sadri, of the same geographical region (Chauhan 1967).

Festivals of Hindus

1. Rakhi
2. Navratra
3. Diwali
4. Sankranti
5. Shivratri
6. Deo Jhulni Ekadasi
7. Janmastmi
8. Bhadya Nam
9. Akdra Tij
10. Lodi Diwali
11. Dasehra
12. Shil Satam
13. Teej
14. Holi.

Festivals of Bhils

1. Nobarta of Magra Baba
2. Rakhi
3. Bhadra Badi Ka Jagran
4. Gavri
5. Nabarta of Bheru and Mata
6. Diwali
7. Bhomia and Matlok
8. Hakrant
9. Jagran of Maghchatt
10. Holi
11. Shitla Mata

At first glance it appears that there are seven festivals which are common to both the Bhils and the Hindus of this region. Besides, the occasions of two other festivals of the Bhils more or less coincide with those of two festivals of the Hindus.

Following are the common festivals of Bhils and Hindus :

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Rakhi | 4. Sankrant or Hakrant |
| 2. Nobarta or Navratra | 5. Shil Satam or Shitla Mata |
| 3. Diwali | 6. Holi. |

Following is the list of festivals observed only by Bhils :

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Nobarta of Magra Baba | 4. Bhomia |
| 2. Bhadra Badi Ka Jagran | 5. Magh Chhatt Ka Jagran. |
| 3. Gavri | |

Festivals observed only by Hindus are :

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| 1. Shivratri | 5. Akhatij |
| 2. Deo Jhulni Ekadasi | 6. Lodi Diwali |
| 3. Janmastmi | 7. Dasehra |
| 4. Bhadyanam | 8. Teej. |

Even those festivals which are common to both Hindus and Bhils, differ markedly in their themes and the manner of observance. A brief comparative account of important festivals is being given here :

Rakhi. The festival of '*Raksha Bandhan*' (bondage for protection) is popularly known in this region as Rakhi. "The festival of Rakhi strengthens two types of relations, viz., between the brother and sister, and the protector and the subject." (Chauhan 1967 : 196). These words of Chauhan express the central theme of the festival of the Hindus of the region. In the traditional feudal set up ,,..... officials of the State and the Brahmans used to tie the Rakhi to the wrist of their ruler—their protector." (Chauhan 1967 : 196). "At the family level, sisters tie the threads to the right arm of their brothers ... On the Rakhi day they (sisters) get something in return as brothers may not accept things from their sisters without obligation. In view of the significance of the sister for the festival efforts are made to get the married sister back to the parental home for the occasion. The festival thus serves as a continuing link between a married girl and her family of orientation. It also keeps the brothers reminding of their continued obligations to the sister." (Chauhan : 196-197)

In Pai, it is not a festival of a particular set of kin but it is a festival of universal love. Charms of Rakhi are tied by each other, irrespective of sex, kinship ties or affiliation to a particular group. Rakhi is celebrated on two days in Pai. On the first day, there are not many activities except that in the afternoon people go to the well for a bath, and later tie Rakhi to the idols of the deities of Bheru, Mata and Ganesh, and also to objects like ploughs, sugarcane crusher, swords, caplocks, bolts of the door, and even to some of the plants of maize. Next day, however, people move in batches, from one house to another, tying Rakhi to all they see, warmly embracing each other and enquiring about each other's mood and health with a broad friendly smile. The household being visited entertains the visitors with some liquor, indigenous cigarettes and curds. So much liquor is drunk on this day that many can be seen

staggering with intoxication and some even passing out, but most of them managing to stay till the evening and singing hilariously. One important aspect of this festival is that the members of the Elders' Council are visited by all in groups of 10 to 15 people, and all those households which have suffered bereavement are visited by villagers and members of the Elders' Council. As the women of the household in mourning notice these visitors approaching, they start wailing at a high pitch till three or four women from the visitors go inside the house to console them and bring them out to dance with them. All visitors are entertained with liquor and indigenous cigarettes. And this sees the end of the mourning of the household.

Nobarta or Navratra. Nobarta is celebrated both in Pai and Ranawaton Ki Sadri in more or less the same style. The ceremony lasts nine days. The first night, the ninth night and the tenth day are marked by hectic activities at various shrines of Bheru and Mata. On the first day, some barley is sown at all Deoras and pitchers filled with water are placed near the idol of the deity. During this period of nine days, the barley seeds sprout up. On the final day, some of the barley stalks are cut and offered to the deity. In Pai, during these days the Bhopas go, off and on, into trance and on the ninth night, the boys and girls dance spiritedly at the site of the shrine. In Ranawaton Ki Sadri a Brahman priest comes on the final day, from a neighbouring village, "and offers prayers and incense to the five local deities located in different parts of the village." But the rest of the ceremony is marked by non-Brahmanical rituals which also include the sacrifice of goats. In Pai, however, both he-goats and buffaloes are sacrificed at the altars of Bheru and Mata. In Pai as well in Ranawaton Ki Sadri, people give a closer look to the little crop and the amount of water left in the pitchers. On whichever side the crop is found good, it is said that villages in that direction will enjoy good crops, and those sides which have scanty growth of barley, it is believed, indicate poor crops in villages lying in that direction. Similarly, if the level of water in the pitchers is high, it is taken to be an indication of good rains, and if

the water level is low it is believed that the rains are going to be scarce. In Pai, the devotees form a procession on the tenth day, which is led by one or two Bhopas, who march to the river stream where they immerse the barley shoots into the water. At this time a few coconuts are broken, and some pieces are burnt in fire as offering to the deity, while the rest are distributed to people.

Both in Pai and Ranawaton Ki Sadri, lots of predictions regarding the trends of prices, state of health of people, and so on are made on this occasion by the priests in their state of trance. Besides, people are blessed by the priests for good health, for children, for recovery from diseases, for amity between ordinary people and their leaders.

The tribal overtones in the celebration of Navratra or Nobarta in Ranawaton Ki Sadri are quite obvious. Even deities worshipped on this occasion are none else but Bheru and Mata and their chief devotees, among others, include the Bhils.

Diwali. In Ranawaton Ki Sadri the day is observed as a festival of lights and for the worship of Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth. It is of special significance for the caste of Mahajan but there being only one family of Mahajans it does not attract much attention'. In Udaipur, however, the houses are cleaned and white-washed for the occasion. There are many stories prevalent regarding the origin of this festival. For example, the Jains believe that Mahavir, their last Tirthankar (embodiment of god) attained salvation on this day; Brahmins and Rajputs believe that on this day Ram returned to Ayodhya after completing the exile of fourteen years and defeating his enemy, Ravana. A section of people also believe that a trader having pleased the king of his state asked him for the favour of allowing him to light his house while other houses of the city were to remain without lights on that particular night. It is said that finding the whole city dark, the goddess of wealth, Lakshmi came stumbling to his house, where the trader welcomed her as a guest. Being highly pleased, she left behind her enormous wealth. That night of the year when Lakshmi visited this earth is since being celebrated as Diwali.

In Pai, however, these stories are not known. It is believed that a Bhil, Godnio Gujar, once had a dream that a cow, Salar Mungar, and a bull, Kabrio, would be visiting his house and be later joined by other cows and bulls. His dream came true, and he received the mystic cow and the bull warmly in his house in spite of the opposition and sarcasm of other people of his community. Though there came only one cow and one bull, their number multiplied many times even before the morning. To make more room for these cattle he himself decided to sleep at the entrance though even his wife also did not like the idea and others even ridiculed him. In the early hours of the morning, while Godnio Gujar was still sleeping, the cattle stepped on him, crushed him to death and made their way again to the forest. Godnio Gujar's wife was so much pained by her husband's death that she cursed Salar Mungar and Kabrio that the day of their arrival would always be celebrated on the darkest night of the year. The songs sung on this occasion are in praise of Godnio Gujar.

In Pai fifteen days prior to Diwali the teenager and adolescent boys and girls decide in their respective wards in which manner they would celebrate the festival. Every night some girls carry on their heads, for a fortnight, in company with other boys and girls, a dried cucumber having holes pierced all around it in two or three rows, and containing a lamp. The exterior of this cucumber is painted green. The whole thing is known as Gadlio. One boy and one girl are chosen by these boys and girls as the father and the mother of Gadlio. Every night these boys and girls visit fifteen to twenty houses of the village and by Diwali, they complete two rounds of the whole village. When they visit these households, they collect from them some oil to keep the lamp burning. On the night of Diwali, these parties of boys and girls under the armed escort of their leaders cross into the boundary of their neighbourhood village and, after dancing a round or two, throw away the Gadlio, into the boundary of their neighbouring village. It is believed that by thus throwing away the Gadlio in the neighbouring village, they

also throw away their misfortunes into that village. The other village in its turn also does the same to ward off its misfortunes.

On the day of Diwali the houses are swept clean. The wives go to the well in the evening to fetch water and leave a lighted lamp there. The lamps are also lighted, one at each place, in one's house and at the village or lineage or ward temple. At night the boys and girls may be seen gliding from one hill to another, singing songs and whooping joyously and showing light to the cattle.

Besides, some households also make two idols of cowdung, representing Godnio Gujar and his son, in front of their houses. A lamp is placed near these idols, and offerings of corn, flowers, milk, and coconuts are made to the idols of Godnio Gujar and his son. In 1962, two households also sacrificed goats at the site of Godnio Gujar and offered the livers of these goats to this deity. Besides two persons were possessed by the spirit of Godnio Gujar, and blessed people with prosperity and good crops.

People also go to paint the cattle of their neighbours, and are entertained with curds, rice and indigenous cigarettes. On this occasion the girls who have been married after the previous Diwali are brought to their parental homes. The husbands are expected to bring gifts of liquor, saris and dhotis for their in-laws. The girls' parents in return are required to offer the son-in-law, if possible, a cow, or at least five rupees.

On the next day, people in groups of ten to fifteen (only men) visit their friends or the elders of the community, and sing songs sitting in front of their houses. Wherever they go they are generously entertained with liquor and indigenous cigarettes. One batch which visited this investigator was so much drunk that some of them passed out in his front yard and others being excited over a matter of no importance, began beating each other with anything that they could lay hands on, even the poles of the fencing, and one even went to his house and brought his caplock. All these people were later fined by the elders' council for causing a disturbance. As

on Rakhi, on this occasion too, the families which have suffered bereavement since the last Diwali are visited by elders and other villagers.

Hakrant or Sankranti. Sankranti is a major festival of Ranawaton Ki Sadri. An important feature of this festival is the preparation of sweets from til seeds and jaggery. On this day alms are offered to the Sadhus and the Brahmans, and cows are fed with grass, as charity. The youngsters spend their day in playing with cloth balls which are set ablaze in the evening. The ball symbolizes the head of Ravana whom Ram killed.

In Pai, however, this day begins with visits to the shrines of Bheru. Following this, when it is still early morning, the grown-up adolescent boys in their respective wards set out to catch a small bird locally known as Dochki. While the boys run after the bird, the grown-up men and women, and the girls and the children watch them with interest and boost their morale by whooping and clapping liberally. Though initially these groups are formed on the basis of wards, during their chase they may cross into the boundaries of other wards. When after good hard work, the bird is caught, it is brought to the central place of their ward. The bird is taken around for being shown to the members of the households of the ward who share the boys' pleasure, by giving them a sweet preparation of maize and jaggery. Finally the boys sit down at a common place, wash the bird with water and feed it some of the maize preparation. Then one boy holds the bird on his open palm and everybody eagerly waits to see it to fly. As the bird is in utter confusion, it might take it some time to realize that it is now free to fly. People anxiously observe the bird flying and where it first sits down. It is believed that if it sits down on a green tree, the year ahead is going to be good, and if it sits on a dry tree the year would be bad. In 1962, when the bird sat on a half-dried tree, people were not sure if the year was going to be good or bad.

Later, around 11 o'clock in the morning, groups are formed in each ward to go hunting in the nearby forest. People go armed

with bows and arrows, muzzle loaders, swords and even axes. The dogs also accompany these hunting crews who settle down on different hills at various strategic points. Then these groups enter the forest, some making noise, while others make fires to bring out rabbits from their holes. On this day only rabbits are hunted, and no other animals. It was noticed there was a great competition among these groups for getting as many prizes as possible. The group that I accompanied was happy over having got two rabbits. However, one other group was embarrassed by not having been able to kill any. The rabbits are skinned in the afternoon and their flesh is cooked with maize. Besides, a pretty good amount of liquor is also drunk by the people before the feast is eaten.

In the evening people (only males) play with a large cloth ball in the style of soccer. The game is played rather roughly and many even get hurt and older people, if they play at all, drop out quickly. After half an hour or so of this game, the same group turns into a ballet and dances two or three rounds to the beat of a drum. This dance is a special feature of the next important festival, that is Holi.

Holi. In Ranawaton Ki Sadri, a pole nearly twenty feet long is fixed by Dholi in the northern corner of the village. On the day of Holi, the girls of the village bring garlands of small cowdung cakes and place them on the pole. Besides a few dried sticks are placed around this pole and at the appointed hour, to the accompaniment of a drum, the pole, the Holi, is kindled. The village women stand nearby in small batches and sing songs of the occasion. While this goes on, a few village elders go to the house of the former feudal chief, or to one of his younger brothers, and assign four of his bullocks names after four months of the year, and if his bullocks are found sitting they are made to stand up. After the Holi had been lighted, people come back to see whether the bullocks are standing or sitting. A standing bullock signifies that the month named after him will not go dry. At the site of the Holi, a Pundit who comes from a nearby village ties a thread around Holi, and directs the feudal chief to observe some rituals after which the Holi

is lighted. At this time, all males who had been married during the preceding year, offer a coconut each to Holi; and try to take out these coconuts before they are burnt in fire. When the flames of Holi shoot up, people go round the Holi fire to rescue the central pole. "The practice is associated with a mythological tale in which Prahalad, a devotee of God, was carried into the burning fire by a witch, Holika, who herself enjoyed the boon of not being burnt by fire. But in case of Prahalad it happened the other way..... The pole is said to represent Prahalad, and an all out effort is made to rescue that pole to signify the victory of righteousness over evil." (Chauhan : 190). After the burning of Holi boys perform a stick dance which is associated with tribals. During all this time women sing devotional songs of Krishna and Siva.

In Pai, the story of Prahalad is not known. Preparations for celebrating Holi begin some two months before, in the sense that people work very hard and try to earn and save as much money as possible for the festival. Ideally people are required to fix up the pole of Holi one month prior to the actual day of Holi but in practice the pole is fixed only on the day of Holi as it is feared that somebody may steal it. I was though told by my informants that in some of their neighbouring villages the pole is fixed fifteen days before the Holi. Though the pole is fixed so late, singing and dancing begin about a month before Holi. One peculiarity of the occasion is the singing of abusive sexy songs by the women of the village. Every night small groups of eight to ten girls and women could be seen invading the houses of important people of the village and singing vulgar songs in front of their houses and not leaving till they are paid a tip of a rupee or so or a coconut or both. Though young boys may laugh but elderly and responsible people listen to these songs their eyes downcast. Besides the men rejoice by participating in the stick striking dance known as 'gher'.

A few days before the Holi most men, pay visits to their married sisters and daughters, particularly so if their sisters or daughters have borne children since the last Holi. A brother never forgets to take a gift of clothes and ornaments for his sister and

the new born baby. The guests are warmly welcomed by their sisters and daughters with plenty of liquor, goats' meat, and indigenous cigarettes. The host offers a he-goat to these guests who have the privilege of killing it. The guests are also entertained by the host's neighbours, particularly girls who come to sing song and dance and in return get gifts of some money and a coconut.

On this occasion almost everyone gets a new dress. For buying clothes and gunpowder and lead balls for their caplocks, a trip down town is almost unavoidable for at least one male member of the household.

In Pai, the members of the lineage of Khokhria clan are traditionally required to provide the pole for the Holi. They have been getting a rupee and a quarter for this service of theirs.

On the day of Holi, in the morning, the village Balai is deputed to make a public announcement to the effect that all men should come in the evening to the place of Holi with a log of wood. In the evenings, some time after sun-set, people reach the place of the Holi dressed in their bright and gay clothes and carrying some fuel (only men carry fuel).

Two poles are fixed side by side, one very large and another comparatively much smaller. The bigger pole is known as "Holi", and the smaller as "Amlī". Some people assign Holi and Amlī the kinship status of husband and wife and others as brother and sister. The headman of the village is then required first to light the Holi and then Amlī. After everyone has arrived the headman stands up facing the Holi, and starts running anticlockwise circling the Holi. While he runs round, he keeps on throwing sweets and pieces of coconut. He thus completes seven rounds of the Holi and in his last round he throws a whole coconut into the shooting flames of Holi. The girls married in the preceding year come to visit their parents, and also throw whole coconuts in the fire of Holi.

While the Holi is still in flames, the participants dance several rounds at the Holi and from there go to the houses of the important

village leaders. Those who are sleepy may quietly slip out from the group. In 1962, however, the headman of Pai told the boys and girls to return home as soon as they had finished dancing at the Holi. It was believed that he had asked the boys and the girls to disperse lest they should indulge in mischief. He was, however, not taken very seriously, and the boys and girls had things their own way.

Next morning the village men and women form a group and go to dance and sing at the houses of the village elders and at those houses in which children had been born since the last Holi. The village elders entertain them with drinks, cigarettes and a cash payment of five rupees, and the families blessed with sons have to give two rupees, and those with daughters one rupee, besides entertaining them with liquor and cigarettes.

The other two festivals, Shitla Mata and Dasa Mata, are observed only by a very small section of the community. They are primarily Hindu festivals and lack the gusto and spirit peculiar to Bhil life. The worship of both deities is mostly confined to women. Shitla Mata is believed to help people in recovering from small-pox, whereas Dasa Mata is considered to be the goddess of fate, giver of children and wealth.

Of those festivals which are observed only by the Bhils, the important ones are : Nobarta of Magra Baba, Bhomia and Gavari. Nobarta of Magra Baba or the Hill god is observed every alternate year, more or less in the same fashion as the other Nobarta. Bhomia or ancestral worship has been already described in detail earlier in this chapter.

Gavari. One important festival exclusive to the Bhils is Gavari, the celebration of which lasts between a month and forty days, during the months of August, September and October. The celebration of this festival is so expensive, time-consuming and exacting in many ways, that no Bhil village celebrates it every year but rather once in three or four years. During these months, how-

ever, in any region which is bound by a network of kinship and economic relationship, there are about seven or eight villages which actively celebrate this festival, while other villages of the region play host to them. As part of the Gavari celebration, the villages move on camping in those villages performing a series of songs, dances and dramas. The performance of song, dance and drama can perhaps be termed as the Bhil masque.

The main objective of Gavari is to venerate in general all Bhil deities and, in particular, the mother goddess who is known by such names as Kalka, Ambav, Parvati and so on. Chauhan and Chelawat, who have made a study of Gavari (1963 : 5-19) in the same region, interpret Gavari as Gauri, the wife of Shankar, and emphasize that she belonged to the Bhil community but, having married Shankar, was raised to the status of a goddess.

The masque, Gavari, besides having such a strong religious content also expresses the Bhil aspirations and world view, and provides entertainment for participants and spectators. It is also an example of the organizational abilities of the Bhils. It promotes solidarity at various levels of the kin, the village and the region. It is also an occasion for establishing and enhancing goodwill between the Bhils and the non-Bhil businessmen and money-lenders.

The allocation of roles. All important roles in Gavari are hereditary but subsidiary roles are open to all Bhils living in the community. All roles whether of males or females, are played by men ; women can only be the audience.

Rai. In Pai there are two men who always play the role of Rai, the female characters in Gavari. The role of Rai is hereditary. Presently these roles are played by Jiva Khokhria and Virko Kharadi, and before them their fathers played these roles. In case a person who plays the role of Rai dies issueless, his younger brother or younger brother's son inherits the role. In addition to these persons, one or two other persons may also play the female characters, Rai, if they had made a promise to the deity that if they recovered from illness, they would offer themselves to play the female roles,

Budio. Budio is another important actor of Gavari. He portrays the role of Mahadeo, also known as Shankar. In Pai, Nathu Katara plays the role of Budio. This role is also hereditary. Budio is required to cover his face with a wooden mask. In all circular dances he moves his head in a circular motion, indicating to the people, "Go ahead, go ahead."

Katukrio. Katukrio tells stories and riddles to Budio. These riddles and stories are in the form of songs. The role is hereditary, and is played at present by Dityo Relath in Pai.

Bhopa. The role of the Pat Bhopa or chief Bhopa is hereditary. Thavra Katara acts the chief Bhopa in Pai, and in addition to the Pat Bhopa there are in any Gavari party four or five other Bhopas. The chief Bhopa acts as the medium of various deities, mainly the mother goddess. Other Bhopas are responsible for protecting the team from witchcraft, as the practice of witchcraft and counter-witchcraft is very frequent during these days of Gavari.

Pujara. Pujaras are responsible for keeping the place of the deity clean and for collecting contributions of ghee and corn from the villagers. There are two Pujaras in Pai, Naria Bhangora and Virji Ayari; one is required to stay back at home and the other to accompany the Gavari party.

Khela. Besides these actors, from each family, more or less, one adult member is required to accompany the Gavari team. These dress mostly in white long-coats and those who cannot afford them, go just in plain clothes. These are known as Khela. Supporting and non-ritual roles are often allocated to them. Their position is not hereditary.

The decision for performing Gavari is taken by the village headman in consultation with other members of the Elders' Council. The decision is, however, finally approved at a ritual ceremony on the next day of Rakhi, when a he-buffalo is sacrificed at the shrine of

Mata. The mother goddess, in whose honour the ceremony is held, assures them of her full protection from all untoward happenings. There is considerable flexibility in starting the celebration of Gavari, which may start as early as on the seventh day after Rakhi or as late as three weeks after Rakhi. In 1963, in Pai, Gavari was started in the third week following Rakhi. Following the goddess' blessings, barley is sown at a specified place in the headman's house. The Bhopa of Mata gets possessed by her, and orders all the main actors to put on their costumes. The deity also issues special instructions for abstaining from liquor and women during the days they are out to dance Gavari.

Next day they perform Gavari in their own village after which they go on camping at one village after another, performing Gavari. Only those villages are visited which are not performing Gavari. The reasons are obvious. If a village is performing Gavari, most of its men will be out and hence it will not be possible for it to play host. Besides a village goes to dance Gavari only in those villages with which it stands in a kind of mutually obligatory relationship. Following villages were scheduled to be visited in the first series by Pai in 1963: Pipalwas, Kumaria Kheda, Khajuri, Palawada, Haldari, Jekda, Madri, Gorana, Palia Kheda, Bari, Wamlari, Dhimdi, Kataria, Kotla, Vida, Adol and Alsigarh Kotda. After visiting most of these villages, the Pai Gavari returned to the village, and left again to visit the villages in the second series which included Moti Undri, Chhoti Undri, Phofti, Kaliwas, Gada, Nava Kheda and finally Nai. Of the villages mentioned, those were not visited which were themselves performing Gavari. All these villages are situated within a radius of twenty miles from Pai. These are the villages in which Pai's girls are married or from which brides have come to Pai. Besides affinal villages, the Bhils also go to the villages with which they have permanent trade relationship. Nai being the main trade centre for the Bhils of the region, all villages of the region come to dance Gavari in Nai.

After, a village performing Gavari is through with a village, it is customary for the party to send a messenger to the next village on their schedule. If the village agrees to be the host, then the Gavari reaches that village at night. The host village is required to provide two meals to the visitors, one meal on the night they arrive and the second next morning when they perform the show. Besides, these villages also stand in an obligatory relationship; that is, the host has also to pay some money to the guest, which is equal to or slightly more than the amount the hosts had themselves received when they performed Gavari in the village of those who are presently their guests. The money is paid at the end of the show.

The last two days of the Gavari celebration are full of hectic activities. On the last day but one, all villages performing Gavari assemble in Nai where they perform with added enthusiasm. In the afternoon, each party buys a clay elephant from its customary local potter. The traders of Nai see off their respective customers participating in Gavari with gifts of coconuts, sweets and some clothes.

The Gavari party then returns on the same day to the village along with the clay elephant, and places it at Mandi, the place where they had sown barley about a month ago. One adult male member from each family observes fast on this day.

Next day, which is known as Valawan, the clay elephant is moved over to a central place, near the school. All villagers, men, women and children, assemble at the school to see the clay elephant. The girls of Pai married in other villages also come on this occasion with sweet balls for their brothers and father. Meanwhile, the Bhopa is possessed by the goddess at Mandi. The shoots of barley are cut, and carried over to the school from where both the barley shoots and the clay elephant are taken in a procession to the temple of Mahadev which is situated by the bank of the village river at the cremation ground. While this goes on, some villagers collect from the households of Pai wheat-flour, about half a maund, which is first made into dough and then given the shape of a buffalo and placed

at Mandi. At the cremation ground, after burning ghee and pieces of coconut in the fire as offering to the clay elephant which is believed to represent Mata, people wash their hands and feet in the river water and then run towards Mandi. The flour-buffalo is chopped by Budio with a sword and all other participants and the other villagers try to get a piece of the flour-buffalo. All then bow before Mata and dance one round before her. And that sees the end of this festival. All taboos regarding drinking, eating meat, and companionship with women are removed.

6

Political Organization

History supports the claims of Bhil rulership in many parts of Rajputana prior to the establishment of Rajput principalities. The Bhil chiefs were ousted from power by the Rajputs and made to retreat into dense forests and rugged terrain of Aravalli Hills. This led to their virtual isolation from civilization. The unfriendly conditions of life did not permit the growth of any central Bhil authority. From stray historical references it is fairly obvious that the earlier Bhil principalities gradually broke down and several petty chieftainships emerged in their places (Tod 1829, Erskine 1908, Shyamaldas un.d)

As the Bhils retired to physiographically unfriendly interiors of Aravallis in the quest of preserving their independence they had to suffer from political disintegration and social and economic instability. They refused to be subjected to the rule of the Rajputs, and the Rajput rulers in their turn having failed to discipline them as loyal subjects had to contend with their capacity to subjugate and oppress them. By and large these discontented people turned into plunderers and law-breakers. Loot and arson became normal activities in many of the Bhil areas. People did not dare to travel through the Bhil villages without proper armed escorts, or without an assurance of safety from the Bhils themselves by pleasing them with money. Extracting money from the travellers passing through

the Bhil tracts came to be known as an accepted form the behaviour, and continued for some years even after 1947, the year of Indian Independence.

Up to the Independence of India the Bhil population lived under two different kinds of administrations : (1) under the direct jurisdiction of the state, and (2) under the jurisdiction of feudal lords, some of them of Rajput dynasties and others of mixed origin, believed to have originated from unions of Rajput men and Bhil women. Feudal lords were independent in the internal affairs of their Jagirs, but they rendered allegiance to the authority of the state. These lords treated their subjects rather harshly and unkindly compared to the State administration. The feudal chiefs of mixed origin are believed to have been even harsher with a view to proving their superiority over their Bhil brethren and equality with the Rajput chiefs. There were several upsurges against the tyranny of feudal chiefs and some efforts were made to set up a Bhil State under the leadership of Govindgiri in 1913-14 (Gupta 1966 : 28). In fact the Bhils have always been opposed to the idea of being governed by any external authority or against any kind of intervention from the State and hence troubles often sparked at the slightest provocation. Mention has already been made of some incidents of Bhil unrest that occurred in the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century in southern Rajasthan. It was largely due to Mewar Bhil Corps (established in 1840) that uprisings in Bhil country could be curbed and law and order established.

The Bhils have always been under two contradictory systems : their own tribal system, and the "Raj" or the Government by which they understand all kinds of alien authority, *i.e.*, the kings and feudal lords and Mewar Bhil Corps in the past and the present day administration of Tahsildar and Magistrate, excise officials, police and forest officials, and the latest, block development personnel and members of Legislative Assembly. So far as their own tribal custom is concerned the maximum and only communal level of authority to enforce social laws is confined to the village community. Each

village unit is independent of others and ordinarily not referable to any higher authority, except for the forced interference by the government in crimes of murder, dacoity or failure on the part of the people to pay revenue to the Government.

There are two important elements of Bhil political organization—Da Mota, the Tribal Council, and Gameti, the Headman. In actual practice the Tribal Council functions as an Elders' Council. The Elders' Council, though an informal body, plays a crucial role in their life. Ideally every adult member of the community should be represented in it and has equal voice, but in practice the most vocal members of the community dominate it. The Headman, who is the chief spokesman of his people and belongs to the lineage of the supposedly oldest inhabitants of the village, presides over the Elders' Council. The office of the Headman is hereditary. After the death of a Headman his eldest son succeeds him, but if he is not survived by a son his younger brother succeeds to the office. In case the Headman is survived only by a minor son, his brother takes over with the understanding that when the deceased Headman's son comes of age he will vacate the office in his favour.

Headman. In pre-Independence days the authority of the Headman had sanction from the rulers of the State. At the succession of a new Headman the State normally sent a red turban to him to mark its recognition. The Headman had certain duties and if he fulfilled them properly the State did not interfere in the affairs of his community. The main functions of the Headman were to assist the government in the collection of revenue, to make available the services of his people when the King camped in or around his village for hunting, and to arrange to carry touring officials' luggage from his village to the next village. For these services the Headman and his people did not get paid; occasionally, however, the King gave away some money on being pleased. As a matter of fact there was little direct contact between the people (or the Headman) and the King. People felt it more important to keep in good humour the petty government officials with whom they had direct contact and who really mattered in their life. Most important of these

officials used to be Kamdar (the revenue clerk) and his assistants, police constables, head-constables, and the police sub-inspector. In general the Bhils harbored some fear and hatred towards these officials for their unfair treatment to them and for their corrupt practices. The people expected their Headman to get a fare deal for them and for this they jointly and individually bribed the officials through their Headman. This made the Headman a person of considerable importance. Although he got a tax-free plot of land for his services, he could also make money by helping the revenue clerk in his unauthorised schemes. If the Headman was displeased with some one he could involve him into serious trouble. The police also operated through the Headman and this again was a source of power to the latter. Actually the prestige and the power of the Headman depended on his capacity to manipulate situations to his advantage by helping his supporters and indirectly getting his opponents chastised.

The authority of the Headman was not unlimited ; the Elders' Council was a check on him. All internal matters had to be settled and decisions taken after discussing them in the Elders' Council where members expressed their view points in a free atmosphere. The Headman was supposed to pronounce the decision or the judgment arrived at by the Council.

Today most of the Bhil villages are inhabited by a number of different clans. It is, however, generally agreed that a village must have been inhabited at its early stage of growth by the members of one lineage belonging to a particular clan. Members of other clans must have come later after seeking the permission of the early settlers to whom they were probably related as affines or cognates and in certain cases could even have been unrelated. Early settlers were deemed to be sort of owners of the village and hence the senior member of the senior lineage of the early settlers enjoyed the special status of Headman of his settlement.

Members of the local community increased because of its natural growth by birth and by immigration of new members and

this meant that in each succeeding generation the territory of the community expanded so the next Headman had a larger community under his control. But on the other hand death of members, migrations, and growth of factionalism sometimes resulting in the emergence of new communities out of an existing one kept a check on the unlimited growth of the local community. For instance, the number of wards or sectors and the population of Pai have increased over the years even within the living memory of people; on the other hand it is predicted by the villagers themselves that in years to come some of the sectors might break away from the village and be recognised as independent villages.

At present, in Pai, the members of Katara clan are generally regarded as the oldest inhabitants of Pai. An authentic account of village history is not available, but it is known to many in the village that before the Katara came to Pai members of many other clans had lived there but they became extinct except the members of the Vadera clan. It is not known which clan provided the Headman before the Katara came to Pai. Perhaps when the Katara arrived in Pai the Vadera were a small and insignificant group and were not in a position to contest for power against the Katara.

The present population of the Katara in Pai can be traced as having descended from one common ancestor, Khema, who had three sons—Deva, Ajba and Lakma. Deva being the eldest of the three brothers, the Headmanship rests with his descendants. After Deva's death his only son Vala succeeded him. Incidentally, Vala was also survived by only one son, Hira, who became the Headman after Vala. Hira had two sons, Chatra and Ambava. Chatra being the elder of the two sons succeeded his father. Chatra had two sons, and his brother Ambava had five sons. When Chatra died his senior son Teja succeeded him but he died in a short while leaving behind no son. Unfortunately his younger brother, Nanko, also died around this time leaving behind only a minor son. Had Nanko not died he would have succeeded his deceased sonless brother. Under these circumstances Nanko's son Hardaro, who was yet a minor, was the rightful person to succeed Teja, but considering his

age Ambava's eldest son Vaka was deemed fit for Headmanship. But he refused to be tied with the Headman's turban believing it to be inauspicious as his predecessors—Chatra and Teja—had died at a comparatively young age following their turban tying ceremony. He only agreed to keep the turban in his house and be its guardian.

When Vaka took over the office he was in his mid-twenties. He was not shrewd and tactful and in general lacked qualities of leadership. This made him lean heavily for support upon Nara, a more energetic, shrewd and diplomatic person, one of Ajba's grandsons.

Earlier Nara pretended that he was more interested in maintaining the village unity and overall political superiority of the Katara, but gradually he came to hold all strings of power in his hands. He made himself indispensable to Vaka and the village. Although he succeeded in creating friends and supporters, he also had to face challenges from his rivals. His important rival was his father's elder brother's son Megha; and his other rival was Lakhma's grandson Vaka. He overcame his first rival by bringing on him charges of witchcraft. He accused his rival, Megha, for introducing in the village a malevolent deity—Sikotra—whose wrath does away with one's prosperity and health and results into the ruin of people. He succeeded in filling people's hearts with hatred for Megha. This ultimately led to his extreme unpopularity and social boycott. Megha's public image was also tarnished by his reputation for seducing young girls of the village. His other rival Vaka became a Christian along with some other villagers and his influence was reduced to a small section of the village, the Christians converts. Besides, he was also once involved in a case of the murder of a woman. Nara played a significant role in getting Vaka arrested, and also as people say in getting him released. This brought Vaka under his personal obligation and the police also began to consider Nara as a powerful man of his village.

For several years Nara and Vaka have worked with understanding. Nara plays most of the secular roles of the Headman and Vaka

plays the ritual roles. The secular roles of the Headman include mediation between the village and various government officials, presiding over the meetings of the Elders' Council where varied decisions are taken such as raising funds for public works, celebration of festivals, punishing the offenders in cases of theft, misappropriation of funds, molestation and adultery, non-payment of personal debts at the promised time, fixing rates of commodities, allotment of land, casting votes in the General and Panchayat Election, and so forth. The ritual roles include performing certain rites at festivals such as Holi, Rakhi, Gavari, and Diwali, and receiving certain monetary gifts after the marriage of a boy or a girl.

So far, there has not been any obvious change in Nara's position, but Vaka's position as the Headman has been somewhat adversely affected with Hardara, the true successor, coming of age. Since 1964 Hardara has been performing many of the ritual roles of the Headman and it is expected that gradually he will come to enjoy all the privilege of the Headman. It is, however, difficult to say that he will also be able to achieve the political stature of Nara. Nara stays fairly agile, is physically strong, and has charisma that carries away people even now when he is believed to be over sixty-five. When Nara was asked whether he thought that his son would also become the Headman after his death, he replied, "If my son is capable he will enjoy the same status as I do, but I cannot deprive Hardara of his right." This brings home the fact that it is possible to attain a political stature even when a person is not the son of a Headman, but such achieved position is not inheritable.

For a clearer understanding of political processes in the Bhil villages it will be helpful to look at some other villages in the neighbourhood of Pai. Kumariakheda is about three miles from Pai. Six years ago the Headman of this village, Limba Katara, died in a road accident. Limba was survived by his two sons, the younger one being a minor. But since the death of Limba village unity has suffered considerably and now instead of one common Holi two Holis are lighted. There is no one who is regarded as the Headman of the village; on the contrary in each ward of the village there are two or

three influential men belonging to the Katara, the Holki, the Hirawat and the Vasatiya clans who are addressed as Gameti but in fact having much less authority than the Headman of the village.

Alsigarh Kotda village, five miles from Pai, is divided in five wards and each ward has its own Headman belonging to its numerically dominant lineage. It was reported that twenty years ago Alsigarh Kotda enjoyed unity and there was only one Headman, Udo Kharadi. After his death his son, Valdo, was formally made the Headman of his village, but in no time the leaders of dominant groups in each ward were challenging the authority of Valdo Kharadi. There in Alsigarh Kotda each village sector is a recognizable unit of social interaction. Even Holi is burnt individually in all sectors. Now along with Valdo Kharadi the leaders of dominant groups are also addressed as Gameti.

In Tidi and Undri villages the situation is more or less like Pai. Besides one rightful Headman there are one or two other persons, as in Pai, who wield political power and are addressed as Gameti. When a village holds together and remains united such persons who wield power, more or less equal to a real Headman are denoted by a special term—Panchgadia Gameti, to differentiate them from a real Headman who is known as Gameti.

Elders' Council. As mentioned earlier the Elders' Council consists ideally of all adult male members, but in practice the more vocal members of the community, having certain personality traits, dominate it. Let us put it this way that anyone interested in the proceedings of the Council is free to participate, but all people not having the required qualities of leadership are not recognized with the status of elders. Only persons having leadership qualities are known as Da Mota, which literally means the intelligent and grown-up. Mota is a kinship term used for one's grandfather. The position of a Da Mota is achieved, except in the case of the Headman who is also a part of this Council. To a certain extent the criteria of age and intelligence are relative and situational. When the list of the village leaders was being made it was discovered that though people

were mostly unanimous as to who were the elders, there were also some people who were referred to as Da Mota by some but not by others. This indicates that the criteria for designating a person as Da Mota are not objective. In my opinion those who are unanimously regarded as Da Mota should be classified as "important leaders", and the remaining ones as marginal leaders.

The analysis of the list of Bhil leaders reveals that there is no definite relationship between the number of people in a lineage and its representation on the Elders' Council. However, it could be said roughly that the numerically large lineages tend to have more members on the Elders' Council, but the ratio cannot be worked out. Some lineages were not represented at all, whereas others were highly represented. In fact, there is more definite evidence to suggest that individuals with certain personality characteristics are more apt to be regarded as leaders than those who lack these.

The most desired quality in a leader is his capacity to talk persuasively. Actually, sometimes, this quality is so much emphasized that even people use an alternative term for leaders, Vatavala—the talkative people.

In the absence of formal education very high premium is placed on age with which comes experience and knowledge. Even though due to difficult conditions of life and lack of medical facilities expectation of life is short, people in the prime of their youth, that is under thirty, can under only exceptional circumstances become leaders of consequence. Most of the leaders in Pai were in the age group of forty to sixty years. One should, however, not forget that though age may be regarded as an important factor in leadership, aged people—physically incapable and invalid—cannot be effective leaders. Nathu Dungri (80), the oldest man of Pai, often complained, "Young people do not care for my opinion and do not bother to consult me on any matter." On the other hand Nara still strong at sixty-five is a powerful leader.

It is not enough only to have the advantage of experience due to advance age and capacity to talk, but aspirants to leadership

positions must be economically sound. Kanji once remarked, "If a man does not have enough food he will be worrying all the time about it and he can't become a leader." He himself lamented that although he had some leadership qualities in him he being not very well off could not devote time to public affairs.

One important quality of a good leader is his ability to mediate between parties at dispute. A leader may have to mediate between his own people or outsiders and his people, or occasionally he may have to become the spokesman for an offender in order to lighten the punishment. Such mediators, known as Vadaliya, play a very important role, and are duly rewarded by the parties whose interests they represent.

Holding an established and continuing religious position, the main priest of the village temple (or Magra Baba) does not help a person in any clear-cut way to wield political power. But a tactful priest can certainly influence some of the decisions taken by the village leaders. For instance, at certain important ceremonies the priest, under possession makes certain remarks regarding the relationship between the Da Mota and the villagers or he occasionally hints that if Da Mota become negligent of their duty, the deity itself might have to act to set matters right. Once when people informed Nara, the *de facto* Headman, that Da Mota were being criticized for not being present at the village ceremony, he remarked, "I know that priest", and laughed away.

There is, however, some truth that people having once attained some political stature try to be more enthusiastic in religious activities. For instance Nara Katara not only emphasizes his belief in Bhil deities but he was also very active in popularising a new sect—Kamdia Panth—in Pai. He also practised for a long time teetotalism and vegetarianism under the influence of the Jain and the Brahman. He persuaded some other people of the village also to give up drinking and eating meat. It is beside the point that their enthusiasm for teetotalism and vegetarianism did not last long. The point to be made here is that though religion may not be made a stepping stone to attain a political position, it is employed by persons already in power to give them added prestige.

The following table gives age-groups of the members of the Elders' Council :

Table 1
Age and Leadership

<i>Age-groups</i>	<i>Number of elders</i>
35-40	2
40-45	2
45-50	4
50-55	7
55-60	7
60 and above	3

The following table gives sectorwise distribution of the members of Elders' Council.

Table 2
Sectorwise Distribution of Members of Elders' Council

<i>S. No.</i>	<i>Sectors</i>	<i>Total no. of Bhil households</i>	<i>Number of leaders</i>
1.	Gavadi	13	4*
2.	Nichla	21	4
3.	Nalwat	17	2
4.	Vadla	34	4
5.	Hamli Pipli	15	2
6.	Rata Kot	9	0
7.	Devda Kad	6	0
8.	Nala	20	2
9.	Mual	28	6
10.	Kemri	3	0
11.	Doda Kad	7	1
12.	Paba	18	0
Total		191	25

* One in a non-Bhil Sadhu.

The following table gives clanwise distribution of the members of the Elders' Council.

Table 3
Clan and Leaders

<i>S. No.</i>	<i>Name of the clan</i>	<i>Number of families</i>	<i>Number of leaders</i>
1.	Katara	71	11
2.	Kharadi	24	2
3.	Pargi	21	3
4.	Bhangora	14	1
5.	Hirawat	10	1
6.	Khokhria	8	0
7.	Relath	7	0
8.	Vadera	6	1
9.	Bodar	6	1
10.	Chhapnia	5	2
11.	Damar	4	1
12.	Ayari	2	0
13.	Dhalovia	2	0
14.	Kharwad	2	0
15.	Sokara	2	0
16.	Dama	2	1
17.	Sania	1	0
18.	Dungri	1	0
19.	Tarwad	1	0
20.	Kapaya	1	0
21.	Kalaua	1	0
22.	Sadhu (non-Bhil)		1

A good combination of all these attributes takes a person a long way in becoming a leader.

There are two important functions of the Elders' Council : (1) settlement of disputes, and (2) co-ordination of various communal activities. The co-ordination of village activities is of two kinds : (1) secular and (2) non-secular. Secular activities are concerned with maintaining amicable relations with the officials of various government departments, namely Police, Revenue and Forest. From a common pool the personnel concerned are offered presents from time to time and their interference in village affairs is kept at a minimum. Non-secular activities are those concerned with organizing religious ceremonies, celebration of festivals, and arranging ceremonial worships of important village deities.

The cases that are settled in the Elders' Council can be broadly classified into six categories :

1. Marital,
2. Sex,
3. Property and its inheritance,
4. Thefts,
5. Debts, and
6. Miscellaneous.

Cases of marital and sex offences are mostly related to pre-marital and extra-marital sex relationship, marriages by elopement, payment of bride-price, and incest. Pre-marital sex relations, unless they result into any complications as marriage or pregnancy, are not regarded seriously, but cases of adultery are viewed as amounting to serious breaches of norms. The offender is made to pay an amount ranging between one hundred and two hundred rupees, as compensation believed to be for the loss of prestige to the aggrieved husband. When the rightful person is deprived of his right to inherit property he may approach the Elders' Council for justice. Similarly cases of theft and non-payment of debts are also settled in the Council. In cases of theft the person is fined five to ten rupees and is made to return the stolen property to its rightful owner. If a person fails to

fulfil his promise to his creditor he is asked to clear his debt on a date fixed by the Council, and a fine of five to ten rupees is inflicted on him. Under miscellaneous cases we may include personal quarrels resulting in physical assault, intrusion of one person's animals into another's fields and damaging the crop, and so forth. In such cases a small fine is imposed and one whose negligence has caused the loss is made to compensate the loss.

The cases are generally settled in the Elders' Council after a great deal of interrogation by the Headman and other members after heated discussion among the members. Occasionally, a dispute may also be settled secretly by the Headman himself or by the Headman and two or three of his friends. The secret way of settling disputes is not liked by the people and their criticism casts doubts on the integrity of their leaders. For example, when Bhema Bhangora's son and Puna Katara's daughter were detected indulging in pre-marital relations Puna Katara approached Nara Katara for justice. As the girl was shortly due to be married it was decided that the matter could not be made public. It is suspected Nara Katara and Vaka Katara together got 100 rupees from Bhema Bhangora for not trying his son publicly. Part of this money was also shared by Puna Katara, the aggrieved father.

The entire Council meets only when a matter of serious import is to be discussed, otherwise only some members of the Council and the elders of one's neighbourhood involved in issue sit together and take a decision. Both, the aggrieved and the offender have to pay a fee for getting justice, the aggrieved however pays only nominal fee and the offender pays a comparatively substantial fee, or in case of a theft or some material loss the offender makes up the loss and pays a nominal fine. The money so collected is spent on drinking or on feasting by those who sat in judgment and the parties involved. Once the aggrieved and the offender and the members of the Elders' Council have drunk together the strain in their relationship is over and they are expected to treat each other with politeness.

In order to present a concrete picture of the working of the Elders' Council, a few cases are being reported here in brief ;

Case 1

Dita Hirawat, who had already been married, eloped with Vaisa Kharadi's daughter, a girl of his own village. This girl with whom Dita took off was of his mother's clan and hence marriage with her would be deemed as incest. But after 3-4 days when they returned they had been married to each other. His father and other elders asked him to restore the girl to her parents but both, the husband and the wife were adamant. In the meeting of the Elders' Council the girl was seated on one side and the boy on the other side at some distance from her. On interrogation the girl told the members, "I am already defamed. Now whatever may happen I am not going to leave him." Finally the marriage was accepted. Dita had to provide one pot of liquor and a goat to the Council. He also paid half of the bride-price immediately, but the other half his father-in-law has not yet received. He is yet to pay one rupee twenty-five paise to the Headman, the latter's due, and twenty-five rupees as his fine to the Elders' Council. In settling this case the names of mediators were not made public, fearing complications.

Case 2

About two years ago Kanji Chhapnia's bullocks entered into Nania Pargi's fields and ate some of his maize. Nania Pargi sent two middlemen, Lallo Bodar and Virko Katara, to Kanji to inform him of the loss. Kanji immediately agreed to pay for his neighbour's loss, but they differed in their assessment of the loss. So Nania Pargi approached Nara Katara—the *de facto* Headman, Vaka Katara—*de jure* Headman, and Dita Hirawat—the priest of the village temple and his neighbour to do the justice. Besides these three eight other members of the Elders' Council and some of their neighbours assembled at Nara Katara's house to decide the issue. Nara Katara played an important role in settling this dispute. Kanji agreed to pay at the coming harvest—after a month, one maund of maize to Nania Pargi, both had to pay immediately five rupees each to the Council. Immediately liquor and jaggery were bought and they all drank and ate together. In this case Lalo Bodar and Virko Katara,

two common friends were made responsible to remind Kanji to pay Nania at the harvest.

Case 3

Rajuri Katara, a girl of Pai, ran away with Hurma Holki of Alsigarh. After some days five to six members of Elders' Council along with the girl's paternal uncle and some neighbours went to Alsigarh and got rupees 350 from the boy's father. Out of this money twenty-five rupees were spent by the Council on drinking and the remaining money went to the girl's father's brother as her father was not alive.

Case 4

Virma Katara and Nania Katara's wife Navli were accused of adultery. But when Virma was tried by the Council the charge was found false. Nania had to pay rupees 150 in all for defaming Virma. Of this amount twenty-five rupees were spent on drinking by the Elders and all those who were involved in the issue.

Case 5

Hukla's father had died when he was still very young. When he grew up he found that his elder brother, Nana Katara, who was farming his land, was not willing to hand over his share of land to him. So he approached the Elders' Council. Hukla's rights in the land were restored. For getting this justice Hukla had to offer a goat and his brother Nana a pot of liquor to the Elders' Council.

Case 6

Hukla died six years ago. After his death his widow remarried her husband's father's brother's son (Phulio) and began living with him with her son. As her son was too young to look after his father's fields Phulio began farming these fields. This was not liked by Hukla's elder brother, Nano. So he approached the Elders' Council. The Council gave the verdict that Nania would take charge of Hukla's son and fields. However, Hukla's son being too much attached to his mother refused to part company with her. As a result

Nania got the possession of the land. but his brother's son is living with his mother's present husband. It is expected that when he will grow up his land will be returned to to him.

Case 7

Virma Katara was found guilty of adultery with the wife of Dita Bodar who had gone out for one month to work in a bamboo camp. At his return he noticed the intimacy between Virma and his wife and so he lodged a complaint with the Council. Virma was tried by the Council and made to pay two hundred rupees to the aggrieved; Dita had to pay five rupees to the Elders' Council for getting this justice.

Normally all kinds of cases are settled within the village by the Elders' Council or by the Headman ; the police interferes mainly in cases of dacoity and murders and in cases involving an outsider, particularly a non-Bhil. In last twenty years or so only on two occasions the police became seriously involved with the people ; once when a Bhil man, Vakta Katara (now turned Christian), killed a Bhil woman in the village ; second time in a case of theft involving some Bhils of the village and a Brahman shopkeeper. In both these cases the Headman played an imminent role between the accused and the police, first in getting the accused arrested and afterward helping in their release from the police custody without being acquitted. Recently the personnel of Excise Department have also become somewhat active and have two times rounded up some people for illicit distillation ; some were released after paying fines and others after bribing the officials. Except on routine round—once in a while, the police mostly keeps away from the village.

The Bhils have persisted in their attitude of suspecting anything "foreign". Till 1947 it could be said that any kind of political or economic reform initiated by the government mostly passed over their head. Even upto 1962 Pai had been successful in maintaining the *status quo*. The idea of village unity and faith in its leadership was still quite strong except occasional experiences of intrusions made by

political and economic institutions. Upto 1963 people refrained from participating in the statutory Panchayat (which came into being in 1952) of which they were one of the three participating villages. The main argument behind keeping away from the Panchayat was, "If we join this Panchayat all new rules will be binding on us. We will lose our forest, we will forfeit the right of distillation, and new taxes will be imposed on us." Their leaders feared that once they joined the elected council they will lose control on their people. People tried (and they still try) to keep the government officials' intervention at its minimum by jointly corrupting the officials of forest, police, Tahsil, and so forth. It is, however, true that the people have lived in a world of illusions and make-believe. Their rights over forest was seriously challenged in 1963 when it was first auctioned to a contractor. They felt inferior before the organized power of the government and hence could not carry out their threats of killing those who dared to enter their forest.

Whether people like it or not there has been a progressive extension of political and economic agencies. Upto 1963 (when the major part of data for this study were gathered) people had polled in three General Elections ; it was one party show—the Indian National Congress. But in 1962 Elections the Indian National Congress was caught napping and the Jan Sangh stole the show by feeding the Bhils on such catching slogans as restoration of their rights in the forest and exemption from on land. No promises were fulfilled and the situation regarding the forest worsened during this period. In fact, the candidate they chose belonged to the party whose voice would not be heard, it being a small party of almost no consequence. Hence the result was that in the next election (1967) the Indian National Congress was again returned.

In pre-independence days the power of a Headman was limited, but now he has become the most important person. The politicians rightly know that the Headman, particularly a strong Headman, can prove a vote bank. So now they are all after him giving him a false sense of dignity and importance. In 1962 General Elections

everybody voted for Jan Sangh because Nara, their Headman, wanted it so. Whoever was asked "Who he will vote for?", the reply came, "Anybody Nara asks for. He knows the best." Nara also told his people the stories of his meetings, perhaps with some exaggeration, with the political leaders of the State.

In the changed situation if the Headman grew stronger people also became suspicious of his integrity. People often said, "He takes money from us and he gets money from the Government, contractors, and from so many other sources." When the forest of Pai was auctioned by the government to a Muslim contractor people began criticising Nara. They strongly believed the contractor must have bribed him.

The Headman's power has increased due to increased opportunity of contact with outsiders. The government officials and politicians having discovered Nara's influence in the village are much too happy and content as if they have found out the button by pressing which they could get everything. He is believed to have an answer for every problem. This is rather an over-simplification of the situation. When the forester wanted to appoint three men for buying grass for the government he consulted Nara, and naturally he got his son's name in the list of candidates. He often boasts to the villagers about getting them work and criticizes those who go to work to distant places when he is in a position to get them work in the village. He said, "They are monkeys, they have no brains. When I can get them work here why should they go eight miles from here?"

It is true that when the Headman and the petty officials develop unfair understanding they can really create enormous problems for the people. It was noticed that those who applied for allotment of land had paid more money than amounts for which receipts were issued to them. The villagers have to bear with injustice as there is no one to voice their grievances.

A considerable degree of feeling of dissension has grown against Nara, but there has been no one who could become the

leader of dissidents. The dissension, however came to surface when Nara's son Dhan Raj contested in the Panchayat election. Dhan Raj's opponent was the son of Alsigarh Kotda's Headman ; his name also was Dhan Raj. People of Pai, particularly Nara, claim that due to misunderstanding many of their candidate's votes were counted in favour of his opponent. When the result was declared and Nara's son was declared defeated there was a lot of tension. As the school teacher put it, "Nara abused a lot and had police not arrived people would have been involved in a fight." One interesting outcome of this election was that although Nara's son was not elected, two other villagers got elected as ordinary members of the Panchayat. Nara did not want his village to have any association with the Panchayat, but the elected members found it difficult to resist the honour. Later, however, those who got elected reconciled with Nara and dissociated from the activities of the Panchayat.

7

Change

Though Pai is only twenty miles from Udaipur—a rapidly modernising city—there has been little impact of urbanisation on it. The Bhils of Pai do not put on Western style clothes ; they have no cycles, wrist watches, radios, fountain pens, and most of them have not yet seen a train ; they have a simple and unadvanced material culture. They have been only slightly exposed to the miracles of modern medicine and by and large they depend for cures of their ailments on their deities and traditional methods. Their technique for the cultivation of land is traditional and the production is meagre. Their economy is mainly based on the exploitation of land and forest yielding only marginal surplus from their own requirements. Pai is a close knit community. It has three main features of a little community ; distinctiveness, homogeneity, smallness, but it lacks the fourth feature—self-sufficiency. It is not self-sufficient and it never was self-sufficient as politically and economically it was dependent to a considerable degree on the national politico-economic community. Its social contours also cut through several villages lying in the radius of twenty-five or thirty miles of Pai.

The Bhils in general, and the Bhils of Pai in particular, have always been perturbed over the external intervention in what they have considered their internal affairs. In the distant past land was

freely available and with the consent of the Headman anybody could plough as much land as he could. They practised shifting cultivation, that is, they cut woods and burnt them and waited for the ashes to be dissolved in the soil with the rain water after which they threw seeds in a broadcast manner. In two or three years when the fertility of the land was exhausted another felling took place (Erskine 1908, 42-43). Prior to 1947-48 people paid revenue in kind which used to be one-third of their total produce ; during the last twenty years or so they have been paying revenue in cash, varying between two annas to three rupees a year on a Bigha of land, depending upon the quality of the land. All land of Pai, except fifteen acres, has been classed as non-irrigated land in the government records.

Acquisition of new land is not so easy now as it was in the past. This is partly due to increase in population and overall congestion and partly due to government legislation. Before 1947-48 and to some extent even upto 1962-63 a person could clear a patch of forest with the consent of the village Headman, as the Patwari—the revenue clerk—operated in the village with his assistance. Presently the title to a new land is granted after a person has deposited with the government the value of money equal to seven years' revenue of the land. The Headman still plays the mediatory role ; it was noticed that the Headman and the revenue clerk connived and charged people much more than the money for which receipts were issued to them.

The mode of agriculture has changed to some extent. The agricultural implements remain the same, but shifting cultivation has been replaced by settled cultivation. Previously the agriculture solely depended on the rains, but now some farmers at least irrigate their crops. Prior to 1933 there were no wells for irrigation; the number of wells before 1947 was seven but in 1968 there were twenty-five wells and thirteen wells were under construction. There is also more consciousness for using cowdung as manure. The State Agricultural Department and the Community Development Block

tried to introduce chemical fertilizer but they did not catch up. The people are strongly opposed to the introduction of new methods of farming advocated by the government partly due to lack of faith in the personnel of the government and partly due to fear of higher taxation. Some people have availed of the government loans and subsidies for creating irrigational facilities by deepening the existing wells and digging new ones, and for getting fitted their wells with persian wheels and leather buckets. In 1965, a small dam was also built by the government at the cost of Rs. 20,000 which is used by four or five farmers for irrigation. Previously people grew mainly millets and maize, but since the improvement in irrigational facilities and with the realisation that crops, such as wheat, turmeric, chillies, sugarcane and rice are in greater demand more and more people are progressively taking to the cultivation of these crops. Although millets are still grown and maize still remain their staple food ; consumption of wheat has also increased. It is, however, surprising that on government records the village is still shown as growing only millets and maize and no other crops.

Forest occupies an important place in the economy of Pai. About one hundred years ago, the hilly tracts in the south-west of Udaipur (where Pai is situated) were beautifully wooded, but now these tracts have been robbed of their beauty by unjudicious felling of trees by the forest contractors and practice of shifting cultivation by the Bhils (Erskine 1908 : 52). The Bhils have always lived under the belief that the forest lying around their village belongs to them and they have a right to make a living out of it. Till 1947, they grazed their cattle freely, cut wood and bomboos for domestic use, and took a small portion of the forest produce to the town for sale to obtain their requirements of clothes and ornaments and other necessities of life. The Forest Department had come into existence around the year 1880 but it did not hinder them from the exploitation of the forest till the year 1947 except for certain Reserved Forest kept for sporting and for the supply of forge and fuel for the State. First forest post was established in this area by the State Government in 1947 at Undri, a village on the way to Udaipur (ten miles) with the

intention of checking the excessive exploitation of the forest and for the collection of taxes on the forest produce taken for sale in Udaipur. The Forest Department claims that the forest lying around Pai had never actually belonged to the village, but it had been illegally exploited by the people in defiance of the law. On the other hand, the villagers assert that the Forest Department has been encroaching upon their rights because the forest has always belonged to the Bhils. It should be recalled that there were many rebellions of the Bhils to voice their protest against the excessive interference in their life by the government, particularly for undermining their right to exploit the forest.

Between the years 1947 and 1963 the people of Pai kept the intervention in their internal affairs by the government departments, including the Forest Department, at a minimum by threatening the use of force and by bribing the petty government officials. In 1962 when it became obvious that the government could not be resisted any longer from seriously challenging and jeopardising the rights of the people in the forest ; as a last resort a co-operative society was formed to fight the menace of the government. But when the time for the bidding at a auction for the contract of the forest came they did not show much courage and an outsider got the contract. Since then the government has given the contracts three times and has dealt somewhat firmly with the villagers. The Bhils have not only lost their privileges but contractors have cleared much of the forest. It is a blow to their economy. There is no awareness either in the contractors or in the Bhils to prevent deforestation. The Bhils are mostly employed as labourers by the contractors to work out the forest.

The road between Udaipur and Phalasia, linking up several villages of Girva ond Phalasia sub-divisions, was built about thirty years ago. Since it was built road building and repairs still continue to be an avenue of employment at least for two or three months almost every year due to popular demand and due to government policy for improving communication channels in the backward areas. During the lean years the government, in order to help the people,

keeps road building going on. The road has improved, but it is still far from satisfactory. It has not only brought wages to the people, but it has to some extent exposed the village to the outside world. Before the road had been built only a couple of petty government officials, the revenue clerk and the police man visited the village, but now a score of officials belonging to the departments of Excise and Customs, Forest, Community Development, Agriculture, Police and Public Works visit or pass through the village. The road has also brought political parties right up to the village. It has also helped traders who can now export or import things more quickly compared to the days when camels, donkeys, horses and buffalos were used for the transportation of goods or human beings carried the goods themselves. The small traders and the Bhils do not use trucks and buses for the transportation of goods but there certainly is some swing from traditional to the modern mode of transportation. Previously people frequently went to the town on foot for the sale of forest and agricultural produce, but now there are at least some traders who make their purchases in the village and ship it to the town in trucks. The road has also helped in the spread of Christianity. The first conversions took place in the year the road was built. Missionary activities had already gained momentum in villages of Kherwara and Dungarpur Districts as these having been linked by the road much earlier than Girwa in which Pai is situated.

Traditionally the Bhils build their houses on the hills or on slopes ; each house is situated at some distance from the other. In Pai the same settlement pattern continues except that now because of greater pressure on land the distance between the houses is reducing and occasionally one also comes across adjoining houses. From the earlier accounts of the Bhil villages we know that the Bhils of a unilineal kin group inhabited the village in the beginning, but as time went on other groups also joined them and through this process the village expanded and acquired the nature of a multi-kin group village. Pai has also been subjected to this developmental process.

The village enjoyed a high degree of autonomy and to a considerable degree this autonomy is still maintained. The village Head-

man, whose office is hereditary, is assisted by the members of the Elders' Council in maintaining law and order in the village. Prior to Independence the State sent a turban to the succeeding Headman as its recognition to him, but now the custom has fallen in disuse.

The changes in the political scene of the nation have also influenced the village. The people of Pai have exercised their franchise in four General Elections. Upto the first two General Elections the people had known only one party—the Indian National Congress, but by the Third General Election a couple of other parties, the Swatantra and the Jan Sangh had also become quite popular. In the Third General Election a candidate of the Jan Sangh had been elected, but in the Fourth General Election again a candidate of the Indian National Congress was returned. In the Third General Election (only the Third General Election was observed by this investigator) all votes were cast in favour of the Jan Sangh at the behest of the village Headman. Only males voted. These elections made the village Headman a powerful person in the eyes of the villagers, the leaders of the political parties, and petty government officials. The Headman often narrated to the villagers and the officials his conversations with various eminent political leaders ; this helped him in building his public image.

Though the village exercised its franchise it has refused to associate itself with the statutory Panchayat that includes two other villages besides Pai. The people and the Headman of Pai opposed the Panchayat as they feared that it would upset the tempo of their life, result in higher taxation, and undue interference by the officials in the affairs of the village. The leaders and the Headman also feared that if they joined the Panchayat their grip on the village affairs will be lost. They had visualized that the Members of Parliament and the Legislative Assembly could not interfere in their daily life but the village Panchayat would, and this could undermine hold of the Elders' Council and the village Headman. In 1965-66 the Headman of Pai was persuaded to participate in the Panchayat elections. The elections were held in a neighbouring village, Alsigarh Kotda. The post of Sarpanch—the president of the Panchayat—was

contested by the son of the Headman of Pai and by the son of the Headman of Alsigarh Kotda. Both candidates had the same name, Dhanji. It is stated by some that due to confusion created by the common name of the candidates, the Dhanji of Pai lost the election; some others believe he did not lose because of the confusion but because of the dissension in the camp of the Headman of Pai. The worst thing that happened was that while the son of the Headman lost two other villagers got elected as ordinary members of the Panchayat. The Headman did not want those who got elected from his village to participate in the activities of the Panchayat ; but the lure of office was stronger than the fear of the Headman. Besides these were the important people of the village. This incidence undermined the village unity and authority of the Headman. However, the elected members reconciled with the Headman later.

Though the Bhils have had long association with the Hindus who are strongly characterised by a hierarchical system—the caste—they have not absorbed the elements of caste to any considerable degree. Among themselves, they are all equal ; and in relation to others, particularly Hindu castes, they claim an independent status. The concept of ritual purity and pollution, the life stream of caste system, is not well-developed. Though there have been some movements inspired by Brahmanical and Jain values of non-violence and abstinence, by and large the pleasure motif of the Bhil culture has withstood them. The superiority of puritanical values is sometimes acknowledged in their personal conversations, but in practice and at heart they remain a pleasure-loving people who like to drink, eat meat, and indulge in similar other pleasures of life.

The Bhils believe that with technological advancement there has been a decay in the faith of the people in their gods and deities. Because of this weakening in their faith the gods have also withdrawn their support to the people. Religions or sects, such as Christianity, Kabir Panth, Bhagat Movement, and Kamdia or Dasnami have made inroads in their religious life. Except for Christianity, remaining movements are more or less indigenous and self-generated inspired by reformatory views and are on the Brahmanical lines. In

Pai only Christians and Kamdia sects are found. The Christians are a small self-contained group having withdrawn from most of the political, social and religious activities of the village. Though the Kamdia have a sizable following in the village, they have not divided people into blocks. The ordinary Bhils participate in the activities of the Kamdia and the Kamdia also participate in the social, political and religious life of the village as full members. The followers of Kabir Panth, Bhagat and Christian beliefs do not interdine and intermarry with each other, but the ordinary Bhils and Kamdia are a interdining and intermarrying group.

It was generally reported in the village that the activities of witchcraft have increased during the last twenty-five or thirty years ; it is believed to have been imported by some of their people from Gujrat State. However if we go through the earlier accounts of Bhil life there is enough evidence to suggest that incidence of witchcraft was high even in the past. These beliefs may have been engendered from increased tension and conflict in their life due to increased contact with the outside world. In certain other fields of religion it appears that the Bhils have accepted the Hindu customs and deities in form but not in content. There seems to be a parochialization of Hindu customs before their acceptance. This is evident from the analysis of their festival cycle and the rituals of life cycle.

Among some other changes may be listed the opening of two schools in Pai, one by the Government and another by the Church. Both schools were opened at the same time but they have had little impact on the literacy index of the village. But since 1960 the idea of educating at least one boy in every household has been catching up. The parents of the school-going children believed that their educated children could become school teacher, Supervisor in the Public Works Department, and revenue clerk. However no one wanted his son to leave the village to get a job. By 1967 there were two boys who had studied up to the seventh class and about ten boys were studying between the fifth and the eighth classes in Tidi and Udaipur. Some parents wanted their sons to receive even higher education if they could get financial support from somewhere.

A Post Office was opened in the village in 1967. Since then it is being managed by the school teacher. The postal service is used mostly by non-Bhils of Pai such as the school teacher and the shopkeepers. Lately the boys having gone out to study in Udaipur and Tidi have also begun using this service.

Change is a continuous process. Formal and legislative changes are relatively easy to observe, but changes caused by them require a deeper study. Past, and particularly social past, is not accurately recorded and hence it becomes difficult to say what has really changed and in what degree. For instance, even when it is known that the Forest Department came into existence in a certain year in the State, it requires elaborate investigation to find out when actually this Department began implementing its rules regarding the conservation of forest and putting a check on the indiscriminate exploitation of forest by people, to what extent people complied with the rules, or if there were any compromises between officials and people notwithstanding the existing legislation. It will require even much greater and sustained effort to know the impact of formal changes on social structure. Though it is fairly well-established that the population in general of the State and in particular of Pai was low in the past and that land was comparatively easily available, we do not exactly know when land became scarce and what was the impact of this change on society. If we are to believe formal statements regarding the functions of structural units—such as domestic group, lineage, and clan—their functions have not changed much. People's statements, if accepted with some allowance for human nature of glorifying the past, may also help in discerning certain changes as the lowering of age at marriage because of contact with Hindus. But again we have no way to ascertain if divorces have increased or decreased, whether incidence of polygyny, or marriages by elopement and abduction are more or less now. Most of the past that is claimed to be known is conjectured past. As a general observation it may however be said that pace of change since 1947, the year of India's Independence, has increased because of improvement in communication channels and various policy decisions at State and National level, to

ensure all-sided development of the Bhils. Introduction of democratic institutions has also made possible greater participation of people in national life. But not all the innovations that are being promoted are compatible with the cultural values of Bhils. Besides non-committal and disinterested approach by change agents have done little to clear the pitfalls from the road of change. There is much that is needed in the improvement of strategy and goals of change.

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