SKETCH MAP SHOWING THE THAKUR HABITAT

District boundaries

Area of Thakur concentration.
THAKURS OF THE SAHYADRI
A child receives her first lesson in grinding corn
Thakurs of the Sahyadri

by

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UNIVERSITY OF BOMBAY

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

PATGAON Pathar is a tableland covering 30 square miles in Thana District. Except for a few Agris who are concentrated in the principal village of Patgaon, the plateau is inhabited exclusively by Thakurs who live in small hamlets from one to three miles apart. The population varies from 100 to 500, most hamlets of about 25 homesteads sheltering 100 to 150 people only.

During the course of five years from 1940 to 1945, I visited this plateau at intervals and lived with a Thakur family of Patgaon. Normally, my stay there was for about a fortnight, although at times it extended to two or three months. I often visited the neighbouring villages and established close contact, which still continues, with Thakurs all over the plateau. Living under the same roof with a Thakur family helped me to gain an intimate knowledge of the Thakur way of life—their family life, economic conditions, customs and etiquette. I never missed an opportunity of attending a Thakur panchayat meeting. I visited Borli in Nasik District, from where the Thakurs are supposed to have descended to the Konkan. I walked from Borli to Murbad near Patgaon, visiting on my way a number of Thakur hamlets. I have witnessed dances, Thakur rituals, marriages and other ceremonies, and have participated in shikar expeditions. I have attended their conferences and have known intimately a few educated young men among them. I have spent a few days at Vinval near Jawhar to acquaint myself with the life of a section of Thakurs known as the Ka Thakurs, a relatively backward section.

Throughout this contact of five years I kept notes of my observations. It is this material that is presented in the pages that follow.

After 1949 I spent some time at Patgaon trying to organize a housing society for the Ma Thakurs of the village. Since then I have visited Patgaon off and on.

The material presented for the Ph.D. degree of Bombay University has been almost entirely recast to form this monograph. In the recasting I have retained all the economic facts
Preface

as they were previously gathered. I have checked and corrected or modified wherever necessary the other material in the light of my more intimate contacts.

Very little has been published so far about the Thakurs in general and the Ka in particular. The district gazetteers, Enthoven and Grierson are the main sources of information about this community. Non-official contributions come from Dr John Wilson, V. K. Rajwade, and my father, N. G. Chapekar. The last author confines himself to the Thakurs of Badlapur as his inquiry forms part of the general survey of that village. There are no Ka Thakurs at Badlapur, so my father's inquiry is naturally restricted to the Ma. I have made use of the available material and referred to it in its proper context.

In the preparation of this monograph I am deeply obliged to my teacher, Professor G. S. Ghurye, whose guidance and help have been very valuable in the production of this work. I have worked with him for over sixteen years, first as a student and then as an assistant. I owe the art of collecting, collating and presenting research material to him. I am grateful to the University of Bombay for publishing the book in the University Sociology Series.

My friends Dr William Morrison of Connecticut, U.S.A. and Shri J. G. Kakde took the photographs. My younger brother Madhu and my cousin Shri A. V. Godbole prepared the line-drawings. Shri N. V. Koparkar of Mhase introduced me to the Patgaon Thakurs from whom most of the material has been gathered.

The most important help comes from my Thakur friends, such as Rambhau Ughade of Patole and the late Kamalu Padir of Patgaon. Although limitation of space prevents me from mentioning others, I shall never forget them.

Department of Sociology
University of Bombay.
January 1957

L. N. C.
PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

I have great pleasure in presenting this second edition of my monograph on the tribe of Thakurs. The entire book is revised in a general way and some new information presented, particularly about the life of the Ka. The life-sketch of a Ka youth appears in this edition for the first time. I have also added some charts and pictographs. Family-budgets and other descriptions of economic life of the Thakurs appearing in the first edition have been substituted by details and figures for the year 1963. The Thakur is fast changing. Modern thought is influencing him; modern amenities are slowly and steadily reaching the remote hills where he has lived so far almost isolated. I have tried to present the new trends in the different facets of Thakur life.

I am much profited by the reviews on the first edition of this monograph which appeared in various periodicals. I had them in mind while revising this edition.

I am indebted to Mary McCollum for going through the book and offering me her valuable suggestions.

I hope this revised edition will be found useful by students of ethnology.

Badlapur, Dist. Thana
July 1966

L. N. C.
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INTRODUCTION

DIFFERENT peoples in different States of India are denoted by the term Thākūr.⁠¹ According to Jñānakosha, the Marathi encyclopaedia, people who go by this name live mainly in the State of Bombay, the Punjab and Kashmir. They are to be found in the ranks of Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Buddhists. Many of these people are also known as Thakkars. Petty Rajput chieftains call themselves Thakurs, the term being used here as a title of honour.

My inquiry is restricted to the hill-tribe, known as Thakurs, of North Konkan.² Thakurs from the Punjab and Kashmir, as also the Rajput chieftains, are consequently outside the scope of the present inquiry.

The standard Marathi lexicon describes a Thakur as: (1) a deity, (2) an idol, (3) God, (4) the name of a hill-tribe and its members in North Konkan, (5) the leader of a Rajput or Bhil tribe, (6) a pāṭil [headman of a village], (7) a sirdar or nobleman, (8) a lord, (9) a title of honour, (10) a priest officiating for some of the Shudra castes.

The lexicon does not give the derivation of the term. Rajwade,³ however, derives it from taskara: taskara-ṭhakkara-ṭhākara-ṭhākura. Taskara means a thief and the term probably denoted a criminal tribe. Rajwade⁴ says that the Thakurs were

¹ Pronunciation: Th as in Thackeray, ā as in Parker, kū as in Cooper.
² Konkan comprises the coastal districts of Kolaba, Ratnagiri and Thana in Maharashtra State.
³ Keshavacharya, Mahākāvatī Bakhār, ed. V.K. Rajwade (Chitrashala Press, 1924), p. 84.
⁴ Ibid.
known to Katyayana [600 B.C.] as Taskara. Although etymologically the derivation seems sound, it is unreasonable to attribute the origin of the name of a timid, god-fearing community noted for its honesty to a criminal propensity.

It is the opinion of the contributors to the Jñyānakosh that there is a strain of Rajput blood in the Thakurs. The statement, however, has little validity as no evidence in support of it has been offered. The Gazetteers of Nasik, Poona and Thana Districts also record this theory, which seems to have originated with Dr. John Wilson. He thinks that the Thakurs or barons of Gujarat, who fled to the jungles as a result of Sultan Mahumud Begada's persecution, induced Hindus of different tribes to join their ranks. This mixed multitude from North Konkan is known as the Thakur tribe.

Members of this tribe are today found mainly in the five Districts of Ahmednagar, Kolaba, Nasik, Poona and Thana. That the original habitat of the people was in the hilly western parts of Nasik District is practically certain. Thakurs from other areas know their ancestral places of abode (vatan) which are situated in these parts. In marriage-songs, prayers are offered to deities from these very places, such as Nasik, Trimbakeshwar, Borli, Talegaon and Anjaneri. All these places are in Nasik District. It seems that the emigrants walked down the Thal Pass from Borli, where a big Thakur fair is held annually even today on the full moon day of the month of Paush (December-January). It is just possible that the emigrants might have left Borli on that day, centuries ago. A legend exists in Borli that the emigrants, before starting on their historic march, threw their weapons into a pond. It shows that the Thakur is conscious of emigration, and perhaps of the change of life from that of a fighter to one of a hunter or a cultivator.

How long the Thakur has been occupying the western parts of Nasik District, when he immigrated into the Konkan and whether the assimilation of the Gujarat barons into the tribe is a fact, and if so the date of the Gujarat barons' migration to Nasik and their route, are questions which cannot be discussed

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5 John Wilson, *Aboriginal Tribes of the Bombay Presidency* (Govt. of India, 1876), p. 20.
Introduction

for want of reliable data. In the present stage of our knowledge, therefore, I have taken the Thakurs to be a hill-tribe of Maharashtra.

An inscription in the possession of a Thakur of Igatpuri suggests that a tribe known as the Thakurs resided in Nasik District in the first quarter of the seventh century. This inscription records a grant by a Chalukya monarch giving the village of Balegrama in the district of Goparashtra to one Balamma Thakur for the worship of the deity Kapāleshvara. Though the area about Nasik and Trimbakeshwar was said to have been once known as Goparashtra, neither Goparashtra, Balegrama nor Kapāleshvara has yet been definitely located.

As for Dr. Wilson's theory, Mahumud Begada ruled Gujarat in the latter half of the fifteenth and the first decade of the sixteenth centuries. The assimilation of Rajputs, if a fact, might therefore have taken place during that period. The ethnic status of the Rajputs seems to be uncertain.

The traditional antipathy of the Thakur towards the horse, the use of hammock instead of cradle, and his fear of Muslims are said to point to a Rajput origin. This is what the Thakur thinks. I was informed that through fear of the Muslim kings the Thakurs discarded everything associated with martial activities. That is why the horse became tabooed. The children were carried in slings when the Thakur's forbears fled for their lives and ever since the hammock has replaced the cradle. Today the shy, timid Thakur has no martial inclination. If there is a strain of Rajput blood, there is none of the Rajput martial spirit, except perhaps in hunting where the Thakur shows amazing courage.

To what extent it is possible to have inherent qualities completely effaced and, what is more amazing, antipodal qualities thoroughly ingrained in a community as a result of unbearable persecution and tyranny is questionable. I have given the arguments as they were offered to me by intelligent Thakurs. From the legend I have already mentioned about Thakur emigrants

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7 "...the lower agricultural tribes and castes adopted the name of Rajputs, connected with some special clan or locality in the course of their historic migrations." R. Mukerjee, Social Ecology (Longmans Green), p. 184.
who threw their weapons in the pond at Borli, and similar tales, it seems that the Thakurs have a knowledge of their Rajput heritage apart from what they have heard from the educated classes who read the *Gazetteers* and other books and who tell them the historical facts about their origin. While not admitting the claim of the Thakurs to Rajput lineage, I must in fairness to them point out that people more or less like them and even in better circumstances and cultural status in the neighbouring region do not advance such a claim for themselves.

Rajwade\(^8\) thinks that the Thakurs have been in the area which they now occupy since about 500 B.C., but does not offer any evidence in support of this view. Probably the date of Katyayana suggests this period to him.

According to *Jñānakosh* the Kolis, from the east, usurped the area the Thakurs and Warlis then occupied and pushed them westward. The Warlis were originally Thakurs but came to be known as Warlis because they chose the upper levels of the Sahyadri mountains for their habitat. *Varale* means 'from the upper region' and the theory is based on this meaning. There are Thakurs on the heights of the Sahyadri and yet it is not known whether they have been ever designated as Warlis. Therefore this explanation of the term Warli as meaning 'one from the uplands' is not satisfactory.

There are Ka Thakurs and Ma Thakurs. As there is evidence to show close relationship between them, I have treated them as branches of the same ethnic group.

The names of the sub-castes are interesting. There are very few communities in India with a single-lettered name. The Ma (म) are often called Mā (मा). This is probably due to the Thakur’s peculiar way of speaking, marked by elongated pronunciation. Various explanations are offered for these terms. The Ma are said to be those from Mahaldesh—a province popular in Indian folklore—while the Ka are said to be from the Konkan.\(^9\) Although it is not certain which part of the country was called Mahaldesh, the area about Nasik is generally referred to by that name. Ka is again said to be the abbreviation of *Kaḍu* meaning

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\(^8\) *Ibid.*, pp. 85, 89.
people of low birth. The Ka resent this interpretation which they attribute to the abusive attitude of the Ma. Another interpretation was offered to me by a literate Thakur whom I met at Borli. 'The Thakurs have come from Mungi Paithan'\(^\text{10}\) he said: 'When at Mungi Paithan our habits were clean like those of the Brahmans and we were called Sudam—the best. When we migrated to the jungles of Sahyadri our culture deteriorated, and we got the epithet Madam—intermediate. Then, in course of time, we were pushed still farther west towards Jawhar. We lost all semblance of culture and we became Kadam—low. We lost our cultural traits through environmental handicaps. The Sudams, who were vegetarians like the Brahmans, took to hunting and eating animal food as a consequence of their jungle life. In course of time the Sudams, Madams and Kadams came to be known as Su, Ma and Ka.\(^\text{1}\)

This interpretation lacks plausibility. In the first place, there are no Sudam Thakurs to be found anywhere today. Although madam means intermediate, kadam does not mean low. With the advanced communities of North Konkan it is the fashion for them to claim that their ancestors immigrated from Mungi Paithan. There are no Thakurs at Mungi Paithan today. It seems the Thakur has taken the Mungi Paithan legend from his advanced neighbours. K. J. Save\(^\text{11}\) interprets Ma as mothe (big) and Ka as kanishtha (low). Another interpretation is analogous to the first one and puts the Ma as Marathas and the Ka as Konkanis (people from the Konkan). N. G. Chapekar\(^\text{12}\) suggests the recurrence of the two letters of the alphabet ma and ka in their respective modes of speech has earned these names for the two communities. Ma and ka are dominant in their respective tongues. Whether this feature alone justifies the names is more than I can say.

According to the 1941 census, the total number of Thakurs in the province of Bombay was 99,386 (males 52,628, females 46,708). Of them 3,661 were reported to be in the city of Bombay. It may be that these Thakurs are members of other castes not belonging to either the Ka or the Ma. Very few members of the

\(^\text{10}\) Paithan in Aurangabad district of Maharashtra.


\(^\text{12}\) Ibid., p. 495.
community live in Bombay City. The figure for the Khandesh district (6,618) seems rather exaggerated probably for reasons identical with those responsible for the Bombay City figure. Figures for the two sections of the Ma and Ka are not shown separately.

The Thakurs are better looking than their neighbours, the Katkaris. They are of medium height. Curly hair is an exception, in which respect they differ from the Katkaris whose women have very curly hair. Their complexion is brown, best described as chocolate. One occasionally meets a child as fair as one from the advanced castes. This is often attributed to an illicit relation of a woman with a man from an advanced caste. This explanation is not satisfactory as a number of children are light-coloured in their childhood. Exposure to the sun turns the skin brown. Due to poor food, the Thakurs are not of good physique. Yet they are well formed, show remarkable powers of endurance and are very active.

Thakur women are noted for their bulging stomachs. Contributors to the District Gazetteers did not fail to mark this feature seventy years ago. The sari which is tightly wound below the navel may be the cause of the distension. Enlargement of the spleen owing to chronic malaria, coarse food were offered as explanations by a medical practitioner of Badlapur. The distension is easily noticed because of the Thakur woman’s bare belly. Her manner of wearing the sari may be inducing it and magnifying it, too. The feature is much less observed today, than in 1944.

Almost cut off from the progressive groups that inhabit the plains, the Thakurs have made the mountains and the hills their habitat. If they are not on the plateau they are at the foot of thickly wooded mountains. From the Thakurs’ geographical situation one has some idea of their economic, educational and moral condition.

The Thakurs seem to live aloof. His preference for forest life is the cause of this seeming aloofness. As a result there have come into existence exclusive Thakur hamlets (Thākurvāḍī). Such a hamlet is never a mixture of different castes and creeds. The community is self-contained; the community’s medicine-

man (bhagat) diagnoses and treats diseases. Just as the modern physician is outside the sphere of the Thakur’s life, so is the judge. Justice, especially in disputes of a social nature, is administered by the panchayat of the community. The panchayat also hears and decides upon property disputes.

On the upland, only ragi (nāgali) and the common millet (vari) crops grow. Paddy fields are few and far between. Nāgali and vari millets therefore constitute the staple food of the uplanders. Those who live at the foot of the mountain cultivate patches of rented paddy-land, but very few have enough land and they are consequently half-starved. Meat and fish are eaten, though not daily. Sometimes the Thakur has to live for weeks on wild onions. Thus the scarcity of food encourages nomadic tendency. Idle and hungry people are always on the move.

Accustomed to mountain life, the Thakurs are a hardy and swift-footed people. They can walk thirty miles a day without fatigue. They build huts from the materials of the forests. They have few clothes to protect them from the cold. Fuel is abundant and the fire by which they sleep is kept smouldering day and night. To protect themselves from the rain they use umbrellas made of strips of bamboo and teak leaves.

Most of the Thakurs are illiterate. No adequate effort has ever been made to educate them. They cannot afford to send their children to school as they are needed in household tasks even when they are young.

The Thakur worships a host of deities. These are as poor as their worshippers. They are not housed; trees are their only shelter.

Various aspects of Thakur life are evident in Thakur songs and folklore. The dialect is enlivened by idioms and proverbs in which reference to forest life is frequent. The delicacies mentioned in the stories are confined to the sweetmeats, not very rich or varied, which are available in the village bazaars.

14 *Eleusine coracana.*
15 *Panicum miliaceum.*
DOMESTIC AND PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

An account of the Thakurs' domestic life is best begun with a description of their houses. A Thakur riddle describes them as Shidgad mountains\(^1\) tied with creepers and lightly poised, for the traditional house is a light structure. Houses built with bricks and tiles are exceptional.

Plate I presents plans of four different but typical houses. Each is roughly square, the area varying from \(3 \times 3\) m. to about \(10 \times 10\) m. Often the whole area is one large room. In the majority of houses, however, a small room \(1 \times 1.50\) m. to about \(3 \times 5\) m. is partitioned off on one side to be used as the kitchen. Along two adjoining sides a breadth of about \(2\) m. is reserved for cattle. Poles on forked struts, extending from end to end, separate this reservation from the main apartment.

A small house has only one entrance, but one of larger size has two of them. One entrance opens into the cattle-shed. The entrance of a Ka house faces either east or north; that of the Ma may face any direction. Wattle and daub screens of the same material as the walls serve as doors. There is no arrangement to fasten the door from inside. Light poles are sometimes placed crosswise by the Ka to close the doorway. Every village has a few houses with an entrance without a door. To a Thakur, a door is protection against the cold. The idea of its affording security to valuables is quite foreign to him, as he owns so little.

\(^{1}\) A range of the Sahyadri mountains, in Poona District.
1. House plans
Gaulani or Milkwomen

Tattoo marks on the forearm

Tattoo marks on the forehead

2. These tattoo marks are also used by the non-Thakurs of the neighbouring community

Slightly enlarged
3. Ornaments

Approximately half size
Burdul with todi

Malai

Bhokshi

4. Fishing apparatus
Domestic and Personal Equipment

Thakur custom requires that the foundation of a house be laid in the evening when the polar star is visible. At sunrise the auspicious first post should be fixed, and the construction completed at dawn when Venus appears on the eastern horizon. Only a house built according to this rule, Thakurs think, will be immune from danger. This shows the simplicity of the structure. The rule, however, is an ideal rarely followed.

The householder is usually able to erect the simple structure of his own house. Villagers help him when team-work is necessary. The only additional help solicited is that of a carpenter, who is generally a Thakur. In the case of house No. 4 in Plate I, the carpenter was paid Rs. 8-50 for the woodwork in 1938. The work was done on the basis of a lump-sum contract. It actually took the carpenter about a week. On the basis of wages, which varied from Re. 0.25 to 0.50 a day, he would have had to be provided with meals in addition to wages.

Durva\(^2\) grass, uncooked rice, a tassel of the gond\(\textsuperscript{a}\) creeper found in ponds and a tortoise-shell are put in the foundation after being sprinkled with water. Durva\(^2\) grass, rice and a flower tassel are articles of worship. The tortoise-shell is used, perhaps, so that it may transfer its toughness to the house. The Kurm\(\textsuperscript{b}\)vati\(\textsuperscript{c}\) legend, an old Thakur explained to me, has been adopted in this manner.

Stones are used for the plinth. Over it stands the wooden framework walled by wattle and daub. Dead wood or wood of a tree struck by lightning is not used in house construction. The walls are daubed to a certain height so that the undaubed upper portion allows free passage for air and smoke. K\(\textsuperscript{d}\)v\(\textsuperscript{e}\) reeds are used for the wattle. Bamboo, g\(\textsuperscript{f}\)hedh\(\textsuperscript{g}\)ar and b\(\textsuperscript{h}\)on\(\textsuperscript{i}\)an are also used. The hipped roof is thatched with paddy straw or with k\(\textsuperscript{a}\)th\(\textsuperscript{b}\)ur\(\textsuperscript{c}\) grass. When iron nails were an uncommon commodity, rafters were fixed to the ridge-pole by means of wooden pins. In a Thakur riddle the ridge-pole is represented as a pillow on which rest a hundred mendicants (rafters). Near the ridge-pole the rafters

\(^2\) Er\(\textsuperscript{a}\)gro\(\textsuperscript{b}\)st\(\textsuperscript{c}\)is linear\(\textsuperscript{d}\).

\(^3\) Pist\(\textsuperscript{e}\)ia strati\(\textsuperscript{f}\)otes.

\(^4\) The legend refers to the incarnation of god Vishnu when he appeared in the form of a turtle and saved the earth from sinking into the ocean by supporting it on his back.

\(^5\) Sti\(\textsuperscript{g}\)obil\(\textsuperscript{h}\)an\(\textsuperscript{i}\)thes c\(\textsuperscript{j}\)iti\(\textsuperscript{k}\)us.
are secured with *paḷashi* creeper to a ring of coiled *māstoṭā*. This arrangement prevents the rafters from slipping. Two kinds of creepers are used as tying material. For fastening reeds, the *vārangā* creeper is used as it is tough. For the rafters, *paḷashi* is preferred for its coarseness.

No paints are used. The walls are usually without design. In 1944, I saw only one decorated wall in a Ma house at Borli in Nasik District. Today designs on walls are getting popular among both, the Ma and the Ka.

A few marking nuts, pieces of charcoal, coins worth half an anna (Re. 0.08) and uncooked rice are tied in a piece of black cloth. This bundle, with mango twig and *kathurā* grass, is tied to the auspicious first post when fixed in the ground and worshipped. Marking nuts and charcoal are used to dispel evil. A coconut and mango twig are tied to the ridge-pole, while it is being raised. A dhoti is placed on it which is later claimed by the carpenter. The ridge-pole is worshipped, and an offering of about Rs. 1.25 is generally made, which is also appropriated by the carpenter. If the house is built without a carpenter and if the villagers have helped in its construction, the money is spent on sweets which are distributed among them. The amount of the offering varies according to the wealth of the owner. A round figure is avoided. The house-warming is celebrated with devotional music and the villagers are entertained to dinner.

The undaubed ends of the reeds of the wall are used as pegs on which to hang clothes, bottles and other household articles. A bamboo frame is suspended from the roof over the fireplace in the kitchen to keep things safe from fowls and cats. As it is directly above the fireplace, it is also used to keep things dry, especially in the rainy season. This frame is called an *udīv* and its importance is emphasized in a riddle which refers to it as the father of the house, the ladder being the mother. This contrivance and the term are also used by the farmers of the plains. A plank fixed on two posts serves as a shelf for water-vessels. This is called a *pañere* and is found in every kitchen. Provisions are stored in the loft. Sometimes a bench is placed on the veranda.

Domestic and Personal Equipment

Generally, two families do not live in one house. When they do, the arrangement is temporary, usually during the rainy season.

In the Ka village of Winwal I found groups of houses separated from one another by an open space. This, I was told, is a precaution against fire. Such a precaution is all the more necessary as water is scarce and usually some distance from the village. Each group consists of five to ten houses, the village being formed of about half a dozen such groups. Sometimes in Ka villages patils or headmen maintain separate houses to serve as guest-houses for government servants. The police patil at Winwal had three huts at his disposal, he and his family living in one, another serving as his storehouse and the third as his guest-house.

If in the construction of a new house either tiles or iron nails are used, the Ka, before occupying it, make an offering of cooked rice and a coconut and sacrifice a fowl. For the occupation of a simpler hut there is no ceremony. A coconut, copper pice, betel nut and turmeric root are put in a piece of cloth and tied to the ridge-pole. The articles the Ka use for worshipping the ridge-pole are the same as those used by the neighbouring farmers.

It is Thakur practice to have always a fire in the house. It is kept smouldering and made up only when required. Because he is privileged to bring firewood from government forests, the Thakur can well afford to do this. The fire is generally called jagadī and in parts of Kolaba, parasā. It is lighted in the outer apartment of the house during the rainy season and in the yard during other seasons. The Thakur also maintains a fire on the threshing floor and in his watch-tower (mālā).

Fire is usually generated with flint and steel. Cotton of the silk-cotton tree (sāvarī)9 is used as tinder. It is carried in a small bamboo cylinder, the outside of which is sometimes decorated with incised patterns. Tinder is also carried in the hollowed shell of a dried bel10 fruit. Fire is also produced by rubbing two stalks of tūr.11 The hearth of the Ka is still a simple arrangement of three stones.

Burning stalks of ambāḍī12 (Deccan hemp) and tāg13 (sandhemp) are carried as torches when the Thakur has to move in

9 Bombax malabaricum. 10 Aegle marmelos. 11 Cajanus indicus. 12 Hibiscus cannabinus. 13 Crotalaria juncea.
the dark. For domestic light the Ma Thakur uses a kerosene container with open wick. The Ka, as a rule, do not use a lamp. They dine before sundown and enjoy a fireside chat until bedtime.

The Ma Thakur is very conscious of the significance of light. In a riddle he speaks of light as the master of the house. Another humorous riddle describes his lamp as the little lapwing that drinks the whole pond.

Most utensils are earthenware. Few metal pots are used. Bamboo cylinders and hollowed gourds as utensils are not peculiar to them.

The Thakur usually eats three times a day: breakfast, lunch and dinner. For breakfast and lunch he has bread with some complement, and for dinner, cooked unpolished rice and pulse. When the stock of paddy is exhausted, as happens in the monsoon, bread is baked for dinner. The common millet is an inferior substitute for rice. Like rice, it may be cooked or ground for bread. Ragi, the common millet and rice are the grains used for bread. The rice is unpolished and the cereals used for curry (dāl) are chavalī, hulaga, tūr, udīd and vāl. To thicken, the soup is cooked with rice flour. Bread is eaten with a stirabout of cooked and spiced flour (alan) unless vegetables are available. It is prepared from the flour of one of the cereals used for curry. In its place chutney is served occasionally especially for breakfast and lunch. This dish is a simple preparation of onions, garlic, salt and chillies. Coconut or dried fish is added if available. Another variety of chutney not uncommon among the Thakurs is prepared from a kind of sesame known as khurāsni. A spiced liquid, sār, which is sometimes used for moistening rice, is prepared from tamarind, fruits of kokamb or karavand berries.

The Thakur does not care for milk or milk preparations such as curds, buttermilk, ghee or butter. Nevertheless when milk is plentiful in the monsoon he eats a delicacy called kharasa which is prepared from new milk, though delicacies prepared from boiled milk or from curds are unknown to him. He cannot eat

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14 Vigna catjang.
15 Dolichos biflorus.
16 Phaseolus mungo.
17 Dolichos lablab.
18 Niger seed; guisotia abyssinica.
19 Bengal currant; carissa carandas.
18 Garcinia indica.
beastings unless five offerings are placed upon the rack suspended over the fireplace and distributed, after a time, to cowherds, and one placed in the fire. Some Thakurs avoid milk as they feel it makes them bilious.

A common preserve is a delicacy called vaḍā. It is prepared from udād pulse and pulp of kohalā\(^{21}\) gourd and dissolved in boiling water to make a good soup.

Men and women do not eat together. The men eat from one dish, the women from another. A guest served with a separate dish would take offence. Eggs are a great delicacy and to offer one to a guest is the height of Thakur hospitality.

There is no peculiarity about the dress of Thakur men. It is similar to that of neighbouring farmers: a loin-cloth and on occasion, a shirt and a cap or turban. Their women, however, are distinguishable from other women in the neighbourhood by their peculiar way of wearing the sari, which is not passed over the shoulders to cover the bodice. Ka women did not wear a bodice but left their breasts bare till recently. Ma women invariably wear a bodice, though it seems they too used to leave their breasts bare a few years ago.\(^{22}\) After marriage, Ka women used to leave the left buttock uncovered as it was supposed to ‘belong to the father’s family (māher)’.

The Ma Thakur places the fragrant roots of vāḷā\(^{23}\) grass in the folds of his washed clothes to scent them and to serve as a moth-preventive.

Although the Ma resort to a professional barber for cutting their hair, the Ka entrust this work to members of their own community. There is a general belief that if a man is to succeed as a medium he must not allow his top-knot to be cut or the hair on his body to be removed. The medicine-men (bhagat) are consequently found with long top-knots.

Women chew copra pieces and apply saliva to their hair as a substitute for hair-oil. When oil is used it is either coconut oil or mahua oil. Artificial tresses for their womenfolk are prepared by Thakur men from combings of women collected for the purpose.

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\(^{21}\) *Benincasa cerifera*.

\(^{22}\) *Bombay Gazetteer* (1885), Vol. XVIII, p. 425.

\(^{23}\) *Andropogon muricatum*. 
The ornaments of Thakur women are the same as those of neighbouring plainswomen. The metal generally used is silver. Gold is rarely seen. As with plainswomen, the toe-ring (jodave) and the neck ornament, called galesari, are considered the auspicious marks of marriage. Every married woman wears them. On the death of the husband they are discarded and buried with him. One ornament worn particularly by young girls deserves notice. It is made of porcupine quills arranged as a necklace. This ornament is to be met with only among the members of neighbouring hill-tribes. Plate II presents some common ornaments.

Tattooing is common only among women. If men are tattooed at all, they have a single wheat mark tattooed on the forehead. Girls are tattooed when they are twelve years old, in some cases at a slightly later age, but never in old age. Patterns are tattooed on the cheek, the forehead and the fore-arms. Milkmaids, lotus, chariot are some popular patterns. There is no particular belief attached to tattooing. It is looked upon only as a form of ornamentation. Plate III presents the most common tattoo marks.
ECONOMIC LIFE

The striking characteristic of the Thakur is his lack of forethought, particularly with regard to his economic affairs. The popular Thakur saying that 'the housewife cannot sleep so long as the barn is full' illustrates this. For the women freely barter away grain for little luxuries such as lemon-drops, peppermint, tea, jaggery and cheap ornaments. Whether the grain bartered away can be spared does not worry them in the least. They barter grain when they have it, borrow, if possible, when the stock is exhausted and do without it if that is not possible. Dhau once got about Rs. 50 by the sale of sweet potatoes. He was then a widower living alone. Nevertheless he spent the whole amount and later borrowed a rupee from me to buy a maund\(^1\) of rice bran which is mainly an animal food, though the poor are driven to it by stress of poverty. 'An agriculturist in the harvest season, a he-buffalo in the rainy season, and a banian trader in summer' is a proverb that describes the seasons when these three are at the height of their might.

The Thakur who considers himself a good agriculturist fits the description much better than almost any plains farmer. Happily, in recent years a change has been visible here and there. I know some Thakurs who, during the harvest, make provision for the rainy season by reserving the necessary quantity of grain to be used only when the rains start.

The occupation of a Thakur determines his economic and social status. An agriculturist stands highest, and a field labourer

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\(^1\) It is a measure of capacity, a maund of paddy weighing about 37 kgs.
Thakurs of the Sahyadri

and firewood-seller, lowest. Stock breeding, rope-making and wicker-work, being side activities of an agriculturist, have no independent valuation. Hunting and fishing, spare-time activities, are considered as luxuries. Consequently, the Thakur does not take to them as a means of livelihood. Trade and skilled carpentry, which are lucrative activities, are foreign to the Thakurs and therefore attract very few of them.

Kamalu, the rich landowner of Vaghachi Vadi was not called paisevalū or moneyed, but danēvalū, one with a large store of grain, the economic position of a person being determined by the amount of grain he holds. The number of ploughs, which indicates the area under cultivation, the number of his livestock and the size of the house are other criteria of economic status.

Houses built with brick and roofed with tiles are rare. Usually it is the traders and land-owners who have such houses.

The Thakur's idea of possession and valuables may be gained from the following illustrations. The house of Babaji Thethala of Winwal was valued at Rs. 2. Kamali Vagh once (1944) asked me for a loan of a rupee or two to buy her an old house so that she might use the material to construct a new one. Kamalu sold his house near Wangani to Hasha for Rs. 3, in 1963. The amount of present given in marriage ceremonies is a measure of this poverty. A quarter of a rupee is presented to the bride or bridegroom by relatives and friends attending the function. In quarrels arising out of failure to pay off debts, the amount at dispute is many times not more than a rupee or two.

At Winwal I saw adults and children actually starving. I was there in late summer when the poor had exhausted their grain and were eating karavand berries and raw mangoes, anxiously looking forward to the rains which would make jungle vegetables and the precious wild onions\(^2\) plentiful. Once, as my hosts, a group of forest contractors, were out on business I had occasion to cook for myself. By the time I finished cooking, three or four men and as many children had gathered in the house and were shyly watching me at work in the hope of getting some food. A child near by had been crying all morning and when I asked the reason, one of them explained that the child had no food for a

\(^2\) Urginea indica.
day and was crying from hunger. ‘I myself’, he said, ‘live on raw mangoes these days. I fetched water for the clerk of the forest contractor and he gave me a pice. With that I bought salt for the raw mangoes. The boys go to the jungle and eat karvand berries. I rarely go.’

A forest contractor, who was our guest that summer, wanted labourers to carry coal from the forest to a shed near by. My informant refused the offer as, he said, he had no energy to do the work through starvation. ‘We shall just try to keep body and soul together till the rains start’, said he. ‘Then we shall have ample vegetables and wild onions and we shall eat to our hearts’ content. Until then, no food, no work!’

‘The well-to-do,’ a Ka Thakur said to me, ‘are those who can eat to their hearts’ content all the year round. Those who have more than this may be called rich. They employ labourers on their fields and sell their corn. I myself belong to the middle class.’ He observed further: ‘As a rule we eat three times a day—bread in the morning and at noon, and rice in the evening. During the harvest we have enough for the three meals. As days pass, the grain is exhausted and we have to reduce our breakfast till it disappears. Lunch is taken a little early in adjustment to the new situation. Then the reduction of the lunch begins and by the time the crop is about to come in, we hardly have one square meal a day. Jungle vegetables are, of course, available in plenty in those days, and they go a long way towards relieving the strain. We begin to harvest the crop before it is ready. We have no grain to eat and we cannot wait for its full development. This is the plight of the middle class. Those who have no choice but to eat when they can and starve when they must are the miserable poor. They rely on Nature which has something to offer them in each season.’

The story of the middle class savours of planning. Experience, perhaps, has taught them a little foresight, but I am not sure if any such method of distribution is actually followed by many.

The callousness of the people towards the starving poor is distressing. The headman of Winwal told me that with their limited means the well-to-do could do little for the starving and, being accustomed to seeing the haggard faces of the half-starved, were not moved by them. A number of children would cluster
round him as he took luscious mangoes from the ripening layers. He could not, he said, distribute mangoes to everybody and please all, or he might starve himself. Under the circumstances he had to be hard. As far as possible he avoided being seen while eating in order to save himself from the envious looks of his neighbours and, particularly, from the evil eye.

A Ka village is a curious sight to a townsman visiting it in late summer. Want and plenty exist side by side. The wide gulf between the rich and the poor is vividly presented here. The economic condition of the Ma is slightly better. They are better agriculturists and grow more food. The majority possess cattle and even if they have insufficient grain for the year their borrowing capacity and their credit are better.

The Thakur is always in debt. The money-lender is ready to pull him out of financial difficulty, but this temporary measure makes matters worse as high rates of interest impoverish him. When grain is loaned at the beginning of the rainy season, the lender receives from one and a quarter to one and a half of the original quantity in the next harvest season. In addition, he is entitled to one day's service from the debtor for every maund of grain loaned.

In the backward north-eastern areas of Thana District, the money-lender's exploitation is more ruinous to the Thakur. The debtor pays one maund of the common millet, an equivalent of twenty rupees, for every ten rupees borrowed. Transactions in cash or kind invariably stipulate an interest of cent per cent. And this, for using the loan for four to six months only. The Thakur debtor is conscious that he honours the contract not so much because he values honesty, but because he looks upon the money-lender as his only saviour in difficult times—the money-lender who is prompt in advancing the loan, who needs no surety nor much formality.

Some try to regain lost ground by various methods. A forester told me that it is common for the Thakur to sell his house, utilize the money to pay the debt and build a new house with timber stolen from the forest. The sale of cattle also helps him to pay accumulated debts of a few years.

An industrious and thrifty agriculturist improves his economic condition without much difficulty. Special mention, however,
must be made of the common millet which works like magic in improving the condition of a cultivator. 'The common millet saves the cultivator' is a saying which recognizes the services of the bountiful crop. Sometimes the cultivator makes a fortune. Kamalu Padir, who was deeply in debt, once harvested such a big crop of the common millet that it fetched him about Rs. 100/ in one transaction. Six years later in 1944, he was considered a rich farmer.

There are few Thakurs who are rich enough to save. The few rich did not save intentionally, but because they could not help it. They are not accustomed to spending more and the surplus remains because they do not know what to do with it. Silver coins placed in a pot lie buried under the ground somewhere in the house or are stored in a corner of the loft. Agricultural land is perhaps the only investment the Thakur knows and the coins are removed from their hiding place only when land is to be purchased. Savings are also invested in ornaments and, nowadays, in metal pots.

Whatever his income, the Thakur is slow to change his habits or to raise his standard of living. He is also unwilling to make any exhibition of his wealth. The headman of Winwal told me in 1944 that he was reluctant to use bricks for his house because that would surely attract thieves and dacoits, and the evil eye of the jealous. In 1963, this obstinacy is weakening because of increased contact with outsiders and a desire to draw level with them, growing fearlessness, and waning faith in witchcraft and sorcery.

The majority of Thakur transactions are done by barter. Provisions are bought mostly from some visiting pedlar or from a neighbouring bazaar or fair. It is now dawning upon the Thakur that the pedlar is more expensive and the present tendency is to buy from the bazaar. As the Thakur is ignorant of prevailing prices he is invariably duped. In 1944, Kairu, younger brother of Rama Nirguda, bought a readymade shirt from a Badlapur cloth dealer for Rs. 4.50. My brother, a few days later, had a shirt of identical quality made for Rama for Rs. 2. One can well imagine how easy it must be to cheat a Thakur from the interior when one realizes that Rama and Kairu live in Badlapur and as such are expected to be more conversant with the tricks of the trade.
Grain is usually not carried to bigger villages, barter transactions being restricted to traders doing business on a small scale in Thakur hamlets. The poorer quality of grain, especially that not properly cleared of husk, is used by the Thakur in his barter dealings and he is pleased with the thought of having fooled the trader. As the trader accepts the grain at a very low rate, it is the Thakur who is ultimately cheated. Compared to barter, cash dealings are always cheaper, and the Thakur has begun to realize this.

Most villages maintain a common fund. When the villagers work in a team, the monies received in payment are not distributed among the workers but deposited in a common fund. The amount is placed in charge of the headman, the unofficial Thakur head of a village, or some other responsible well-to-do person, and is advanced to needy villagers on loan. The fund is used for a communal feast. Sometimes a goat is bought and its meat distributed to villagers. It may also be used by common consent for some other communal function, e.g. managing a village fair; but Thakur fairs are exceptional. The Thakur, having no better idea for utilizing the fund than for a communal feast, has no heart in increasing it. As a consequence the fund does not accumulate to any appreciable amount. In 1962 I found this fund utilized for buying big metal pots for the benefit of the village.

Even in pre-war days, a village used to earn from Rs. 75 to Rs. 200 in one year, and the whole amount was spent on communal feasts. Another source of joint income is the tip paid to a village by a trader who reserves for himself the exclusive right to purchase sweet potatoes, shega 3 pods or other vegetable from the village. Fines recovered at panchayat meetings are yet another source of joint income.

In some villages grain is collected from villagers and stored for the benefit of those who are short. These grain banks, however, do not work well for, members are behindhand in repaying loans. There is no actual recovery of grain, and the volume of loans swells because of paper adjustments of accounts.

3 Horse-radish, *moringa pterygosperma*. 
Economic Life

A glance at the sources of income and expenditure will reveal that there are some items which are sources of income as well as of expenditure. Field labour, doctoring and divination, presentation of comic opera (tamāshā), lexim dances and brideprice are some of them in which, if both the transacting parties are Thakurs, money changes hands *inter se* without in any way affecting the economic position of the community.

I have known of cases where a Thakur pays land revenue for land neither in his possession nor under his cultivation. A Thakur from Lavhali once came to me in 1944 with a complaint that the trees on his land were being felled by an intruder in spite of his warnings. On inquiry it was revealed that though he thought he had been paying revenue for the land under dispute, he was, in fact, paying revenue for a totally different piece of land which was owned and cultivated by a third man.

Although the Thakur has fairly definite ideas about possession and ownership in general, he is confused when confronted with subtle details. The head of a family is apparently the exclusive owner of all the family belongings—the fields, the house and everything that it contains, though individual possessions of family members (āvanjī) are an exception. There are accepted conventions which prevent the head from exercising his right to the detriment of other family members. Virtually, he is a trustee of the joint property because abuse of authority results in members of a family separating and demanding partition. Such matters affect only a joint family. When a household consists of a man, his wife and children, the man is the genuine owner, exercising exclusive rights and control over the property.

A small hut, agricultural implements, a few heads of cattle, ornaments and metal pots comprise the property of an average Thakur. Those who owned fields were few. This situation has now changed because of legislation bestowing ownership of land on tenants. Of possessions, livestock is the most valued for it represents capital to the Thakur breeder. Ornaments in the possession of women serve as savings to fall back upon in exceptional circumstances. Possessions, like agricultural implements and pots, are not of much value. The majority of property disputes concern livestock,
Although a Thakur can dispose of his wife's ornaments at will, he does not do so during her lifetime for fear of general disapproval, unless driven by dire poverty. Public opinion does not worry a profligate. A divorced woman must return to her husband the ornaments she received from him. She may keep the ornaments, usually minor ones, given her by her father as the husband has no claim on them. The head of a joint family cannot dispose of the ornaments of a woman without the consent of her husband. If he insists, the husband will in all probability seek separation from the joint family. The Thakur dismisses as highly improbable, the idea of a woman giving away her ornaments. When I asked what a man would do if his widowed mother who lived with him presented a few of her ornaments to her married daughter, I was told that he would permit this only if the ornaments were not valuable. Otherwise he would protest.

If a profligate head of a joint family planned to sell the house and make off with the proceeds, he would certainly be prevented from doing so by the family, who would call a panchayat to help them.

When a widow remarries and takes her children to her new home, she carries the property of her first husband with her. It belongs to her children, and the mother and her new husband manage it for them. If however the children are not old enough to understand their rights, their step-father may dispose of a part or whole of the property with the consent of his wife. I was told that many a property has been squandered by profligates who marry propertied widows for their money. By Thakur standards even the widow's small amount of property is a sizable fortune.

The property owned by individual members of a joint family is known as āvanjī. The question of āvanjī does not arise with the poor, as earnings from all sources and by all members of the family are hardly enough to meet their bare needs. If a father buys a heifer for his son, the heifer and her brood become the āvanjī of the son. A hen is presented to a woman or a child by some near relative. It is an āvanjī which increases as the hen breeds. A woman may cultivate a piece of land and the crop is her āvanjī. Bhau Vagh had two wives who lived together. Nami, his first wife, had grown some ragi crop and her husband
helped her in the work. The harvest was her āvanjī. Though Bhau permitted as well as helped Nami to grow the crop, I heard dissentient voices in the house. Family members thought it improper for a woman from a well-to-do family to grow an āvanjī crop. Bhau had no objection as the āvanjī was only nominal, Nami having no intention of selling the grain. Besides, he wanted to placate his wife who was rather displeased at his second marriage. Cattle, fowls, grain and money are common āvanjī possessions.

An āvanjī owner has full authority and control over his or her possessions. He or she may dispose of any part of them or even the whole. The amount thus realized is usually small and spent on little luxuries, a piece of cloth for a bodice, a few strings of beads, or sweets. A deserting wife is invariably prevented by the husband from taking her āvanjī with her, unless she has shrewdly converted her possession into cash and manages to carry it with her secretly. Not seeing justification for confiscation of the āvanjī, I asked the Thakurs to explain the matter. They were surprised at my inquiry. Her behaviour, in the light of Thakur custom, is a first step in changing husbands and, is socially approved sooner or later.

Many incidents in Thakur life cannot be appreciated without an understanding of āvanjī rights and their implications. I once asked Jaitu, Kamalu Padir's elder brother, for milk and he supplied me with a pot each day at one and a half anna (Re. 0.09), the rate fixed by Kamalu. Posha, Jaitu's son, used to bring the milk to me. After a week or so he asked for payment. My cook, after making payment, made an entry in the accounts book and casually read it aloud. The purport of the entry was that a certain amount was paid to Jaitu for milk and that the payment was made through Posha. Next day Posha raised the rate to two annas (Re. 0.12) per pot. When I protested to Jaitu, he told me he was helpless, as the cow belonged to Posha. Kamalu supported him. Posha was living with his father and I naturally concluded that the three rogues had conspired to trick me. Later I learned that what they said was true, and that Posha was frightened at hearing his father's name being put down as the supplier of the milk. He was convinced that his father, uncle and I were conspiring to take his cow and that my
cook was fabricating evidence for this purpose. After a few days he actually asked me why Jaitu’s name was entered in the accounts book. A demand for a higher rate, he seems to have thought, would assert his ownership and perhaps dissuade me from buying milk from him, thus assuring his safety from scheming people.

Fruit trees, especially the jack tree and the mango, are often owned by individuals, though not necessarily by the person who owns the land on which the trees grow. Although such claims are honoured in the neighbourhood, I doubt if they would stand a challenge in a court of law.

Agriculture is the Thakur’s main source of income and is invariably supplemented by allied activities determined by environment and culture. Hunting, gathering jungle fruits, roots and other jungle produce, wicker-work, stock-breeding and labour for others are some of his money-making activities. If he wants to do carpentry he must be trained.

The principal crops of the Thakur are ragi and the common millet. In addition to these he cultivates rice, sweet potatoes, chillies and a variety of vegetables. In the districts of Poona, Ahmednagar and Nasik he cultivates wheat and other local crops.

Tuesday is considered inauspicious for beginning agricultural activities. Among the Ka, a cock is sacrificed and ragi seed smeared with its blood before sowing, or the seed is smeared with the dung of a camel. Seeds of ragi and of the common millet are rubbed with onions, and those of chavaḷī and uḍīd with sweet oil as a preventive measure against insects and decay. Grinding and shaving are forbidden as long as the sowing operation is in progress.

Transplantation is necessary for rice, ragi and the common millet, and is not begun until the worship of the deities in and around the village (sāth) is over, and the māṭh vegetable from the burnt soil where seed is sown (rāb) is eaten. He must not eat this vegetable before the worship. With the māṭh, the ghola vegetable is also brought from the forest. Five stems of each are placed on the thatch and five are offered to the deities in the house.


Amaranthus ríístis. 4 Portulaca oleracea.
The cultivator now walks five to ten steps from his house, places on a leaf five stems of each of the two vegetables with leaves to the east and roots to the west, and sprinkles them with a few grains of rice. He next makes obeisance to God and breaks a coconut as an offering. Both the vegetables are cooked for the evening meal which is followed by the opening all-night dance of the season. Although an offering of ghōl vegetable is made along with that of māth, it is not considered that important. There are families who do not eat ghōl vegetable, and others who do not eat the wild mushroom shevāle which grows in this very season, until these are first offered to the family deities, but this practice is limited to some specific families only. It is not observed by the generality of Thakurs, as is the case with māth vegetable.

The village headman, in consultation with elders, decides on the day of worshipping the village deities (sāth). He collects contributions from the villagers, about a quarter rupee from each family, and deputes someone for the worship of the deities. A young cock is sacrificed on this occasion.

The worship of the village deities at the commencement of transplantation is called the worship of the Khāḍī deities by the Ka. The village medicine-man (bhagat), who may not necessarily be a Ka Thakur, offers the worship. Villagers eat together; foodgrains for the feast are collected by voluntary contributions. The medicine-man is possessed of the deity when he worships it.

To the Ka, the term sāth denotes the worship offered to the village deities on the Dasarā day in October. The medicine-man worships the deities and is in trance on the occasion. Goats are sacrificed. In Mokhada and Jawhar Talukas, the home of the Ka, the deity at Kortad is offered the first worship and the first sacrifice as it is taken to be the chief deity.

Before starting transplantation, an offering of rice and pulse grains is made to the guardian-deity of the field. The Ka apply red lead to the stone idol of Mundil and offer prayers and food to her. The term mundil means a head, and the deity guarding a field is called so because it demanded the head of a goat before offering rich harvests. In course of time, it seems, symbolic offering of rice has dispensed with the sacrifice of a goat. If

* See p. 96.
there is no idol in the field, prayers are offered to God, the Father, who is asked to kill the mice in the field.

Rice seedlings are the first and ragi ones the last to be transplanted. A few plants are reserved for a ceremonial finale. They are about as many as can be held in one hand and are, as such, called mūth, which means a fist. The rite is called mūth sodane—opening the fist—and consists of praying and making five offerings of rice grains, pulse, cooked rice and milk to God. If milk is not available, cooked pulse is substituted. The offerings are placed on leaves near the ragi plot. This ceremonial plantation is limited to ragi, that being the last crop to be transplanted. If, however, there be a deity near a rice field to which it is customary to offer food, transplantation there is finished with a ceremonial finale. The rite is usually performed by a male.

The Ka perform the rite in a different way. They place two offerings of cooked food and a lighted lamp on a brass plate and put the plate in the loft where the food is offered to God. The plate is taken downstairs and rice from the offering is thrown outside the house and in the loft.

A sickle is placed on the ground where rice sheaves are threshed to bring goodluck. After being threshed, ragi lies heaped in a circle around the centre post on the threshing floor. The circle is called kaṇā. The grain is worshipped before it is removed for storing. Each year a small quantity of ragi is preserved in an air-tight earthen pot and mixed the following year with the fresh harvest. This is called dhānyabhet.—the meeting of the old and new crops. This meeting pertains only to ragi.

Along with the preceding year's grain, chāphā and pālas flowers and a copra-half with pulse and jaggery in it are placed in the circle. Marking nuts and seeds of castor oil plant are also put in the grain, as these are believed to be insecticides. The cultivator sits near the circle facing east and makes ten offerings. Each consists of rice grains, cooked rice and pulse. Another four offerings are placed in the circle in the four directions. After the

8 Michelia champaca. 9 Butea frondosa.
worship, the farmer goes to a shid\textsuperscript{10} tree near by, worships it, brings some leaves and puts them in the grain. The grain is then carried away for storing. The copra-half with its contents is placed at the bottom of the bin in which the corn is stored. The flowers are allowed to remain in the grain. Formerly two chickens were sacrificed, one at the beginning and one at the close of the threshing operations. This practice no longer prevails.

At the time of worship the Ka place shid leaves and the fruit of the gel\textsuperscript{11} and nimbārā\textsuperscript{12} trees in the circle, in addition to flowers and the preceding year’s grain. These trees are synchocarpous and the presence of their fruit is supposed to ensure supply of grain till the next harvest.

Menstruating women are not allowed to visit the threshing floor. Formerly, the floor was tabooed to all women, though today much work on the floor is done by them. Leather sandals, wooden pestles and brooms are not allowed on the floor. These taboos are observed from the day sheaves are brought to the floor and are in force till all the grain is removed. A winnowing basket may be used to fan ragi to separate the husk, but it is not to be shaken for purposes of sifting if the grain is in the basket. This practice is observed so long as the grain is still heaped on the threshing floor. Less and less credence is being given to these taboos. The straw rope with which the sheaves are tied is called barakatyā—bringer of good luck and prosperity. A reef knot is used for tying sheaves.

Grain is usually stored after sundown, though formerly it used to be stored after midnight. The Ka think it a sin to measure grain while storing.

During all agricultural operations, co-operative work helps the small household. Field parties of relatives and friends are formed and the helpers are paid with reciprocal services. Another form of payment is to give a goat or a domestic pig to villagers for their help in the work of transplantation. The offer of a pig is an attraction, but being expensive, is largely confined to the well-to-do. The normal daily wage for agricultural work is around a kilo of paddy, a little less of ragi. If taken in advance,

\textsuperscript{10} Bauhinia racemosa. It is also called ḍptā. Its leaves symbolizing gold are exchanged by friends and relatives on the Dasarā day.
\textsuperscript{11} Randia dumetorum. \textsuperscript{12} Mella dubia.
it is three quarter of the normal wage. It, however, differs from region to region. It is much lower in backward areas like Jawhar and Mokhada Talukas, being Re. 0.50, and a little higher in urban areas. The labourer has to be fed once in the morning and once at noon in addition to the payment in kind.

Sweet potato is practically the only cash-crop of the Thakur. He grows Deccan and san-hemps from the fibres of which he makes ropes, and they are for his own agricultural and domestic needs.

Stock-breeding is an important activity of the Thakur. The cow is his Laxmi, the goddess of wealth. The animal is much revered and a person swearing by the cow is invariably believed. When a fawn is reared on cow’s milk it may not be killed for food, though the Thakur is very fond of venison. According to a Thakur’s dancing song, this Laxmi is given him by God not for milk but for her dung, which is used as manure and for plasterings. As the Thakur allows the calves to drink milk without hindrance, his cattle are picture of health and strength in spite of the poor breed. His stock serves as security whenever he is in need.

Although the milk yield of an average cow is poor, the number of cows is not insignificant. The latter half of the rainy season is the time to calve and the supply of milk at that time is appreciable. When milk is plentiful it is used to prepare clarified butter for sale. The churning stick made of bamboo is similar to the one used by the Todas of the Nilgiri hills. It is a metre-long bamboo, split vertically at one end into four parts eight centimetres deep, with a cross-shaped wooden piece fixed in the heart of the diverging sections to keep them in place. Clarified butter is sold for cash, and buttermilk is distributed to neighbours. Hardly three or four families sell clarified butter in a Thakur hamlet of twenty-five families. The average produce of these families is two to three kgs. of clarified butter per month. But the supply of milk begins to fall off after three or four months and the yearly income from this source rarely exceeds Rs. 25 for a family.

Heifers may be hired for breeding on terms of the ardheli. The contract stipulates that half the number of calves of the animal hired for breeding should go to the owner of the animal, and half should be retained by the breeder. The breeder thus gets every alternate calf as remuneration for tending the animal. There
being ample pasture in the hills where the Thakur resides, oxen are brought from distant areas for tending during the rainy season.

The buffalo is not a favourite animal with the Thakur. Scarcity of water may be the reason. The business of buying a dry she-buffalo and selling her when she has calved is, however, engaging the attention of a few Thakurs.

Goat-breeding is not common. According to well-informed Thakurs, it has dwindled due to prohibitive fines imposed on breeders when government forests were closed to their animals. Every family keeps fowls though no coop is maintained. The birds are usually owned by individual members of a family. Cocks are in demand for religious sacrifices and bring a good price.

Fishing is mainly for home consumption. The Thakurs usually fish during the rainy season when mountain streams are full. Other seasons are open for fishing only to riparian dwellers. At the beginning of the rainy season fish come up into the streams and fields for spawning and return to the river at the end of the season. For this reason they are most plentiful in the months of August and September. The Ka men organize fishing parties and camp out for half a week when river is not near. The time and money they thus spend indicates their rage for fishing. Women, too, organize their separate fishing parties.

The Thakur constructs dams and weirs and uses a variety of nets. For river fishing he uses a circular cast-net with small metal balls attached to the circumference (päger). Where water flows with great force he uses a funnel-shaped net called bhokshi. It is tied to two poles, one on each bank. The narrow end of the net opens into a bamboo cylinder which is placed in a big-bellied, small-mouthed bamboo vessel, burdul. A smaller version of the bhokshi is the āsū. Its wider side is fastened to a bamboo ring and, unlike the bhokshi, it is fixed to two pegs pitched in the bed of the stream.

The vāl, małaī and bhotoṭ methods direct the flow of the water to fish-traps in the bed of the stream. The first of these is an elaborate affair. A thick log of wood is laid across a stream about five centimetres above the water. Thick sticks called khutya are fixed in a slanting position from the log to the bottom of the
stream a little way up. The slanting surface is covered with twigs and prickly pear, and teak leaves are spread over them. Sand and earth are placed over this 'umbrella' to make it weighty. A sort of cascade is thus formed and the water rushing up the slant falls over the log. A few holes are made in the 'umbrella' parallel to the log and about thirty centimetres away from it. A bamboo cylinder inserted in a big-bellied, small-mouthed bamboo vessel is put beneath each hole. Big stones are placed near and parallel to the log so that the fish are obstructed by the stones and are drawn to the holes by the eddies formed there.

A *maṭraḷi* is a home-made bamboo cage about three feet in height, so constructed that fish can get in but cannot escape. Weirs are constructed and the water current is controlled so that it leads the fish to these traps.

Bamboo screens called *kappā* or *sāṭā* rest on logs which, in turn, rest on forked struts. The fish are carried by the current to a big cylindrical vessel of bamboo (*bhidot*) placed at the foot of the last screen. If the force of water is violent, stone turrets known as *murul* are built to support the logs on which the screens rest.

A simpler device is a rope of rice-straw along which palm leaves are tied (*lot*) and which is held by two men standing on opposite banks. These leaves serve as a sort of bund in the stream and the fish are caught in a stretched cloth which forms a pocket as they jump over the rope to escape the impeding palm leaves.

In addition to these devices which require elaborate constructions and nets, the Thakur kills fish on a dark night with the help of a trident called *dārkind*, the fish being dazzled by the glare of his hurricane lantern or incandescent lamp. He also uses certain plants for poisoning the water. Usually the poisonous substance is pounded, mixed with earth and thrown into the stream, but sometimes a paste of the poisonous substance is used without being mixed with earth. This method is not favoured as the fish thus caught are not palatable.

*Ma* women form teams to fish. Each woman takes an earthen plate on which is a dead crab for bait. The plate is put at the bottom of a stream and is covered with sand and small stones so that only the bait is seen and not the plate. Fish are attracted by
the bait. When a large number are gathered, the women, who stand on the bank and keep watch, lift out the plate with the fish in it. The skill lies in taking the plate out without allowing the fish to escape. Thakur women, especially the Ka, catch fish in a sheet, two women holding the four corners. It is interesting that the sheet, though an ordinary, cheap sari is called shelā, denoting a rich garment. Ma women’s songs dispraise this practice.

The Thakur works as a labourer in the fields or forest. Those living near towns work as domestic servants. Others obtain low grade jobs with the railway and institutions near by.

The Thakur’s employment as a forest labourer by the forest department is hardly a paying activity for him. He has expressed his opinion in these words: ‘Government work is bond labour. If we work in Chaitra (March-April) by the time we receive money it is Bhadrapad (August-September) or even next Chaitra. We never know at what rate we are paid. Also, when the money is paid to us, the forester says, “What do you give me?” and the overseer says, “What about me?” After all these exactions, what is left for us? The remnant that is ours is meagre and helps us in no way in our day-to-day life.’

The official version, however, is quite different. This is how an officer described the situation: ‘The work is varied and rates are fixed by the divisional officer. When the Thakurs of a village are asked to do a job they go in a group, one from each family—even a boy or a girl—and spend half a day on the job, leaving the evenings free for their own work. Although payments are made by the piece, the rates are reasonable, being calculated on a rough estimate of the working hours required for the job.’

Work with forest contractors is comparatively paying. Felling trees is a team work while charcoal-burning is considered the business of a small group usually the family. The Ma Thakur is new to charcoal-making which is virtually a monopoly of the Katkari. Nevertheless he is known to be a better charcoal-maker than the veteran Katkari. The money received as remuneration by team workers is divided among them. Without neglecting his agricultural activities, a man can earn about Rs. 25 a year from this part-time work. Those who have little agri-
cultural work earn up to Rs. 75 a year. Those who engage in charcoal-burning earn about Rs. 60 a year, but this work demands much attention, making it an impracticable occupation for a genuine agriculturist. Prosperous cultivators consider it inappropriate for them to work as labourers. Their sons, however, join the villagers when the latter accept piece-work.

I knew some Thakurs who went to Assam to work on tea plantations. They were accompanied by their wives, who also worked for wages, and brought their savings with them when they returned after three years. One brought back Rs. 100; another, Rs. 80. With this money neither was able to raise his economic status. Today they are not distinguishable from the rest either by their behaviour or by their standard of living.

Carpentry and wicker-work are the part-time activities of the Thakur agriculturist. He can manage without carpentry, but not without wicker-work. Most Thakurs have an elementary knowledge of this craft and can make simple bamboo articles.

The Thakur carpenter is not a highly skilled worker, though I know one named Ghute who builds carts and good grade houses. The carpenter works with the forest contractor at wood-felling and earns Rs. 300 to Rs. 400 during a season of eight months. The minimum wages for a day-labourer are fixed by the government at Rs. 2 for an adult man, Rs. 1.50 for a woman and Rs. 1.25 for a boy under eighteen. A carpenter, however, being a skilled labourer, receives half a rupee more. Bhore, a Ka Thakur from Mokhada Taluka is a carpenter and builds houses. His own house, however, is a small, simple hovel. Although his profession and income have not led to any improvement in his own house, they have influenced his younger brother who is studying in the eleventh standard in a high school at Jawhar.

The only implement which the Thakur uses when working with the bamboo is the wood-bill. Other instruments of the basket-maker are taboo. No one knows the reason of the taboo. The basket-maker caste (Burūd) is considered almost an untouchable and that, I believe, has led to the prohibition of his instruments. When I asked a Thakur wicker-worker, he said he was afraid to use other instruments for the village leaders may fine him. The Thakur thinks it improper to make a winnowing basket, as it
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<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>Weeding.</td>
<td>Fishing crabs, Gathering forest foods, Tending cattle:</td>
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<td>Storing grain.</td>
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requires to be ‘tied up,’ a process forbidden to the Thakur. The origin of this is not known.

Wicker-work as I observed, is a man’s job. I heard of only two women, one from Jambhulvadi in Murbad Taluka and one from Olman in Karjat Taluka who were adept at it.

Basket-work is plaited. Coiled-work is restricted only to artistic toys prepared by cowherds. Most of the work is either check or twilled. Lattice-twined and wrapped-twined varieties are exceptional.

It is difficult to estimate the income from the sale of forest produce. My friend Ambo told me that his mother earns about Rs. 40 a year from the sale of forest produce (1944). I know she is a hard worker and her earnings may be considered to be much above the average.

It is exceptional for Thakurs to engage in trade. I know only one who trades in sweet potatoes and other vegetables and makes about Rs. 300 a year. He is from Patgaon in Murbad Taluka and sells his produce in the Bombay market. Another Thakur friend thought of working as an agent for a firm in Bombay which deals in patent medicines.

If a Thakur practises as a medicine-man his earnings vary from Rs. 5 to Rs. 30 a year (1944). His performance in a comic opera (tamašhā) and lezim dance does not bring him as much. All these activities have the advantage of their practitioner being treated to a sumptuous meal on the occasion. More valued than the economic gain is the admiration with which these artistes are looked up to by Thakurs.

The expenses of the Thakur are few because his wants are restricted to the bare necessities of life. His clothes and food are meagre, and inferior compared to those of a town labourer.

Because he lives in the forest, the Thakur gets a few economic advantages. Felling and using government timber for his house is illegal, and the Thakur has to pay when his crime is detected. Bringing firewood from the forest, however, is his special privilege, so he does not have to spend anything on fuel. His indispensable fire (jagadī) which serves as a protection against cold and saves him from buying much clothing would not be practicable but for the free use of firewood.
He enjoys smoking, tobacco being the only luxury which has become a necessity to him. In 1933 Rs. 6 per head was the normal yearly expenditure for tobacco. In 1944, it had doubled. It had not much changed in 1962. Chewing tobacco, being more expensive, is less popular than the smoking variety.

The Thakur likes tea. When people meet, formally or informally, it is a practice to serve tea. The expenses on such occasions are borne by the host, or by the village where the meeting takes place. Often they are paid from the fine received on the occasion. Milk, as a rule, is not drunk. Bhau Vagh, who had seven members in his family, one a child, spent Rs. 21 for jaggery and Rs. 6 for tea in the year 1944. Kamal Padir, who also claimed a family of seven, spent in that year Rs. 3 for tea and Rs. 7 for jaggery. Bhau was a good host and spent liberally to entertain his guests. Ambo Padir, with four members in his family who drink tea, spent Rs. 24 for jaggery. He is a true addict. Much more is spent now as is seen from the budgets which follow.

About Rs. 25 were spent on clothes every year by a man and his wife in 1942. In 1963 they spent twice as much. The grain the Thakur needs is grown by him and is supplemented by what he receives as wages and loans. He barter a part of his grain for some of his minor requirements and usually spe<sup>money only</sup> for chillies, because the quantity he grows is insufficient, and for salt, spices and dried fish. These provisions are also available in exchange for grain as grocers in Thakur areas accept grain for almost everything. Money as means of exchange is cheaper; the stock of grain is limited. Nine to thirteen litres of kerosene a year are required for lighting purposes by each family.

Agricultural implements are a vital item of expenditure. Average people use only one plough, the well-to-do two or three, and the really wealthy who cultivate large areas maintain four. Thakurs who maintain more than four ploughs are exceptional. The wealthy Thakur landlord of Olman in Kolaba District maintained ten ploughs at one time. The majority of implements are bought from the market; a few simple ones are made at home. Repairs are entrusted to a blacksmith who receives a fixed quantity of grain from his customers each year at harvest time.
Cash payment per job is also common. Carpentry, if simple, is done by the Thakur himself. Outside help is used only when necessary.

Bhau Vagh, who had two ploughs, kept implements worth Rs. 30, while Kamalu Padir, who had three ploughs, kept Rs. 50 worth. Ambo Padir, with only one plough in common with his brother, had the minimum of implements worth about Rs. 18. They spent about 25 per cent of the value of their implements on repairs each year. This was in 1944.

Payment of land taxes is another annual expense. Few Thakurs owned land. The large majority were tenant-cultivators. Of the few landholders, the majority owned only an acre or two and those who owned more land were exceptional. In 1944, a co-operative society was to be formed at Patgaon in Murbad Taluka of Thana District. One paying a minimum of five rupees as land revenue annually was eligible for membership. Of two hundred and odd families on the tableland, about fifteen individuals owned land, the annual revenue for which exceeded Rs. 5. The government-owned plots which the Thakur cultivates as a tenant are either from government forests or from pasture lands. He pays tax to the forest department. The tax of the forest plot was Rs. 2.50 per acre of paddy-land and half a rupee per acre of rough grazing. Since the ‘grow more food’ campaign, however, the tax charged was only Re. 0.25 per acre for any variety of land. Today in 1963 the tax is Re. 1 per acre for the forest plot and Re. 0.25 for the latter. These plots are as good as owned since the cultivator has full control over them. There being shortage of forest, the department has stopped the practice of letting plots in government forest.

Marriages and obsequies are the principal Thakur functions that call for extra expenditure. A marriage is perhaps the only occasion on which the Thakur tends to be liberal, and meant an expenditure of Rs. 125 to Rs. 250 in 1944 for a Ma and less for a Ka. Today in 1963 a Ma spends Rs. 150 for his daughter’s marriage and Rs. 500 for son’s. The expenses for obsequies varied from Rs. 10 to Rs. 100 in 1944. Today in 1963 they vary from Rs. 40 to Rs. 150.

Balu Paradhi, a Ma Thakur of Patgaon, spent Rs. 280 (1944) for the marriage of his brother, Valaku. The details are: orna-
ments Rs. 50; payment to Brahmin priest Rs. 12; cloth Rs. 80; betrothal Rs. 2; tea and jaggery Rs. 10; payment to musicians Rs. 15; ornamental flowers and coronets Rs. 4; brideprice Rs. 21; entertainment to villagers when they went to buy cloth Rs. 3; goat for feast Rs. 5; in lieu of feast Rs. 10; pulse Rs. 5; payment to barber Re. 1; tobacco Rs. 10; sundries Rs. 2; total: Rs. 280.

Nana Nirguda, a Ma Thakur of Badlapur, spent Rs. 185 (1948) for his marriage but could give me no details.

Padu of Patgaon spent Rs. 466 for the marriage of his son in 1968. The details of expenditure are: brideprice in cash and kind—Rs. 110 of which Rs. 60 were paid secretly being over and above the conventionally laid down amount; ornaments for the bride Rs. 105; clothes for the two—Rs. 65; grain and provisions for meals—Rs. 60; goat for feast—Rs. 12; tea—Rs. 18; tobacco—Rs. 9; officiating priest—Rs. 12; musicians—Rs. 21; barber—Rs. 8; betel nut—Rs. 10; ornamental flowers and coronets—Rs. 6; miscellaneous—Rs. 40; total: Rs. 466.

Krishna Hindola also of Patgaon spent Rs. 180.75 in 1963 for the marriage of his daughter. The details of expenditure are: clothes for the family members and for presentation Rs. 54.25; jewellery for children in the family Rs. 7; ornamental flowers and coronets Rs. 5; grain and provisions for meals Rs. 65; tea Rs. 10; tobacco Rs. 6; printing of invitation cards Rs. 10; coconuts for presentation Rs. 5.50; musicians Rs. 8; miscellaneous Rs. 15; total: Rs. 180.75.

The expenses of a Ka marriage varied from Rs. 50 to Rs. 100 (in 1944), according to the status of the parties concerned. The normal expenses were: a turban Rs. 8; a sheet of cloth for the upper garment Re. 1; a shirt Re. 1; a loin-cloth Re. 0.25; a pair of saris Rs. 6; a bodice Re. 0.37; payment to musician Rs. 10; cloth to present to relatives Rs. 20; brideprice Rs. 10; tobacco Rs. 10; sundries Rs. 10; total: Rs. 71.62. Shri Govind told me that in 1968 the expenses were thrice as much.

A great luxury for the people in the interior is a visit to a village restaurant or to some fair near by. Ramaji spent about Rs. 2 in 1944 on these occasions. Each time he visited Murbad or Badlapur he spent about Re. 0.12 but a vain young man from Badlapur spent about Rs. 25 on these visits in the same year.
In 1963, a young man from the interior spent about Rs. 5 on this item.

A small but recurring expense for the women is for glass beads and minor repairs of ornaments and the amount rarely exceeds Rs. 5 a year. These expenses, in the majority of cases, are met from the personal income of women and the household revenue is not touched.

There are a few craftsmen who will offer their services throughout the year for a remuneration of a fixed quantity of grain to be received at the time of the harvest. Such an agreement is called *balute* and the craftsman, *balutedar*. The Thakur deals with three of them. The first and the most common is the barber, who receives 16 kgs. of grain from a married man irrespective of age, and 4 to 8 kgs. from an unmarried boy according to his age. The quantity to be given by a family is calculated on this basis. The barber is expected to visit a village twice each month. But he is rarely regular and tries to save a few turns in a year. He is, however, always available if one goes to him and the youths do go to him, as they are anxious to look smart, when they are invited to a concert or dance. The barber cooks for himself when on his professional rounds, the provisions being given him by the headman of the hamlet he visits. The blacksmith, who sharpens the implements of the Thakur, is paid 18 to 24 kgs. of grain per year by a family according to the volume of work, ascertained from the number of ploughs in use. He used to give to his customer, in addition, a new bill and a new sickle each year. This practice no longer prevails. If the customer needs it, the smith also provides him with a piece of steel for making a fire. In the past, a Mahar village-servant who served as a messenger, used to receive 24 kgs. of grain per year from each family. In some places it was customary for the Mahar to provide a branch of the silk-cotton tree for the sacred *Holi* fire and receive the food offered to the fire on that day. The practice of making an yearly lump payment in kind is today on the decline; cash payment against service is becoming the rule.

Below are presented some budgets with details of the property of a few Thakurs. The first three are of Ma from Patgaon and

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13 See p. 108.
the rest of Ka from Jawhar. The families whose accounts are given here belong to different economic levels as evinced by the number of livestock, of ploughs, the size of the hut, and stock of grain. Casual minor expenses are met from casual minor earnings. Both these are irregular and have not been recorded here.

1. Mahadu Balu Vara

Members of family: Mahadu, his wife, three adult sons, a daughter-in-law and his four small children, making a group of ten.

Property: house (6 × 8m.)—Rs. 100; cattle-shed (3 × 3m.) Rs. 20; land (1\ 4 acres paddy-land, 3 acres rough grazing and 3 acres forest)—Rs. 1090; goats and fowls—Rs. 82; agricultural implements—Rs. 53.50; ornaments—Rs. 143; utensils—Rs. 85.75; sundries—Rs. 45; total: Rs. 1619.25.

Mahadu built the house six years ago with timber of his old house in an adjoining hamlet from where he then moved here. Members of his family were the only labourers. The cattle-shed was built by the family without any hired help in 1962.

Details of the property: 12 goats—Rs. 72; 1 hen and 7 chickens—Rs. 10; total: Rs. 82.

2 Ploughs—Rs. 10; 2 axes—Rs. 10; 1 hoe—Rs. 2.50; 5 metal rakes—Rs. 7.50; 4 wooden rakes—Rs. 4; 5 bills—Rs. 10; 5 sickles—Rs. 5; miscellaneous—Rs. 4.50; total: Rs. 53.50.

Son's silver waist-cord—Rs. 16; a pair of son's wristlets—Rs. 7; daughter-in-law's ornaments—Rs. 115; wife's—Rs. 5; total: Rs. 143.

Metal pots—Rs. 60.75; earthenware—Rs. 25; total: Rs. 85.75.

1 Quern—Rs. 10; 1 wooden pestle—Rs. 1.50; empty kerosene tins—Rs. 8; baskets—Rs. 21.50; bottles—Rs. 4; total Rs. 45.

Annual income:

Paddy—45 maunds.
Other cereals—81 mounds.
Sweet potatoes—14 bags.14

Of the 126 maunds produced, 2 go to a landlord as rent and 10 for hiring two pairs of bullocks. After keeping about 100

14 A bag contains about 93 kgs.
maunds for the use of his family, Mahadu has about 14 maunds left. He gets about Rs. 210 from the sale of this surplus.

Sweet potato is a cash-crop. In 1962 Mahadu got Rs. 168 for his 14 bags of sweet potatoes.

**Annual Expenses:**

Agricultural expenses—Rs. 25; land rent—Rs. 10; land revenue—Rs. 10; clothes—Rs. 184; barber—Rs. 20; blacksmith—Rs. 5; grocery—Rs. 160.50; total: Rs. 364.50.

Mahadu bought a goat for Rs. 25 and fed the villagers who helped him in the work of transplantation. Although it is no longer obligatory on the tenant to pay rent to his landlord, Mahadu follows the old practice through outward friendship and real fear of the landlord with whom he avoids conflict.

Four men in the family require clothes worth Rs. 84; Rs. 30 are required for the clothes of the two ladies and Rs. 20 for the children’s clothes.

Details of grocery: tobacco (6 kgs.)—Rs. 36; tea (1 kg.) Rs. 10; jaggery (1 maund)—Rs. 30; kerosene (40 lit.)—Rs. 16; chillies (10 kgs.)—Rs. 12.50; salt (1 maund)—Rs. 6; spices (8 kgs.) Rs. 10; dried fish (1/2 maund)—Rs. 40; total Rs. 160.50.

This is a balancing budget which means a happy family. Mahadu wants to buy bullocks to save the hiring charges. He could not do so in 1962 as he had to spend on the marriage of his eldest son in that year.

2. **Bhau Nama Nirguda**

Members of family: Bhau (32), his wife (27) and a daughter aged 7, making a group of three.

Property: house (3 × 4 m.)—Rs. 50; lands (1/4 acre paddy-land and 4 acres rough grazing)—Rs. 220; cattle and fowls—Rs. 95; agricultural implements—Rs. 23.50; ornaments—Rs. 20.50; utensils—Rs. 31.50; sundries—Rs. 56; total: Rs. 496.50. Details of the property: 1 bullock—Rs. 60; 1 cow—Rs. 20; 4 hens—Rs. 8; 7 chickens—Rs. 7; total Rs. 95.

1 Plough—Rs. 5; 1 axe—Rs. 5; 1 hoe—Rs. 2.50; 1 metal rake Rs. 1.50; 1 wooden rake—Re. 1; 2 bills—Rs. 4; 2 sickles—Rs. 2; miscellaneous—Rs. 2.50; total: Rs. 23.50.
1 Necklace—Rs. 10; a pair of wristlets—Rs. 2.50; wife’s minor ornaments—Rs. 3; daughter’s ornaments—Rs. 5; total: Rs. 20.50.

3 Brass pots—Rs. 18; German silver pots—Rs. 4; earthenware Rs. 9; china cup and saucer—Rs. 0.50; total: Rs. 31.50.

1 Quern Rs. 10; 1 wooden pestle—Rs. 1.50; 5 empty kerosene tins—Rs. 10; baskets—Rs. 17; bottles—Re. 1; 1 net for catching game—Rs. 5; fishing apparatus—Rs. 9.50; 3 umbrellas of leaves and split bamboos—Rs. 2; total: Rs. 56.

Annual Income:

Paddy—3 maunds.
Other cereals—23 maunds.
Wages in kind—1 maund.
Sweet potatoes—10 bags.

Of the 27 maunds of grain collected, Bhau has to give 3 maunds for the hire of one bullock and one fourth maund to the barber for his services during the year. He needs the remaining for the use of his family and has no grain left to sell.

His cash earnings are Rs. 126.50: Rs. 120 by the sale of sweet potatoes, Rs. 1.50 by the sale of gum from forest trees and Rs. 5 as wages in cash.

Annual Expenses:

Maintenance of agricultural implements—Rs. 5; clothing for the three—Rs. 31; land revenue—Rs. 1.56; rent to the landowner Rs. 6.87; grocery—Rs. 70.50; total: Rs. 114.43.

Details of the expenses:

Bhau’s clothes—Rs. 8; wife’s Rs. 15 and daughter’s—Rs. 8; total: Rs. 31.

Tobacco (8 kgs.)—Rs. 18; tea (1/2 kg.)—Rs. 5; jaggery (16 kgs.)—Rs. 12; kerosene (20 lit.) Rs. 8; chillies (3 kgs.)—Rs. 7.50; salt (80 kgs.)—Rs. 5; spices (2 kgs.)—Rs. 5; dried fish (5 kgs.)—Rs. 10; total: Rs. 70.50.

Bhau’s is a happy family with a balancing budget. People of his village told me that he reaps more grain than what he tells them. Last year (1962) he purchased a bullock without seeking help from a money-lender and he could not explain when asked to.
Economic Life

3. Rakhamabai Changoo Katvara

She lives alone since 1961 when her husband died. She has grown-up sons who live separately but help her in her work.

Property: house (3 × 3m.)—Rs. 10; lands (1/4 acre paddy-land and 1 acre rough grazing)—Rs. 130; fowls Rs. 8; agricultural implements—Rs. 4.50; ornaments—Rs. 14; utensils—Rs. 20; sundries—Rs. 25.50; total: Rs. 212.

Rakhamabai’s sons built the house for her with timber brought from a forest near by.

Details of the property: 2 hens—Rs. 4; 4 chickens—Rs. 4; total: Rs. 8;
1 metal rake—Rs. 1.50; 1 bill—Rs. 2; 1 sickle—Re. 1; total: Rs. 4.50.

A pair of armlets—Rs. 6; 2 pairs of wristlets—Rs. 4; a pair of anklets—Rs. 4; total: Rs. 14.
2 metal pots—Rs. 17; earthenware—Rs. 3; total Rs. 20.
1 Quern—Rs. 10; 3 empty kerosene tins—Rs. 6; baskets—Rs. 8 bottles Rs. 1.50; total: Rs. 25.50.

Annual Income and Expenditure:

Paddy—3 maunds.
Other cereals—6 maunds.
Wages in kind—1 maund.
Sweet potatoes—3 bags.
Recovery of loans, in kind (advanced in the previous year)—8 maunds.

Rakhamabai collects 18 maunds of grain. She needs 12 maunds for herself. She loans the remaining 6 maunds to the needy and receives 25 per cent in kind as interest.

Sale of sweet potatoes brings her Rs. 45. She earns about 3 rupees by the sale of temburni leaves which are used by smokers to roll tobacco in. Temburni trees grow in the forests near by. She gets Rs. 40 by the sale of fowls and vegetables. Thus her annual cash income comes to Rs. 88.

She spends Rs. 27 on her clothes, Re. 1 for the maintenance of her implements and Rs. 34.75 on grocery. Her total annual expenditure is thus Rs. 62.75.

15 Diospyros montana.
Details of the expenses:
1 Sari—Rs. 7; 1 bodice—Rs. 1.25; a sheet—Rs. 1.25; 1 cotton covering—Rs. 9.50; 1 woolen blanket—Rs. 5; a pair of leather sandals—Rs. 3; total: Rs. 27.
Tobacco (1 kg.)—Rs. 6; tea (1/4 kg.)—Rs. 2.50; jaggery (12 kgs.)—Rs. 9; kerosene (7.5 lit.)—Rs. 3; chillies (2 kgs.)—Rs. 5; salt (15 kgs.)—Rs. 2.50; spices (1/2 kg.)—Rs. 1.25; dried fish (2 kgs.)—Rs. 4; turmeric powder (1 kg.)—Rs. 1.50; total: Rs. 34.75.

Ploughing is a man’s job and her sons plough her land with their ploughs and bullocks. They also pay her land revenue. She has a surplus of about Rs. 20 which she lends to the needy and earns interest in kind and cash.

She is a happy woman who lives alone because she cannot pull on with her daughter-in-law. Her sons do not mind it because her separate living does away with quarrels and because they know that on her demise her property will be theirs.

4. Kondu Bachchu Govind

Members of family:—Kondu (55), his two wives (50, 50) one adult son (32) son’s two wives (28, 27) and a widowed female cousin (50) making a group of seven.

Property: 2 houses—Rs. 10,000; cattle-shed—Rs. 1,500; 2 laterins—Rs. 1,000; lands (12 acres paddy-land and 8 of rough grazing)—Rs. 2,400; cattle—Rs. 1,925; agricultural implements Rs. 91; ornaments—Rs. 55; utensils—Rs. 310; radio—Rs. 200; a bicycle—Rs. 250; sewing machine—Rs. 250; furniture—Rs. 105; a bullock cart—Rs. 250; sundries—Rs. 171 total: Rs. 18,502.

Kondu built one of his two houses recently (1956) and said he spent Rs. 16,000 on it. It is a well-built storied house 15 × 10m. and is coloured with distemper. A room on the upper floor and one on the ground floor are rented out. The old house 10 × 6m. is of mud-plastered bricks behind which stands the brick-built cattle-shed of the same size. A six-metre street separates the two houses. In the new house Kondu keeps his grocery shop, the provisions being stored in the rooms at the back. Kitchen and ladies’ room are in the old house. Kondu’s son has his bed-room on the upper floor of the new house. Laterines, with a septic tank, are well-built and modern in appearance. Kondu owns, besides, two houses in a neighbouring village where another son
of his lives and runs a shop. They are valued at Rs. 1,225. All the property is undivided and stands in Kondu’s name. Kondu inherited very little and most of the property is made by him.

Details of the property: 6 he-buffaloes—Rs. 600; 2 she-buffaloes—Rs. 300; 5 buffalo-calves—Rs. 250; 6 bullocks Rs. 600; 2 cows—Rs. 125; 2 calves—Rs. 50; total: Rs. 1,925.

5 Ploughs—Rs. 25; 3 axes—Rs. 15; 2 hoes—Rs. 5; 3 metal rakes—Rs. 4.50; 2 wooden rakes—Rs. 4; 10 bills and sickles—Rs. 20; miscellaneous—Rs. 17.50; total: Rs. 91.

3 Neclaces—Rs. 30; miscellaneous—Rs. 25; total: Rs. 55.

Metal pots—Rs. 300; earthenware—Rs. 10; total: Rs. 310.

1 Cot—Rs. 50; 1 table—Rs. 15; 1 bench—Rs. 15; 3 chairs—Rs. 15; 1 charpoy—Rs. 10; total: Rs. 105.

1 Oil stove—Rs. 15; baskets—Rs. 28; empty tins—Rs. 25; 4 querns—Rs. 80; 1 wooden pestle—Rs. 3; pictures—Rs. 20; total: Rs. 171.

Annual Income:

Paddy—300 maunds.
Other cereals—70 maunds.
Profit from the grocery—Rs. 1,500.
House rent—Rs. 144.

Kondu has 6 permanent servants who take their food with the family. Of them 3 work in the shop and 3 on agriculture. He hires 3 more for the transplantation season. There is a maid servant to carry water from the village well, which is about two minutes’ walk from the house. She is employed only for the four months of summer and is paid monthly wages of Rs. 5, with food. After reserving food for the family and the servants, Kondu has about 150 maunds left for selling. This brings him about Rs. 2,250. His total income, thus, comes to about Rs. 3,894.

Annual Expenses:

He pays a land revenue of Rs. 28 and spends Rs. 25 annually on the maintenance of agricultural implements. He said he requires a thousand rupees annually for household provisions and Rs. 250 for clothes. This might be an overestimate. He said he has to spend much on guests.

In the poor community of Ka Thakurs, Kondu shines out as one of the wealthiest. He has three sons all of whom have receiv-
ed primary education. The eldest is a government servant, the second one, who lives with the father, is a social worker and an elected member of the district council, and the youngest, as said already, lives in a neighbouring village and runs a groceries shop.

5. **Dharma Budhya Bhogade**

Members of family: Dharma (50), his wife Budhi (42), son Mahadu (15), daughter Gangu (13) and daughter-in-law Remi (18), making a group of five.

Property: a house, $7.5 \times 5.5$ m, with Mangalore tiled roof—Rs. 400; Lands (2½ acres of paddy-land and 8 acres of rough grazing)—Rs. 400; cattle—Rs. 565; goats and fowls—Rs. 94; agricultural implements—Rs. 25; ornaments—Rs. 10; utensils—Rs. 51; sundries—Rs. 21.50; total: Rs. 1,566.50.

Details of the property: 3 bullocks—Rs. 225; 4 cows—Rs. 200; 6 calves—Rs. 140; total: Rs. 565.

6 Goats—Rs. 90; 2 hens—Rs. 4, total: Rs. 94.
1 Plough—Rs. 5; 1 axe—Rs. 5; 1 metal rake—Re. 1.50; 2 wooden rakes—Rs. 2; 3 sickles—Rs. 3; miscellaneous—Rs. 8.50; total: Rs. 25.

Dharma’s earrings—Rs. 5; miscellaneous ornaments of the women—Rs. 5; total: Rs. 10.

Metal pots—Rs. 49; earthenware—Rs. 2; total: Rs. 51.
1 Quern—Rs. 10; 1 wooden pestle—Rs. 1.50; bamboo baskets—Rs. 9; empty tins—Re. 1; total: Rs. 21.50.

**Annual Income:**

Paddy—85 maunds.
Other staple food-grain—42 maunds.
Miscellaneous cereals—4 maunds.

Dharma hires out one of the bullocks and receives 3 maunds of food-grain as bullock-hire. He is the only one in the family to work as an agricultural labourer, when free. He said, he can hire out his labour for not more than 25 days in a year. He thus earns Rs. 12.50 from this source, not a very substantial amount compared to Rs. 50 he spends on agricultural labour, in addition

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*His life-sketch appears in chapter twelve.*
to food to the workers. He accepts to work on daily wages to avoid displeasing his helpers. Sale of eggs brings in about Rs. 3 a year.

**ANNUAL EXPENSES:**

- Agricultural labour Rs. 50; land revenue—Rs. 6.94;
- clothes—Rs. 116; blacksmith—Rs. 5; grocery—Rs. 111.75;
- total: Rs. 289.69.

Each man requires Rs. 20.50 for clothes and each woman Rs. 25.

Details of grocery: tobacco—Rs. 8; tea and sugar Rs. 24; kerosene—Rs. 24; chillies—Rs. 20; salt—Rs. 3.75; spices—Rs. 2; turmeric—Rs. 4; dried fish—Rs. 16; onions—Rs. 6; garlic—Rs. 4; total: Rs. 111.75.

Dharma has a surplus of about 18 maunds of food-grain which brings him about Rs. 300. Thus, this is a balancing budget indicating an economically well-to-do family. He is a self-made man.

6. SAMBHU BENDU GAVA

Members of family: Sambhu (52), his daughter Budhi (32), and Budhi’s daughters Baby (14) and Dhakli (9) making a group of four.

Property: a house with Mangalore tiled roof and wattle and daub walls, 7.5 × 5.5m—Rs. 350; 10 acres of rough grazing land—Rs. 750; a she-buffalo—Rs. 200; a hen—Rs. 2; agricultural implements—Rs. 42; ornaments—Rs. 5; utensils—Rs. 35; sundries—Rs. 6.50; total: Rs. 1,390.50.

As Sambhu had no son, he got his first daughter Budhi married to a boy who was to live and work with him like an adopted son. But the son-in-law deserted Budhi four years back. Since then Budhi with her two daughters is living with father.

Although Sambhu has become the owner of the land which he cultivated earlier as a tenant, he has to pay to the original landlord, as price of the land, Rs. 200 in ten yearly instalments. He has not paid any instalment so far.

The house was built fifteen years ago and is in good condition.

Many years back Sambhu, a self-made man, bought a she-buffalo, the mother of the present animal, for Rs. 35. She died;
but before her death, Sambhu sold four female and one male offsprings of her. The female ones fetched Rs. 225 each and the male one, Rs. 188. Sambhu gratefully expressed the help of this animal which, he said, steered him safe through times of stress. The she-buffalo which Sambhu possesses is a dry animal now. But during milking period she gives 3 litres of milk every day. Sambhu sells the milk in Jawhar, a town about four miles from his village.

A gentleman from Jawhar has entrusted a she-buffalo to him for tending. He said he would get about Rs. 3 for keeping the animal during its dry period. Although the remuneration is meagre, he accepted because ‘it is easier’, he said, ‘to tend two buffaloes than one.’

Details of the property: 1 plough—Rs. 5; 2 axes—Rs. 10; 1 hoe—Rs. 2.50; 2 metal rakes—Rs. 3; 1 wooden rake—Re. 1; 3 sickles—Rs. 6; miscellaneous—Rs. 14.50; total: Rs. 42.

Metal pots—Rs. 27; earthenware—Rs. 1.25; miscellaneous—Rs. 6.75; total: Rs. 35.

1 Quern—Rs. 4.50; 1 wooden pestle—Re. 1; empty tins—Re. 1; total: Rs. 6.50.

ANNUAL INCOME:

Paddy—nil.
Other cereals—10 maunds.
Sale of eggs—Rs. 3.

Sambhu and Baby hire out their services as agricultural labourers on daily wages. Budhi attends to household chores. Sambhu works for 4 days in a week while his grand-daughter works for 5 days a week. Both, together, bring in the house every year about 20 maunds of food-grain, as wages in kind. Considering that the two eat out when they are employed, the yearly family needs of food-grain come to about 32 maunds. Of these, Sambhu produces 10 maunds on his land and gets 20 maunds by way of wages. There is still a deficit of 2 maunds. This deficit increases when Sambhu gets his wages in cash.

ANNUAL EXPENSES:

Sambhu pays a land revenue of Rs. 7.78. He and his grand-daughter serve on the fields of the man who gives him
bullocks for ploughing. Because of this exchange of service, Sambhu has not to pay any cash or grain for the bullock-hire.

Rs. 46 are required by the family for clothing: Rs. 15 each for the three elder members and Re. 1 for the younger girl. Rs. 3 are spent on the maintenance of agricultural implements. For tobacco, Sambhu and Budhi require half a rupee each, per week. On tea, jaggery, salt, chillies, kerosene and other provisions, the family spends Rs. 2.25 a week. The family, thus requires about Rs. 218 a year for which there is no provision.

This is a bad budget and shows a half-starving family. During the rainy season Sambhu and the girls live on wild onions and other jungle fruits and roots, for days on end.

7. Devji Balya Taral

Members of family: Devji (30), his wife (19) and a daughter (5) making a group of three.

Property: house—Rs. 5; a fourth of an acre of paddy-land—Rs. 40; half an acre of rough grazing land—Rs. 40; 2 sickles—Rs. 4; miscellaneous ornaments—Rs. 2; 4 cheap metal pots—Rs. 4; earthen pots—Re. 1; empty tins—Re. 1; total: Rs. 97;

Devji built his thatched hut, a year ago, all by himself with wood brought from the forest. He keeps no cattle. He had a hen which was stolen. The cheap metal pots are his winnings at wrestling bouts.

Annual Income:

Paddy—5 maunds.
Other cereals—5 maunds.

Devji and his wife are agricultural labourers who get work for half the days in a year. Their yearly earnings from this source are about Rs. 180.

Annual Expenses:

Devji and his wife eat out when they are employed. They require 18 maunds of food-grain a year of which they produce only 10. There is, thus, a deficit of 8 maunds. Last year he had brought on loan 3 maunds of food-grain. He paid half as much as interest, in the next harvesting season.

The husband and wife require Rs. 3 per month for tobacco. The wife takes tea and spends about Rs. 1.50 per month on it.
On chillies, salt and spices, they spend Rs. 3 a month. Devji, thus, spends Rs. 90 per year on these items. Rs. 12 are required for kerosene and Rs. 8 for dried fish. For clothing, Devji needs Rs. 15, his wife Rs. 11 and the child Rs. 3. He pays a land revenue of Rs. 3. The total annual expenses thus come to Rs. 142. Barber is not a source of expenditure as friends help each other with hair-cutting.

8. Dhakal Kamlu Dighe

Members of family: Dhakal (46), his wife Devaki (35), sons Dhavlya (4) and Ravjya (8 months), and daughters Jivi (7) and Sakri (8) making a group of six.

Property: thatched hut, $3 \times 2m$—Rs. 6; agricultural implements—Rs. 7.50; utensils—Rs. 4.50; sundries—Rs. 10.50; total: Rs. 28.50.

Dhakal cultivates $\frac{1}{2}$ acre of paddy-land and $\frac{1}{4}$ acre rough grazing. This cultivation gives him about 6 maunds of food-grain. He pays Rs. 5 to the owner of the land and after meeting plough-hire and other expenses is left with 4 maunds for the use of his family.

Dhakal and his wife are agricultural labourers. They work for about 300 days in a year. An adult requires one maund of paddy for one month. A child might require half as much. Considering that Dhakal and his wife eat out once a day when employed, the family requirements, for eight months come to about 18 maunds of food-grain $(2 + 3/2) \times 8 = 300/30 \times 2 \times 1/2$. Of these, Dhakal has only 4. To earn 14 maunds, the husband and wife have to work for 392 days. They, thus, may accept cash for 208 days in a year $(300 \times 2 = 392)$. This would bring them Rs. 104. The minimum annual cash expenses of the family are Rs. 49: tea and tobacco—Rs. 22; salt & spice—Rs. 9; kerosene—Rs. 6; dried fish—Rs. 2; clothes—Rs. 10. There is thus a surplus of Rs. 55 to spend on miscellaneous unrecorded heads.

Last year Dhakal had borrowed on loan half a maund of paddy. The family lives on jungle roots and fruits during the four months of the rainy season, and during the other months, the parents and children are not assured of a square meal every day.
4

**BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD CEREMONIES**

According to Thakur belief, both men and women used to have the periodical blood-flow or menses. Their explanation for its absence now in males is that God willed that males should not suffer from this handicap and transferred it to the teak tree. They substantiate this tale by pointing to the red fluid which flows out when a tender teak leaf is squeezed. They know that conception is impossible without menses, as there cannot be fruit without flower. They believe there is also a further function for menses, to provide a safety valve for female passion. Their phraseology and practice in connexion with menses are almost identical with those current among farmers in the plains.

Women in the menses may bring water from the well for their personal use only. They wash their clothes and bathe twice a day. A girl in her first menses is not allowed to wash clothes in flowing water—which the Thakur calls the Ganges—for two reasons, first to refrain from defiling 'the Ganges' and secondly to avoid an incessant flow of blood, like the flow of the stream.

The Thakur is very particular about not allowing a woman in menses to touch his bow and arrow. He is also certain that the mere presence of a menstruating woman causes a sick person's condition to become worse.

Semen, according to the Thakur, is stocked in man's head whence it flows down to the penis. The testes are only a distinctive mark of the male. Conception is not possible without sexual intercourse. It is, however, possible that a woman may
become pregnant as a result of intercourse with a species of ghost, Munjā. This sort of ghost visits only a married woman. But the woman does not know this and feels as though her husband were possessing her. The semen during intercourse passes into the womb of the woman. There it takes human form. The woman, according to the Thakur, does not contribute to the formation of the foetus. It is all man's doing, the woman being only the custodian into whose charge the germ is given to be developed into human form.

Children are not a drain on the Thakur's resources, for when they are about seven years old they begin to contribute their quota of work towards their own upkeep. Birth control, therefore, has no place in his thoughts. He desires children because they help him in his economic activity. Methods of abortion are unknown. If for some reason a Thakur woman does not wish to have any more children, she buries the placenta of her infant in an inverted position.

A pregnant woman must not cross a rope by which a horse is tethered, lest her term of pregnancy be prolonged to twelve months—as long as that of a mare. A scorpion bite suffered during the period of pregnancy minimizes for life the severity of a scorpion bite that the child may suffer. Besides the pregnant woman, her husband too is expected to observe a few taboos; he must not offer grain to the dead at obsequies, nor can he be one of those who carry a dead body to the burial ground.

Sexual intercourse continues till about the eighth month of pregnancy.

If milk begins to ooze from the breasts of a pregnant woman and her bodice becomes wet, the infant is sure to be still-born. If the nipples grow black, the Thakur thinks the infant will be a boy; if grey, a girl. The period of pregnancy is longer if a male is in the womb and shorter if a female. With a female in the womb, the woman looks bright; with a boy, her face grows pale, her cheeks sunken, and her neck lean and drawn. Delivery is painful and difficult if the hands or feet of the mother are swollen.

Childbirth is an event fraught with anxiety for the Thakur, as the proverb, 'Man's death comes from a tree; woman's from her womb', testifies. But the Thakur community does not have a high rate of puerperal mortality. Medical practitioners
have spoken to me in high terms about the vitality of Thakur women.

When a woman feels that she is near her time, she goes home, changes her sari, wraps a piece of cloth round her loins, and lies supine on a rough blanket in the inner chamber, resting her head on a folded cloth. There are no previous preparations. Instances of women who delivered outside the house are exceptional.

Messengers are then sent to fetch the local midwife and her assistant who is called potadharī—one who holds the belly. They are both Thakur women. A midwife is paid a rupee for her services and the assistant half as much. The knowledge they have gained is from experience. The assistant is an apprentice who expects to become a midwife.

Charpoys are not used till the woman is delivered. When bearing a child, the mother lies supine with the woolen blanket removed and her bare hypogastric and pubic region resting on the floor. The midwife squats at the woman's feet and the assistant by her side. The assistant massages the mother's stomach downwards and the midwife is ready to guide the emerging child. The mother holds her breath and makes an effort to relieve herself. At the same time the assistant gently massages downwards and the midwife delivers the infant.

If there is much delay, or the delivery is difficult, charmed ash is brought from a medicine-man and applied to the forehead of the parturient woman. Another measure is to wet a part of her husband's loin-cloth and give the water to the ailing woman to drink. Placing special herbs under the woman's head is also supposed to be efficacious.

On the presentation of the child, the midwife, if necessary, gently pulls the umbilical cord to bring out the placenta. She cuts the cord with a sickle and ties it with a white unused string. The sickle is then placed at the head of the child and under the hammock in which the child is placed on the fifth day. A hole half a metre deep is dug just outside the house on the opposite side of the place where the mother and child are to be bathed, and the afterbirth is buried there. The afterbirth is placed on a paḷas leaf and rice is sprinkled over it. The central leaf called jīvaṇaṇ must be used. It is then placed in the ditch by the midwife. The ditch is usually dug by a woman. After filling up the ditch
the midwife places heavy stones over it as a safeguard against dogs.

After delivery the woman sits with her legs folded, pressing the vagina with her right heel to prevent prolapse of the uterus. In the case of a prolapsed uterus the woman lies down and the uterus is pushed in. She is then seated on a hot brick covered with a piece of cloth.

After depositing the afterbirth, the midwife bathes the mother and the infant with hot water. Prior to her bath, the mother is made to stand, arms up, and the midwife massages her stomach with the right knee to force out blood. The bath over, the midwife changes the loin-cloth of the mother, this time using a bigger piece of cloth which is worn tighter and is well tucked in. The mother then warms herself at the fire, and chews some ajwa and copra, and blows the vapour on the navel and head of the child. She then eats the ajwa and copra and drinks a little hot water. When she feels sufficiently warm, she is fed gruel of rice and is then allowed to rest.

The bath, the food and the rest refresh her sufficiently to feed the infant. If the infant is asleep when the mother is ready to give it its first feeding, it is awakened. This is necessary, otherwise it is thought the infant will not learn to suck. The usual position for the first feeding is for the mother to sit and hold the child in her lap. *Dudhakānd* or milk-tuber available in the forest, is supposed to be efficacious in increasing the supply of milk. It is given to women and dairy-animals.

For five days after childbirth the mother is fed only rice gruel. She must eat a moderate quantity of it. She cannot eat salt, and must keep indoors during this period. After five days she is given rice, pulse and milk. For two or three weeks, according to her health, excesses are excluded from her diet which is strictly vegetarian. Later she is given, if means allow, fowl, eggs or milk to help her recuperate.

A child born with a caul is called *topavāl* and one born with teeth is called *saurā*. Albinos and abnormal infants are supposed to be the children of Khais, a class of ghosts. Such a child is called an *ād*, and besides being considered unlucky to its parents, is looked upon with horror. It is placed beneath a basket covered by a heavy stone, and left to die of suffocation. A blue mark on
the buttocks of an infant is taken to mean the rebirth of a deceased forefather.

For five days, members of the family restrict their activities to household work, refrain especially from setting fire to sowing-plots, from carrying a dead body and from offering grain in obsequies.

When a woman known to be a worshipper of the goddess Saṭvāī is in childbed, people take special precaution to keep their children away from her during her ‘wet’ period, which lasts about three weeks after childbirth. The belief is that if the shadow of such a woman falls on a child, it cries incessantly. When in spite of this precaution, a child is affected by her shadow, cow’s urine is given to the child and its mother to drink as a cure.

The Ka mother takes complete rest for a fortnight. During this period she eats only rice and tūr or udīd pulse. Ragi and the common millet are avoided. Flesh and fish are not eaten for about a month and a half. During the first twelve days, no-one eats food or drinks water touched by the mother. This is in contrast to the practice of the Ma who observe no such restriction.

Pachavi-pūjan is the worship of the goddess Saṭvāī on the fifth day after delivery. Among the Ma, a woman who conducts the ritual (punjārin) is specially invited. The goddess Saṭvāī visits a Thakur woman in her dreams and instructs her to become a ritual conductor, and that is how she takes to this profession of officiating as a ritual conductor. At a fifth-day worship which I witnessed, the ritual conductor was about forty-five years old. Goddess Saṭvāī visited her in her dreams when she was about twenty-five and she has been a practising ritual conductor conducting this ritual ever since.

The worship is performed in the morning. The material required is kept ready in a winnowing basket. There are five varieties of powder: (i) A dark red powder, Kunkū, (ii) a light red powder, gulāl, (iii) minium powder, (iv) a black powder, bukkā, and (v) turmeric powder. Jaggery and a piece of turmeric root are also used. Copra-halves, betel nuts, two offerings of cooked rice and pulse, udīd pulse and uncooked rice for the ritual conductor and coins worth about Rs. 0.20 are included.
Thakurs of the Sahyadri

A thirty centimetre square on the walling screen behind the bathing stone is dung-washed about a metre from the ground. Five circular marks are stamped in a horizontal row at the foot of the dung-washed space. This is done by the ritual conductor with the tip of her middle finger covered with minium powder. Five circular marks are again stamped in an identical manner, this time with kunkū powder, in a parallel line just above the first row. The procedure is continued with gulāl powder for the third row, turmeric for the fourth and bukkā powder for the fifth. The order in which the powders are used is never changed. The five rows form a square which represents Saṭvāi. A small piece of dry palm leaf is fixed to the centre of the square. The ritual conductor worships the goddess Saṭvāi in the usual way, presents one of the offerings and makes obeisance to the deity. The other offering is for her and she takes it home. The child is presented to the deity, a string tied round its wrist and sacred ash applied to its forehead. Another string is tied around the waist if the child is male. The mother now pours a few grains of rice on the offering. The ritual conductor applies sacred ash to her forehead and ties a coloured string and a piece of orris-root round the mother's neck.

After being presented to the Saṭvāi, the child is placed in a basket filled with soft grass covered with a piece of cloth. Henceforth no-one can turn his back to the Saṭvāi. Water from unwashed cooking vessels is not to be thrown near the ceremonial spot.

After the worship, two women—an unmarried girl and a woman married for the first time—are treated to lunch. These women fast until lunch. The mother applies kunkū powder to their foreheads, puts gulāl powder in the parting of their hair and washes their hands before they begin their meal. Each is offered a copra-half with uncooked rice and turmeric powder. The mother makes obeisance to them after sprinkling a few grains of rice on the ground, and the two women bow to the mother. Other women from the village are now treated to lunch. When the two have finished their lunch, the basket that contains the infant is placed where the food was spilt, though the dishes have been removed. The ritual conductor eats her food in a neighbouring house. On her return after lunch she is given a kilogram
of ragi grain and other provisions which are kept safe under a basket. She leaves for home when someone accompanies her to the border of the village and returns without asking her leave or speaking to her.

The mother bathes in the morning and in the evening, for the first three days after childbirth. On the fourth and fifth days, she bathes once a day. The bathing place is kept dry for the worship, and that is why a bath is not taken on the evening of the fourth day.

In the evening a portion of dry fish is chewed and thrown towards the bathing stone which is not cleaned during the day—a protection against evil spirits.

Before going to bed at night, the mother covers a small stone with one of her bodices and places it by her side which is removed the next morning—to elude the evil spirits.

The next morning, the sixth day, the mother goes to the village well to wash her clothes. She must not leave the house before her visit to the well. On return she takes a bath. The bathing place is changed by moving the bathing stone a little. After bathing she places the infant in a sling, and smearing her palm with wet cow-dung moves it once, over the square representing Satvāl wiping off a part of it. Copra is then distributed to the village girls.

The fifth-day worship is called Pāchorā by the Ka. The Ka midwife takes lamp-black, red lead and turmeric, and draws four vertical lines with each of these on the walling screen near the bathing place. The midwife is served meals in payment for her service, and is given half a kg. of rice and Re. 0.37 in cash. The next morning the Ka mother worships the well. Applying wet lamp-black to a finger, she draws four verticle lines on a rock on a side of the well. She then draws lines in a similar way with red lead and turmeric so that there is a row of twelve parallel lines. Making obeisance to the well, she fills her pitcher with water and brings it home. The midwife announces the name of the infant on the day of pāchorā worship. The name is selected by the members of the family. If the infant cries incessantly and stops crying when addressed by the name of a deceased member of the family, that member is believed to have been reborn in the family and the infant is named after the deceased. If this
happens after the fifth day, the first name is cancelled. It is
now the practice to perform the pāchorā worship on the fourth
day and the worship of the well on the fifth. There is no
well-worship among the Ma.

The name-giving ceremony is performed on the twelfth day,
by some Ma Thakurs. When the Ma celebrates it, he invites
four married women and an unmarried girl, as he did on the fifth
day, and gives them a feast. The Brahmin priest advises the
father what to name the infant. He gives three or four names by
referring to the almanac. Sometimes a Thakur uses them all.
Many names are based on the day of birth, or on some peculiar
characteristic of the infant. As in the plains, it is quite common
to find a child named Bhikya, meaning beggar, or Kerya, one who
is born of a litter. If the name given by the priest happens to
be that of a recently deceased member of the family, the deceased
is believed to have been reborn in the family.

When the child is about a year old, its hair is ceremoniously
cut. The ritual is known as jāval. The maternal uncle always
cuts the first lock. Then, a paternal aunt places the child on her
lap and sweets prepared from rice and ragi flour are poured on the
child's head. The aunt puts her hands on the child's head to pro-
tect it from the falling sweets which are then distributed to
villagers.

Among the Ka, too, it is the maternal uncle who cuts the hair.
which are consigned to a flowing stream in the next rainy season.
The flowing 'Ganges' washes the infant's sins and assures him of
long, flowing hair like its current.

A woman and child are liable to be affected by Saṭvāī. It
is believed that a child affected by Saṭvāī cries incessantly or
refuses to drink milk. When either of these is observed, a medi-
cine-man is consulted. He finds out with the help of his esoteric
art if Saṭvāī is responsible. If she is, he prescribes the worship
of the deity to appease her. Sometimes it is a departed spirit,
generally of an ancestor, and not Saṭvāī who has affected the
child.

A few coins, turmeric, betel nut, date fruit, gulāl and kunkū
powders, and rice are placed in a copra-half and tied in a piece of
cloth. This is bhāk or pledge. It remains suspended from the
roof in the cow-pen till the worship of Saṭvāī is performed. The
worship is never delayed longer than a year. If it is performed immediately the pledge is deemed unnecessary.

Villagers are invited to the worship of Saṭvāī and go to forest carrying the pledge with them. Women do not attend this ceremony, though small girls are allowed. The medicine-man advises what offering the Saṭvāī wants; rice and pulse, a fowl or goat. The ritual is performed by the medicine-man, the deity being represented by areca nuts placed on betel leaves in a row.

If a spirit (bhūt) causes the child’s illness, it is offered a coconut instead of a copra-half. The rest of the offerings are the same as offered to Saṭvāī. A figure, resembling a human form and called bhutāchā vajā or simply vajā is made of lead. The figure and the other articles are placed in an earthen pot or bamboo basket and suspended from the roof in the cow-pen. It is worshipped by the medicine-man. The figure is removed only when a younger sister of the mother whose child is affected by the spirit conceives.

When a woman is affected by a spirit, the affection is passed on to her daughters, and they too on moving to their husbands’ houses, have to keep a figure (vajā). The affection spreads like a creeper, and is called bhūt-vel, vel meaning creeper. When something goes wrong, an offering is made to the figure (vajā) according to the advice of the medicine-man.
5

MARRIAGE

The Ma Thakur’s rules of exogamy seem to be intended to avoid marriages between consanguines. Those bearing the same family name are surely kindred; but those bearing other family names, too, may be kindred. Such families are called brother-families (dādābābā kuḷi) as against affinal families which are called families of potential in-laws (soyārā kuḷi). One must not choose a mate from a brother-family. Thus members of the Padir family cannot marry Padirs, nor can they marry Paradhis, because Padir and Paradhi are brother-families. A Ma Thakur knows his affinal and consanguinal families at least from the neighbourhood wherein marriages are usually contracted. Among the Ka the family name alone forms the basis of exogamy.

When a man wishes his son to be married—and this is generally when the boy is sixteen—he begins by consulting a Brahmin about the auspiciousness of the year. After this is determined, he tries to find a suitable girl from a neighbouring settlement. Both the Thakur sections consider the bridegroom’s maternal uncle’s daughter as the proper bride for him and give her a preference in the selection of bride. She is usually from twelve to sixteen years old, and must be younger than the bridegroom.

Although financial status is not of much importance, an agriculturist with a good income is reluctant to give his daughter to a labourer or domestic servant.

When the bride and groom do not belong to the same generation and the difference is revealed by kinship terms used by their parents, the father of the bridegroom has to ‘break’ the relationship (pālaya) by giving one rupee to the people of the bride’s
village. Thus if the bride’s father is a nephew of the bridegroom’s father, the money must be paid. This indicates that such a marriage is not considered quite proper.

Having approved of the bride in preliminary talks, the settlement is ratified by the betrothal ceremony (supūrī phoḍane), performed in the morning at the bride’s house. Only male members, one of whom must wear a turban for good luck, go to her house for the ceremony. It is a simple affair, costing the bridegroom’s father about two rupees for tea. If the marriage agreement is broken after this ceremony, the defaulting party must pay a fine up to five rupees.

The betrothal over, the fathers of the bride and groom proceed to the Brahmin priest to arrange an auspicious time (muhūrta). Because of their acceptance of the Brahmin priest, the marriage rites of the Ma conform to the basic Hindu type. In the marriage arrangements of the Ka, the Brahmin priest takes no part.

Every village has a Brahmin priest whose exclusive right to officiate for the villagers in their religious rites is acknowledged by them although it has no longer any legal sanction. Marriage normally takes place in the bride’s house in her village. In exceptional cases when it takes place in the bridegroom’s village, the priest of that village officiates. The bride’s party camps in a separate house. This camping is called jānosā.

Auspicious day is selected so as to avoid the bride’s menstrual period. If the calculation fails, the function is not postponed but her condition is kept secret.

Although an auspicious day must be selected, no special time for the ceremony is necessary. Thakur marriages are generally celebrated in late evening, and in winter after the harvest. Tuesdays are avoided.

The Ma Thakur offers a betel nut when inviting relatives and friends to the marriage ceremony. Nowadays printed invitation cards are becoming popular and their use is increasing. It enhances social status and is economical as it dispenses with betel nut, the cost of which has become prohibitive. The Ka offers a small packet of tobacco with the betel nut when inviting people to a marriage ceremony, unless there is a printed invitation card. The use of printed cards is, however, rare. My friend Mr. Govind said he knew of only three such invitations.
There are three types of Thakur functionaries for the marriage ceremony. The first type consists of a couple who represent the manes (pītaryā, pītarī). The second, also a couple (umbaryā, umbarī), is entrusted with the construction of the booth. The first two couples must be consanguines of the family for whom they officiate and, consequently, consanguines of each other. The wives must be married according to the first-marriage rites. In fact, a remarried wife has no place in the religious rites of the Thakurs. The third functionaries, vahuḷi, are maids entrusted with odd jobs.

The amount of dej, or brideprice, which the father of the bridegroom pays does not vary. It is a fixed amount of Rs. 20, 8 kuḍāv\(^1\) of rice and a kuḍāv of some pulse. Formerly, a bride who had not attained puberty at marriage brought larger brideprice, but this is no longer so. The Ka give as brideprice Rs. 21 in cash, four maunds of rice and an equal amount of pulse. Formerly, the cash amount was Rs. 10. The grain is carried to the bride’s father, sometime before the marriage, by a party of men. A youth may serve with his prospective father-in-law in lieu of the brideprice.

The brideprice is given in two instalments. Cash and a large part of grain are informally delivered earlier. A kuḍāv of rice and all pulse are held back to be given ceremonially at the sari-presenting ceremony which takes place before the marriage.

The rice as brideprice is ceremonially husked from paddy. The bridegroom’s mother invites four married women and an unmarried girl for the purpose. Five mango twigs are tied to the grinding stone and ceremonial songs sung when the rice is husked. The rice is then ready to be dispatched to the bride’s father as part of the brideprice.

Before the relatives of the bridegroom start for the bride’s village for the ceremony, the bridegroom is ceremonially anointed with turmeric, which has been pounded by the umbarī, three married women and an unmarried girl. Many of the details of the turmeric-anointing ceremony are similar to those observed among plains farmers.

\(^{1}\) A measure of grain approximating 10 kgs.
Marriage

After the anointment the bridegroom sits on the bundle of rice to be given to the bride's father at the sari-presenting ceremony. He sits facing east and ties five knots to the neck ornament (galesari) to be presented to the bride. At some point during this function the maternal uncle of the bridegroom places a dagger in the hands of his nephew, which the latter keeps with him throughout the marriage ceremony.

Remarried women are not allowed to join the party that goes to the bride's home for the sari-presenting ceremony. Unmarried girls may join the party. One of the women carries a metal pot containing rice, two copper coins, a coconut, and a sprig of mango leaves. This pot is known as karyā. Karyā is a corrupt form of the standard Marathi word karā which is derived from the Sanskrit karaka meaning a small copper pot. Unlike the Thakurs, farmers from the plains fill it with water. The pot is carried by a younger sister of the bridegroom, who is consequently called a karavali. Around the coconut and the neck of the pot is wound a coloured string (nāḍā). Although the bridegroom's sister carries the pot and joins the procession, it is clear from certain marriage songs or dhavali that the bridegroom attempts to dissuade her from accompanying the party.

Along with grain the relatives of the bridegroom carry with them wet turmeric left over from the bridegroom's anointing, to the bride's house. This turmeric is used for the ceremonial anointing of the bride which follows the sari-presenting ceremony. It is rubbed on the pair every morning during the four days of the marriage festivities. The bride's maternal uncle places a dagger in her hands which she keeps with her. Further protection for this vulnerable pair is provided by the karyā, the sacred pot which they keep by their side during the four days of the ceremony.

The articles brought by the party are grain, sweet oil, vegetable beans and wafers. Beans are necessary; no other vegetable is considered a proper substitute. Beans and wafers are mixed with the grain. Turmeric and the auspicious red powder (kunkū) are also brought by the bridegroom's party. It is also necessary to take the neck ornament and a pair of toe-rings for the bride. These are the insignia of wifehood; widows do not wear them. The bride's clothing is a bodice, and a sari to which the ceremony owes its name.
The party stops outside the bride’s village where they are received by the village elders. Once the guests are seated in the bride’s house, the male functionary umbaryā of the bridegroom’s party hands over the bundle of clothes to the female functionary, pitārī of the bride’s party, who then drapes the bride with the clothes in the Brahmanic style. The bride wears these clothes for the rest of the marriage ceremony.

The rice is poured into a stone mortar and is not removed till the ceremonial polishing. For this purpose four married women and an unmarried girl are invited by the bride’s mother. These women do the polishing with a pestle to which five twigs of mango are tied. Songs describing the procedure are sung while the polishing is in process. The bride gives back to the umbaryā from the guests five handfuls of rice which he carries back to the bridegroom’s house. This rice is cooked on the next festival in honour of the manes.²

In this poor community it is considered bad manners to measure the grain in the presence of the guests who have brought it.

After a few formalities the sari-presenting ceremony comes to an end with the distribution of betel nut, copra and black-pepper powder. The distribution is entrusted to a potential in-law of the bridegroom’s family.

Next comes the keeping and worshipping of the devak, which is the collective term for the deities worshipped on an auspicious occasion. This is done in the bride’s house after the sari is received and in the bridegroom’s after the return of the party carrying the sari, usually in the evening, by the male functionary pitaryā or, in his absence, by someone belonging to the family for whom the pitaryā works.

Normally, five small heaps of rice placed on two pieces of red and white cloth represent the deities of the devak. Some Thakurs place nine heaps. An additional heap of rice is placed in a winnowing basket. On every heap is placed a betel nut, date fruit and turmeric root. Near these are placed narcotic hemp, tobacco, and sugarcane with coriander (kothimbīr)³ and methi⁴ vegetables,

² See p. 98.
³ Coriandrum sativum.
⁴ Foenugreek, Trigonella foenum-graecum.
A dry stalk of Deccan hemp with a betel leaf tied to it is also placed there and is later used for sprinkling oil at the next ceremony.

The deities of the devak are worshipped and offerings made to them by the male functionary pîtâryâ. A pâch vanâchâ khan is offered to the deities. This offering (vâna) consists of five (pâch) small loaves of bread made of steamed flour: four of rice and one of ragi.

The medicine-man is usually in a trance by this time, and in that condition he worships the deities. He waves before the deities a plate containing a paper coronet, a string of ruîs flowers, a covering sheet and a turban. All these are for the bridegroom. To the hem of the turban are tied a rupee coin, a marking nut and a piece of charcoal. Next, he holds the plate over the deities, then places it on his own head and lastly on the head of the bridegroom. If there is any irregularity in the procedure, the medicine-man takes the male functionary pîtâryâ or his substitute to task. Men and women anxiously pray to the deities who are supposed to be communicating through the medium of the medicine-man, to excuse any discrepancy.

Now follows the oil ceremony (telvân) during which sweet oil is poured on the heads of the bride and the bridegroom in their respective houses.

At this ceremony the bridegroom, wearing his turban sits in front of his mother between her outstretched legs. He sits on a blanket in the fold of which an auspicious figure called chauk is drawn with rice. The seat is in a square, formed by four earthen pots placed at the corners and joined by white string. The bridegroom takes his seat after five circumambulations during which he throws rice in the earthen pots.

While oil is poured by four married women and an unmarried girl, songs are sung in which Thakur deities are invited to attend the marriage ceremony. Some of these deities are described in the songs as being from the ancestral homes (vâtan) of the Thakurs, in Nasik District.

After the pouring of oil, the female functionary umbarî places one by one four small loaves made of steamed rice flour and

6 *Calotropis gigantea.*
one of ragi flour on the bridegroom’s lap. The bridegroom covers his head with a sheet to avoid seeing the offering. This is because it is considered improper for men to eat these loaves. Children eat them.

The umbari now removes the blanket and earthen pots and collects the scattered rice grains in a mortar. The grains are pounded by four married women and an unmarried girl with a pestle to which a mango twig is tied. The dhavalarin, an old woman who is entrusted with the singing, continues singing. When the rice is well pounded the umbari prepares the sacred thread or jānave. She ties a cloth into five knots each knot containing a little of the pounded grain. A betel nut, marking nut, one pice, charcoal and turmeric root are tied in with the grain. The strip is then daubed in turmeric and the sacred thread is ready. It is worn and taken off with the paper coronets. From now on the bridegroom wears a neck ornament and a silver chain.

At the oil ceremony at the bride’s house, she is given the neck ornament (galesari) and toe-rings to wear. The bridegroom’s father has already sent these with the bride’s sari. The neck ornament is the insignia of wifehood and the wife continues to wear it so long as her husband lives. That this insignia should be worn at the oil ceremony, before the main marriage rites are performed, shows the importance of the ceremony. Even among non-tribal agriculturists and others of the plains the same practice prevails: the bride wears these ornaments before the main marriage rite.

A wafer of rice flour is fried in the oil left from the oil ceremony. It is tied to the main post in the booth and is broken by the bridegroom while entering the booth for the marriage ceremony. This custom, however, appears to be restricted to a few localities.

On the morning of the marriage day the male functionary umbari fastens a teak branch to a post in front of the booth. This branch has to be a forked one and has to be peeled and roughly squared.

Earlier in the morning, the bridegroom goes by invitation to the house of the village headman, to the houses of his near rela-

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6 Cf. N. G. Chapekar, op. cit., p. 442.
tives and of other influential people in the village, for a bath. The bride too is invited for a bath by the people of her village.

The booth is adorned with mango twigs suspended from the roof. The Ma entrust this work to a Mahar while the Ka entrust it to the village servant Kāthyā, who may not be necessarily a Mahar by caste. The adornment brings sanctity to the booth; henceforth leather sandals are to be removed before entering it. The Mahar gets half a coconut and two annas (Re. 0.12) for the service. This adornment is called toraṇ and is put up sometime before the flower-tying ceremony. The Mahar to whom this work is entrusted has a hereditary right to be called and remunerated for the service. He must be paid even when a marriage takes place in the bridegroom’s village and his service is not demanded.

Jungle deities of the Thakurs, Vāghyā, Cheḍā and others are worshipped before the ceremony of flower-tying (phule bāndhane). For this purpose young boys are dispatched to the neighbouring jungle where the deities have their abode.

The flower-tying ceremony, which is performed during the forenoon, starts with the umbaryā placing the plate containing the paper coronet, ornamental strings of flowers, the linen sheet, the turban, bangles and the sacred thread, on his head. Earlier on the occasion of the worshipping of the devak, the medicine-man had used this dish with most of the contents. Facing each quarter in turn, the umbaryā offers prayer and gives the plate to the groom’s maternal uncle who then dresses his nephew. The bridegroom is shaved before he is ready to be dressed. The shaving is called chuch karaṇe or moha karaṇe.7 In the absence of his maternal uncle, a barber does this work.

Male and female relatives and friends follow the maternal uncle, tie ornamental strings of flowers to the groom’s forehead and offer him presents. Ordinarily, a quarter of a rupee or a copra-half is the gift given. The well-to-do and the closely related may give more. The amount of cash gift normally given was Re. 0.06 in 1944. The present practice is to make a list of givers and their gifts. Small amounts are not listed. Each guest waves a lighted wick before the groom and applies consecrated rice mixed with auspicious red powder to the forehead of the groom,

7 Cf. N. G. Chapekar, op. cit., p. 448.
who returns the honour in a similar way. The groom’s father now offers presents to his relatives. The gifts are placed on the heads of the persons for whom they are intended.

Then follows a meal to which the bridegroom and the female functionaries are treated. The pitaryā waves a lighted wick before the groom and then waves the hem of his turban, with a rupee, charcoal piece and marking nut tied in it, before the diners. A boy with a turban and with vermilion on his forehead dances and shouts when the meal begins. This boy is called a vīr (hero).

The guests now dine and the bridegroom prepares to set out in a wedding procession for the house of the bride, where similar ceremonies have been in progress.

After the flower-tying ceremony, the umbaryā goes out to cut a branch of a glomerous fig tree. He is accompanied by his wife, the bridesmaids and musicians. Many times the musicians are from the ‘untouchable’ community of Mahars. On the eve of marriage he has already put a marking nut, uncooked rice, a piece of charcoal, turmeric powder and pice in black cloth and tied it to the fig branch. He must go alone on this mission and avoid being observed.

As the procession starts, two offerings of food are made and two groups of five boys each set out with the offerings. One group goes east and the other west. They run out of the village with the food, offer prayer, eat together and return. They try to return before the umbaryā is back with the fig branch and generally succeed in doing so. The dinner is left unfinished if the boys fear they will not arrive back in time.

The umbaryā and a youth from the party hold a cloth (pālav or pāl) overhead, under the shade of which the rest, excluding the Mahar musicians, walk. The umbarī holds a plate with articles of worship, oblational food, lighted lamp and sickle.

When the procession arrives at the fig tree, the umbarī worships the tree and offers food to it. If she is pregnant her husband acts for her. The umbarī holds the branch while her husband cuts it with a sickle and places it in her plate. The party then returns to the booth with the branch. They also bring with them a tiny forked branch of teak.

On arrival at the booth, the umbarī worships the branch and, with the help of her husband, ties it and the forked teak branch
to the main post in the booth. Her husband ties a mango twig to a pestle and, packing cooked rice, pulse and a loaf of rice bread in a leaf, ties the package to the sickle. He then thrusts the pestle and the sickle in the thatch of the booth.

The procedure followed at the bride’s house is similar.

The bridegroom is taken to the bride’s village in a procession led by musicians. The procession starts in good time to reach its destination by evening. Songs are sung by women on the way. A basket containing material required for the ceremony (mūla- pāṭi) is carried by the party.

The party does not go direct to the bride’s house but proceeds eastward and stops outside the bridegroom’s village. Three stops are made. On the first, the bridegroom pours some rice on the ground with jāmbhūl\(^8\) leaves and puts a betel nut on the ground. Turning to each direction, North, South, East and West, he offers prayers and makes obeisance. One of the party carries the bridegroom on his shoulders for a few paces, when the second stop is made. The medicine-man, who by now is possessed of a deity, offers worship. He warns the people of any irregularity in the procedure. As usual, those assembled eagerly pray for the protection and favour of the deities during the wedding. The groom is again carried for a while until the third stop is made. Here, people greet the bridegroom and each other. The procession then starts for the bride’s village.

The party stops outside the village of the bride. While the bridegroom is waiting, the Brahmin, in the bride’s booth, conducts the meeting of the two fathers (vyāhōhet). They are asked their family names. The asking of questions and the breaking of betel nuts are done by the Brahmin. The two men unwind a small length of their turbans and rice, given by the Brahmin, is tied in the hems. This rice, (akṣatatā) is thrown on the bride and the groom during the singing of the benedictory verses (mangalāśṭaka). The two then embrace each other, greet the assembly saying rām-rām, and the meeting is over.

The maids dung-wash a little patch of ground in the booth and draw ornamental geometrical figures (rāngoḷī) with ragi flour. Karmelā\(^9\) leaves are placed on the ornamental figures.

\(^8\) *Eugenia jambolana.*  \(^9\) *Dillenia pentagyna.*
Two spots are thus prepared, one for the bride and the other for the bridegroom. The Brahmin now takes a sheet of cloth from the bridegroom's father and draws two lines on it with coloured powders. The mark is called nand. The sheet of cloth is held like a curtain by two men, one from each party. The bride is to stand on the side away from the entrance concealed from the view of the incoming bridegroom.

When the bridegroom receives an invitation from the bride's father, he starts for her house seated on the shoulders of a young man from the bride's party. Musicians lead the procession with a lighted copra torch carried at the head. At the entrance to the village a coconut is broken as offering to the tutelary deity of the village. The path is now obstructed by cowherds who place a log of wood in the way. The bridegroom makes a present of about half a rupee to the cowherds and the obstruction is removed. This practice is probably a hangover symbolizing real resistance and substantial satisfaction, of old.

At the entrance to the booth, the female functionary umbari from the bride's party washes the feet of the bridegroom and applies wet turmeric to them. She then waves a lighted wick before him and taking off one of his paper coronets she replaces it with a coronet of the bride. The one removed from the groom's forehead is later used by the bride.

The maids now approach the groom, each with two pots on her head one above the other and the bridegroom presents about an anna to each of them, which is placed in the upper pot. The bridegroom next meets his bride's brother, who is also seated on the shoulders of a young man. The wife's brother boxes the ears of the groom and receives in return a piece of cloth which is placed on his head. This is called kānchimbali which means 'pulling the ears'. On entering the marriage booth, the bridegroom pulls off and breaks the wafer tied to the main post after the oil ceremony. He is then led to the place opposite that to be occupied by the bride. She is summoned and on her arrival the Brahmin starts the marriage rites. Her maternal uncle stands near.

The Brahmin first ties a string to the paper coronets of the pair and then proceeds to sing the benedictory verses (mangalā-shtaka). During the singing the bride and groom put a betel-leaf
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packet (viḍā), in their mouths. People assembled hold out their sticks over the pair. A barber distributes rice to the people which they throw on the couple during the singing. The bride and the groom clasp each other's hands. This is called ḫāṭa-
juḷaṇī which means the confining of hands. Their hands are unclasped by the priest when he receives a small fee.

The couple are seated after the singing is over, and play the sōṇṭakkā game in which the priest puts some coins in a plate and the bride and bridegroom rush to collect them. The one who collects more coins wins. After the game, the priest gathers the clothing and ornaments for the bride from the bridegroom's father and delivers them in the presence of the guests. The bride retires to change, and the interval is utilized for the distribution of booth-money (māṇḍavphad), done by the police patil of the revenue village of which the hamlet is a part. He is often a non-Thakur. He receives a rupee from which a half is paid to the Thakur headman of the hamlet. The headman of every hamlet within the jurisdiction of the police patil is given a coconut. Honoured guests attending the ceremony are each presented with a coconut. The surpīṇ and ṭhokjōshi receive two annas each. Surpīṇ is the Mahar musician who plays the instrument sūr, and ṭhokjōshi is the Mahar priest. The marriage fee (dakshinā) is paid by the groom's father to the Brahmin priest.

When the bride returns, the Brahmin knocks the couple's heads together. A sacred fire is lighted and the couple circles it five times. The hems of their garments are tied together. The bridegroom and bride are now husband and wife.

The string with which the paper coronets of the couple are tied together during the singing of the benedictory verses is called mangalasūtra which means the auspicious string, and is worn by the wife round her neck until the next rainy season when it is thrown into a running stream.

Next morning the husband pretends to be displeased10 and goes outside. The wife tries to pacify him by offering him a cow, a goat, a hen, an earring or a shegaṭ (horse-radish) tree. She waves a lighted wick before the reconciled husband who places a few coins in her plate. He then returns to the booth carrying

10 Cf. N. G. Chapekar, op. cit., p. 441.
his wife on his hip. If a shegat tree is offered, the pods are given to him every season by his father-in-law. In the booth, his mother-in-law waves a lighted wick before him and puts a ring in his earlobe. She then pours jaggery in the mouths of the two, and receives a present of a rupee from the groom.

The couple play games, as the plains people do, and then rest until it is time to start the bridal couple's journey home (varāṭ). The journey starts from the bride's village in time to reach the groom's village by evening. The two are carried on the shoulders for some time, but are allowed to walk once outside the village, unless a cart is available. They are again carried when entering the groom's village. The musicians lead the procession, and women sing on the way. Three stops are made outside the bride's village as made when the groom arrived for the marriage.

In the Thakur villages through which the procession passes, women of the village wave a lighted wick before the groom, who is expected to give them a coin or two.

The couple does not enter the groom's village until the villagers assemble to take the two in procession to their home. Musicians lead the procession and are followed by young men who dance and play the lexim, a bow with stringed metal discs which jingle. The couple visits the headman of the hamlet, their near relations and the influential people in the village. At each house, the housewife waves a lighted wick and offers to the couple a copra-half with jaggery placed in it, receiving from the bridegroom a gift of a pice or two. Before waving the wick the housewife cracks her knuckles against the thighs and arms of the bride and groom. She also waves the wick before the elders present.

At the bridegroom's booth, the female functionary unbari washes the feet of the bride and groom. Applying wet turmeric to their feet she waves a lighted wick before them. She receives a present of an anna from the bride and twice as much from the bridegroom. An equal amount is presented to the maids who now approach the couple.

The entrance to the house is blocked with a wooden pestle by the groom's sister, who sits on the threshold with legs outstretched and with a plate containing pieces of betel nut on her knees. The bridegroom asks her why she does this. She says, 'Brother, I want your daughter'. He replies, 'When I have
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a daughter, I shall give her into your house'. This means he will give his daughter to her son in marriage. The sister then removes the pestle and distributes the pieces of betel nut to all present to celebrate her brother's promise.

Once in the house, the bride and the groom play games, eat from one dish and feed each other. Before going to bed the two must ask the villagers if they may remove the ornamental paper coronets and strings of flowers. Permission is requested the next morning to put them on. In fact, permission is requested morning and evening during the period of the marriage ceremony. Failure to ask means offence to the villagers and amends are made by a small fine.

Early afternoon the next day the couple again visit the houses of influential persons and near relations, the rites performed being identical with those of the previous night.

On returning home, and after further formalities, they take a bath. The place for bathing is a square formed by four earthen pots connected to each other with a length of string. After the hems of their garments are tied together, the bride and groom must walk five times around the enclosure before entering it. They enter facing east and throwing a few grains of rice before them. The bridegroom removes his upper garment and turban, and he and his wife apply wet turmeric to each other. On behalf of the bride, her sister pours five handfuls of turmeric water on the groom and the groom's sister pours turmeric water on the bride for him.

While bathing, the groom holds the bride's right hand in his left. The groom's mother sits behind the couple with outstretched legs. The water that is collected in earthen pots is thrown over the couple. It is called kalasavanī. Pieces of charcoal are put under the feet of the two as they step out of the enclosure. The female functionary umbarī waves cooked rice before the two and then throws it on the thatch and towards the four quarters. The waving of cooked rice is known as kharakaṭe utarane. The husband and wife change and then wave a lighted wick before each other. The bride waves a lighted wick before the Mahar musicians and gives them a small gift.

The tying of the flowers must be done in the forenoon when the sun is ascending, and they must be removed in the afternoon.
For the ceremony of removing flowers, the bride and groom, seated on a charpoy, face each other. A doll called 'Bābū' symbolizing the son-to-be, is made from the bride's bodice, put on a plate, and placed between the couple. The groom's maternal uncle removes the paper coronets, strings of flowers and the sacred thread from the bride and groom and places the articles over 'Bābū'. Later, he ties them to a post in the house. In the absence of a maternal uncle the barber or the male functionary umbaryā does the work. The plate holding 'Bābū' is placed in the sheet worn by the bride and the couple lull the 'Bābū' to sleep. The groom's mother then takes the plate and goes round displaying 'Bābū' to everybody, kissing the 'Bābū' each time it is shown.

An inverted metal pot is suspended from the thatch. The pot is filled with water and its mouth covered tightly with a piece of cloth in which a grass blade is inserted, so that water trickles down slowly and continuously. This represents 'Bābū' urinating.

The bride waves a lighted wick before the elders, and her father prays to each of them: 'Please accommodate the girl (born) of our sins and (begot because) of your merit'. The bride then retires to the house. The barber shaves the bridegroom.

When the barber has finished, everyone in turn waves a lighted wick before the groom and each drops a small coin in the plate. The collection is divided between the barber and the maids. The barber gives rice to the bridegroom and grants him permission to retire. The barber is paid a rupee. The coconut from the bride's karyā pot is broken and the kernel distributed to people at this ceremony.

The heaps of rice representing the deities of the devak are now removed indicating the end of the marriage ceremonies. A man married by the first-marriage rites may do this. After obeisance the man breaks the coconut placed in front of the deities and distributes it. The winnowing basket with its contents is placed by the male functionary pitaryā in the thatch of the booth, and is removed next morning and placed in the loft. The contents of the basket are later given to the female functionary umbarī.
The dinner which follows is called the ḍāḍhīcē jēvan, a dinner to celebrate the shaving. All the villagers are invited and the bridegroom, wearing his coloured sheet round his waist, serves water to the guests to wash their hands and feet. A he-goat is killed and cooked, if the bridegroom is the youngest of his brothers. Non-vegetarian food is prohibited in the ceremony until the heaps of rice representing the deities of the devak are removed.

The next evening the couple go to the bride's house. They take with them loaves of bread and some jaggery as presents. Cooked rice is waved before them as the couple enter the bride's house. The coconut from the karyā pot of the bridegroom is broken and its kernel distributed. The jaggery and the bread are distributed to the villagers by the newly wed who visit each house. Loaves of bread are presented also to the maids. This visit is called pāch (five) paratane (return) because it is on the fifth day of the ceremony. For lunch next morning a fowl is cooked in honour of the son-in-law. The youths from the village are invited. A piece of string is hidden in the soft flesh of the fowl (budhalā, or bīṭā) which is served to the guest of honour. Throwing away the piece of string, he eats the flesh. The bridegroom is said to have gone to eat budhalā.

When the bridegroom returns home with his bride, cooked rice is waved before them as they enter the house. The couple goes from house to house in the village distributing bread and jaggery given them by the bride’s father.

The paper coronets and strings of flowers are removed from the post where they were tied for five days, and are then tied to the stancheon over the ridge-pole. When tying them, the maternal uncle says, 'I have kept them for five days, now you may keep them for ever.'

The ceremony of the Ka does not require the services of a Brahmin priest; they themselves perform the ceremony. Anointing with wet turmeric and the oil ceremony are essential. Some sort of music is also necessary; usually it is a medicine-man who plays the small drum called ḍāk.

For a marriage ceremony, the Ka prefer Wednesdays and Sundays and avoid Tuesdays. On the morning of the marriage, the bridegroom's father invites the villagers to lunch. Before lunch, one of the villagers goes into a trance, applies wet turmeric
to the forehead of the groom and dresses him with a string of ruī flowers and a paper coronet. The women apply wet turmeric to the bridegroom's forehead, then to each other's and to those of the men. They then make obeisance to elders.

At her house, the bride is adorned with a paper coronet by the woman-singer (dhavaḷārīn or gānārīn). It is carried to her house earlier in the morning by four or five women from the bridegroom's party. The woman-singer applies wet turmeric to the bride, and then ties the paper coronet on the bride's head. She also dresses the bride with a string of ruī flowers. Strings of fragrant flowers may be used in addition, but the one of ruī flowers is important and cannot be dispensed with. This done, other women apply wet turmeric to the bride's forehead.

As the bridegroom's party arrives at the bride's house, they are met by five married women each standing with a pair of earthen pots on her head. As he enters, the bridegroom drops a coin in the upper pot of each. The bride's mother waves a lighted wick before the bridegroom and he in turn presents her with half an anna. The groom is then led to his seat in the booth. Rice grains are used to form lines parallel to the sides of the blanket on which the groom sits. This square made with rice grains is known as pāṭ or kaṇā. The brother of the bride now takes hold of the bridegroom by the ears and receives from the groom the gift of a dhoti. The bridegroom's sister offers a new sari to the bride sitting in the house. The bride hands it over to the woman-singer who inspects it and if it is used, old or torn, returns it to the bridegroom's sister and the bride continues to wear her own sari. If the sari offered is unacceptable, a new sari is given to the bride later. If it is approved, this is announced, so there may be no cause for complaint thereafter. All the ornaments are provided by the bridegroom's father.

The bride, after being dressed, is led to the booth where the groom carries her on his hip and walks around the square five times with the maids following him. After this the bride and the groom are seated side by side on the blanket.

The oil ceremony begins with some women pouring sweet oil on the heads of the couple. It collects in the cupped hands of the maids who stand behind the couple with their hands over the heads of the two. The oil is poured with mango leaves fixed to an
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arrow-head and the gleanings rubbed on the bride and groom. The woman-singer sings during the ceremony.

The bride and groom are now husband and wife. The father of the husband distributes cooked tūr lentil, betel nuts and tobacco to the guests in celebration. Those who have erected the booth and those who have entertained the gathering receive as present an anna or two from the groom’s father. The bridal dinner then follows; it may not be vegetarian.

Next morning the couple are given a bath. Then the bride rolls up her bodice and the groom his loin-cloth, which they throw at each other. These are received by the maids in an out-stretched sheet. The bride and groom are anointed with wet turmeric.

The bridegroom and party spend the day at the bride’s house. Tamāshā (bawdy, comic opera) party is in attendance to entertain guests. In the evening the procession starts for the bridegroom’s house. In the villages through which the procession passes married women with pots of water wave a lighted wick before the couple and receive a coin or two from the bridegroom. On reaching the bridegroom’s village, the bride and groom are not led direct to their house, but are held up at a friend’s house. From here, by leave of the village headman, they are taken in a procession which arrives at the bridegroom’s house by midnight or later. On reaching home, the groom’s mother waves a lighted wick before the couple, each presenting her half an anna. In the booth, an enthusiast from the gathering dances with the bride, carrying her on his hip, followed by other enthusiasts. After this the bridegroom performs in a similar fashion. This dancing is known as dhele nāchavane or taḷi nāchavane. It was once practised by the Ma. The dancers and other guests of honour are given an anna or two by the groom’s father. Each guest who is honoured by such a gift waves a lighted wick before the couple and makes a return present of a pice. The newly-married couple now enters the house where their paper coronets are removed by the maids, and carried in a plate with much ceremony to the central post of the house and tied there. The bridegroom goes to the booth, greets the guests saying rāṃ-rām and formally announces the close of the ceremony. The amounts of gift given above prevailed in 1944. Today they are about four times as much.
After five days, women of the house take the bride to her parents. She lives there for five days and is then escorted back to her husband’s house by women from her father’s family.

With an eye to economy, the Ma sometimes complete the marriage ceremonies in a day. Such a function is termed ekarātyā lagīn, which means a one-night wedding.

Polygyny is allowed in Thakur society; polyandry is taboo. Marriage with a wife’s sister is socially approved. Whether the girl is a widow or virgin is of no consequence. A man may marry his wife’s sister either during the lifetime of his wife or after her death. A man usually marries his wife’s younger sister. I have not heard of a man marrying his wife’s elder sister, although theoretically it may not be objectionable. Levirate is treated as incest and is abhorred. I have a case on record where a man was dragged before a panchayat for having illicit relations with his brother’s widow.

When a man has no son, he arranges the marriage of his daughter with a youth who agrees to live and work with him. Such an in-marriage youth is called ghar-jāvāi, the son-in-law who lives in his father-in-law’s house.

When a man and wife are incompatible they seek divorce, which is a simple procedure. The Ma call a panchayat and at the meeting the divorced woman breaks her neck ornament, the symbol of wifehood, and hands it over to a representative of the divorced husband.

The obsequies of a married woman living with her parents are performed by the parents if a formal divorce has been obtained, otherwise her husband performs them.

Among the Ka, divorce is granted only when the husband and wife agree to a separation. In the panchayat that meets for the purpose, a member is entrusted with the breaking of a little stick or straw, which is the formal rite of divorce. The first husband claims all the expenses of his marriage from the new husband of his deserting wife. This amount is called dāvā and there is much haggling about the amount before an agreement is reached. This amount of compensation many times stands between two and four hundred rupees. The outgoing husband pays his village folk five to ten rupees from this amount of compensation presumably for helping him in the bargaining. The father, as the natural guar-
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dian of his children, is not entitled to any compensation. Thus when a woman obtains a formal divorce and lives with her parents at the time her remarriage is arranged, the father receives no money from his prospective son-in-law. The former husband is also taken to have lost his claim for compensation. Among the Ka, there is no brideprice for a remarrying woman; so that way too, the father gets nothing.

A divorced woman may live with her lover without a formal ceremony. She is then called a gharghushī. The term literally means ‘(a woman) who forces herself into the house (of her paramour)’. The couple may marry later at their convenience. Until they are married, the lover must pay a rupee yearly to the villagers for being allowed to keep the woman. The payment is a guarding or keeping fee, and is called rākholī.

Even an unmarried young girl, whose parents do not approve of her choice of mate, may live with her lover without a formal ceremony. A man may marry by the first-marriage rites any number of times; a woman may be married by these rites only once. Remarriage rites, therefore, are compulsorily followed by women marrying a second time, whether or not they are widows.

No woman may marry into a brother-family of her father, whether it be her first marriage or remarriage. This is a taboo for life. At the time of her second and subsequent marriages she has to avoid, in addition, the families of her former husbands. It is not improper for her, however, to marry into a brother-family of her former husband. Thus Mali, the wife of a Gorha, left him and got remarried to a Hindola; the former wife of a Kamadi got remarried to a Nirguda and the widow of a Thombara to a Pachange. These pairs are brother-families, yet the remarriages were considered proper.

I have on record the case histories of nineteen women who have remarried. Women who have had three or more husbands, are rare. During my investigations, I found hardly one such in a village of twenty or twenty-five households. This is natural because their advanced age may come in the way of making themselves acceptable to men of their liking. Two women remarried into brother-families of their fathers, a relationship considered incestuous. This, however, was inadvertently done, the surnames of their suitors being new to their fathers.
Among the Ma, the brideprice for a remarrying woman is a kudaw of paddy. The amount of money is decided upon by the two parties. The Ka pay no brideprice in a remarriage.

Remarriage rites must be performed after sunset. The bridegroom accompanied by his friends and relatives goes to the bride's village on the eve of the marriage. The main rite is simple. Turmeric is applied to the bridegroom who wears a turban. He gives the bride a red sari, a bodice and ornaments including a pair of toe-rings. She wears the clothes and the ornaments, and waves a lighted wick before the bridegroom. He daubs her forehead with wet vermilion, breaks her neck ornament and ties a new one on her neck. This ornament is the insignia of wifehood and the act speaks for the change of husbands. The light of the wick is now extinguished and the bride waves before the elders present the extinguished wick and makes obeisance to them. The belief is that a person who sees this light is sure to remarry. So youths take great care to avoid seeing it. Unmarried youths generally do not attend a remarriage ceremony for this reason. When unavoidable, they cover their faces. Guests are given a dinner which concludes the ceremony.

The new husband sends a rupee to the old husband as compensation for the dicarded neck ornament, if the latter is alive.

That the bridegroom must stay at the bride's house during the night and leave with her before daybreak is one of the essentials of the ceremony.

At his house, the bridegroom and bride trample a chicken to kill it. The dead fowl is waved in front of the house and thrown over the house to the other side.

A Ka remarriage is a simple affair, exclusively women's. Female friends and relatives accompany the woman to her new husband who gives clothes and ornaments to her and feeds the women guests. The party arrives at the man's house usually in the evening. Leading the woman to her new husband's house seems to be the main item. The husband gives his village folk five to ten rupees.

11 Cf. N. G. Chapekar, op. cit., p. 444.
12 See p. 147.
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When a Thakur, either Ma or Ka, has lost two wives, before taking a third he 'marries' a *ruī* plant, as the plains people do. An unmarried youth wishing to marry a widow or a divorced woman also performs the marriage ceremony with a *ruī* plant, before he marries his woman. The Thakur calls this 'marriage' *ruimandāl*. One who has been 'married' to a *ruī* plant abstains thereafter from cutting the plant or plucking its leaves.
DEATH AND FUNERALS

The Ma bury their dead. Among the Ka it is sometimes cremated according to the desire of the deceased or that of his relatives. Those having died of a long sickness, contagious disease, from suicide, pregnancy or childbirth are invariably interred. Children are always interred. Each village has a common burial ground, although some families have private plots.

A dying person is placed on the floor on a blanket with his head on the lap of a near relative. After death, wet turmeric and copra are applied to the body, and the hair is combed. The body is then bathed in hot water, dressed, and wrapped in a new cloth, called kaphan, in one end of which cooked rice is tied to be put into the deceased's mouth after the body is placed in the grave. The body is carried with the feet in front.

It is interesting to note that the Thakur word for bier, khāṭārā, is derived from the Sanskrit khattikā. During the funeral procession rice and ragi grains are scattered. The procession halts for a while near a šid tree. Here the bier is turned so that the head of the deceased is now in front.

The body is deposited with the head to the north. Common ornaments of small value are placed in the grave. The neck ornament that is the insignia of wifehood, and the toe-rings of the wife of a deceased man are removed from her person and tied in the sheet covering the dead body. The Ka leave the personal belongings of the deceased, such as his bow and arrow, stick, sickle and tobacco pouch, at the halting spot on the way to the burial ground. The waist-cord is cut before the grave is closed. Cutting
of waist-cord liberates the body from worldly ties and symbolizes similar liberation for the mind and soul of the deceased. After filling the grave, the chief mourner offers water to the deceased, thrice at the head and thrice at the foot of the grave.

When a woman dies in childbirth, a ring of the dhānvel creeper symbolizing the infant, and thorns of the asānā plant, believed to prevent the deceased woman from becoming a ghost, are placed by the side of the deceased in the grave. When a pregnant woman dies, the Ka open her abdomen, remove the foetus and bury it separately.

The chief mourner and his party now go to the village well where, near a shīd twig planted in the ground, they offer water to the deceased by pouring it on the stretched palms of the chief mourner. On return, everyone throws cow’s urine at the house of the deceased. The bearers are then seated and the chief mourner rubs their backs and stomachs with oil. They are asked to dine, but they take only a morsel and that, too, they place on an empty platter, which is placed thereafter on the roof.

Among the Ma, the chief mourner, the following morning, places a loaf of bread, rice and milk in a bamboo joint near the shīd tree at the halting place and pours milk and cow’s urine on the loaf. He next places an egg preparation and a bamboo joint with milk at the head of the grave and a loaf of bread and a bamboo joint containing cow’s urine at the foot. Milk and cow’s urine are poured on the egg and bread. For two days the bereaved family does not cook food but is supplied with bread by the villagers.

The Ka observe the day of secondary obsequies (dhākatā divas) on the third day when villagers take a holiday. The mourners make an offering of rice, pulse and fowl at the grave. If the villagers go fishing, as they usually do, an offering of fish is also made. An offering is made at the grave on every holiday until the annual obsequial day (mothe-pitar) which falls on the new moon day in the month of Bhādrapad (August-September). On that day, food is placed on the roof and offered to the deceased. Once during the first year, rice and the edible grass called kol must be offered at the grave. There is no obsequial feast.

1 Bridelia retusa.
Among the Ma, the obsequies are performed at the earliest on the seventh and latest on the tenth day after death, according to the age and the matrimonial status of the deceased. No obsequies are observed for unweaned children or for those who have not teethed; obsequies of elder children are performed on the seventh day following death and are consequently called sātore—coming on the seventh day. For the people not married by the first-marriage rites and for the unmarried, they are performed on the eighth day, and for the rest, on the tenth. Tuesdays and Saturdays are considered inauspicious, and the obsequies in such cases are performed a day earlier.

A Brahmin priest usually conducts the obsequies. But in parts of Kolaba District they are conducted by a Kumbhar; at other places by a member of the Jangam sect.

The night before the day of obsequies is spent in singing devotional songs and collective prayers, or songs narrating stories from the great ancient epics (lāvanī). They are sung where the death has occurred. A figure representing Shiva, the third of the Hindu trinity, is drawn there with rice. An oil lamp with two lighted wicks burns continuously by its side.

The actual rites are performed in the morning on the bank of a stream near by. Women as a rule are not present.

The performer of the obsequies bathes in the river. After being shaved he bathes again. During the second bath, he applies cow-dung and wet earth to his body. He then puts on the fourth finger of his right hand a ring of grass, called a pavitrak, and prepares eleven balls of rice-dough called pinda. One of these is larger than the rest. A small stone brought from the funeral (ashmā or jīvakhadā) is put in the larger ball. A human figure made of dough (bāhulā) to symbolize the deceased is cremated with formalities identical with those performed at the actual cremation.

After the funeral fire is extinguished, the ashes (asthi) of the ‘cremated person’ are taken out and buried in the bed of the river. The place occupied by the pyre is now cleared and a few twigs of mango and jāmbhūl are driven into the ground. These twigs symbolize a booth. A string is placed over the booth

* A member of the Potter caste.
and the performer ties another around his waist. The performer now puts the dough-balls on paḷas leaves inside the booth. The bigger dough-ball containing the stone, is placed on a separate leaf and the rest are placed together. The dough-balls are worshipped, the booth is pulled down, and the ten smaller dough-balls are deposited in the river. The performer takes ten small blades of lavhā³ grass and cleans his teeth with them. He uses one, throws it in the river and pours water over his head. The procedure is continued till all the ten are used and thrown away. The Brahmin priest now proceeds with the worship of the planets and the deity Gaṇapatī (Graha-Gaṇapatī-pūjana).

After the worship, a sacred fire is lighted and offerings of a mixture of various grains (dhan) whose number should be odd—seven, nine or eleven, are thrown in it. When the Brahmin has done with the sacred fire, milk is sprinkled over the unused grains and the performer stands in the river with the bigger dough-ball in his hand. The near relations are shaved and all take some grain and pour three handfuls of water on the dough-ball. The mourners return home after bathing in the river. The sacred fire is occasionally lighted at home instead of on the bank.

On return, guests are given a meal. A medicine-man, always a sacred personage, must eat in another house. Before the guests are served, an offering is placed on the roof by the host. Another offering is deposited, with an amount of sweet oil, on a few embers placed in a piece of broken earthenware, and this is deposited outside the house to the left of the entrance. A man is dispatched to keep an offering of food for the deceased, at the grave.

Then follows the ceremony to mark the end of mourning (dukhavaṭā). A relative-in-law (soyarā) ties some rice, betel nuts and a small amount of money in the hem of the chief mourner’s turban. The relative-in-law then puts the turban on the chief mourner and applies consecrated rice to his forehead. The mourner, in turn, applies consecrated rice to the forehead of the relative-in-law. The two then exchange greetings and give one another betel nuts. Other relatives-in-law follow and greet the chief mourner in a similar way, one after another. There is an

* *Cyperus rotundas.*
exchange of consecrated rice and betel nuts. Each relative-in-law presents coins to the mourner which are put in a plate containing a lighted wick. He then sprinkles a few grains of rice on the ground and pays his respects to the assembly saying *ram-ram*. In the end the chief mourner greets the assembly. Betel nuts are then distributed. Only in-laws may present money at the obsequies. Consanguines are in mourning and sit in a row. The ceremony, intended to end their mourning, is addressed to them. They get some money in lieu of the turban. The amount depends on the collection. The ceremony offers an opportunity to guests to know their relationship with the mourner’s family. An informant told me that he attended such a ceremony with an intention to offer his present. But when he was asked to sit in the row he knew that he was a consanguine and not an affine of the mourner. This happens only when the family names of the consanguines are not identical. Members of brother-families are in mourning which this ceremony terminates.

In the obsequies which are conducted by a Kumbhar, five dough-balls are prepared and thrown in a river after worship. Among the more prosperous, rice is spread on the floor and a metal pot containing water, a mango twig and a coconut is placed on the rice. A string of flowers is hung from the roof down to the pot. The Kumbhar spends the whole night singing. The Jangam sings the poems of Tukaram, the saint-poet of Maharashtra, which are usually sung at funerals.

The obsequies among the Ka are not performed during the first four or five days after death, nor can they be postponed for more than a year. The poor, instead of making independent arrangements, often join the funerals of the well-to-do, thus saving money by performing their own obsequies at the same time.

Invitations are sent on a Sunday to those who possess idols worshipped by the Ka, to the Kamadis, who are to officiate at the rites, and headmen and leaders from the surrounding villages. An invitation is also sent to those who are to offer blood to the deity. Two youths from the Chibade, Madi or Moraghe families are invited for this honoured purpose.

4 For a detailed description of the rites and songs of the Kumbhar see N. G. Chapekar, *op. cit.*, pp., 71-84; *Bombay Gazetteer* (1882) XIII, p. i, pp. 187-38.
In every locality there is a deity or a group of deities traditionally selected to be worshipped on the occasion of obsequies. I was told that the Nārāyaṇadevas, a group of six idols which are in the possession of the Kavha family of Sarsoon village are brought to Winwal near Jawhar for the performance of funeral rites. The group consists of a silver plate with a male figure impressed on it and a collection of small stones. When obsequies are performed at two or more places in the locality on the same day, a few idols from the group are sent to each place. The Dambali and Taral families act as messengers and workers of the Kamadi. A member of one of these families is entrusted with the task of bringing the idols and returning them after the function. The idols are brought on Tuesday and are placed that evening on a mixture of rice and the common millet spread on the floor under a bamboo-frame or miniature booth (makhar).

A drum is played continuously from sunrise on Sunday to Wednesday noon. Young adults and children dance night and day around the drummer.

Neighbours gather at the house of the host at noon without a formal invitation. The drum heard throughout the neighbourhood, serves as an announcement. Some of those who attend come to perform the obsequies of a recently deceased relative of their own, while others come merely for entertainment. Villagers bring their drums with them and dance until Wednesday noon. The host provides his guests with food, while others bring their own provisions.

The chief mourner puts a few grains of the common millet in a cup made of leaves and throws it into a stream. If there is no stream near by a water-trough of carved log will do. A betel nut, a string and a small coin are placed in the cup with the grain if the deceased is a male; turmeric root, coloured string and a coin are required for a female. This is offering food to the deceased (dhonī karāṇe) a ritual performed by everyone present.

The Kamadis invited to the function sing to the accompaniment of dāk, the small drum, from the time the idols are brought in on Tuesday evening until the offering of blood on the following day.

The two offerers of blood are called vīr. Carrying a bunch of peacock feathers, which represents the deity Hiravā, they dance
and approach the idols. A few youths, holding a piece of cloth, dance to keep the offerers of blood company. As the dancers enter the booth the Kamadis stop singing. On approaching the deities, one of the offerers of blood sits down and cuts his head slightly with a sword so that a few drops of blood fall at the feet of the idols. His companion then offers his blood. The first offers blood in the name of the deities while the other offers his in the name of the deceased. This ritual brings the function to a close.

The host spends from two to three hundred rupees for the obsequies. Those who join to perform their own rites engage separate offerers of blood who are paid about five rupees for the service. The offerers of blood, as said earlier, must belong to the specific families entrusted by the community with this work.

Among the Ka, the obsequies attract big crowds and with revellers and pedlars give the place an appearance of a village fair. Paradoxical as it is, people, particularly the youth, utilize the serene occasion for merry-making and love-making, innocent and clandestine. It is because of this abuse and because of the prevailing opinion against the offering of blood, that the Ka Thakurs who met in a conference at Jamsar in Jawhar Taluka on 25 April 1968, unanimously decided to stop the practice.
7

IDEAS OF THE PHYSICAL WORLD

The Thakur's knowledge of the physical world is based on his own observations. He studies the animal and plant life of the forests around him. Although some of his deductions seem queer, on the whole they are logical. His ideas of anatomy are derived from what he knows of the animals he kills for food.

According to the Thakur, plants, like human beings, have emotions. They experience joy and sorrow. If a plant is struck with an axe it shrieks 'chín-chín', which the Thakur thinks is an expression of grief. According to him parasites, such as creepers and insects, make a plant unhappy, as they impede its growth and sap its strength. Water and new foliage bring it happiness.

The life of a plant is in its roots, so that even if it is cut it will sprout again. But the mango, mahua and some other trees die if they are felled, because the life of these trees is in the trunk. The leaves lend vigour to a plant and help it to grow. Withered leaves act as a fertilizer. The roots give the tree strength and support and help it to withstand strong winds. That is why shrubs are easily uprooted in a storm. The bark is the skin of the plant and beneath it is the bone. When thoroughly barked, some plants die while others survive. There is no fruit without flower, though the fig tree, pāyari,¹ and a few others are exceptions. The pulp covering the seed protects

¹ Ficus nitida.
it from being eaten by animals—for without seed there can be no fruit.

Plants also need water, air and light. As the clouds absorb water, and as we stock grain for the rainy season, so plants store water. The bones of a plant have perforated rings. The roots take in water which is distributed to the remotest parts of the structure through these perforations. Drops of water are often seen trickling from the fresh foliage of a plant.

There are male and female plants, the Thakur believes. The male tāḍ (a palm tree) does not yield fruit; the female does. The male silk-cotton tree (sāvari) yields bigger fruit than the female species. The male sweet potato is round and fibrous; the female is oblong and smooth. There is also a difference in the yield, the female yielding far more than the male.

Teak, gurj² and several other plants take a year to sprout; the bamboo flowers once in sixty years, the kāruḷi every five years. Seeds are distributed by beast and bird who carry them in their mouths, claws, and in their droppings. A strong breeze is also a carrier of seed. Some seeds, such as the ṭetū,³ paḷas and paḷashī, have feathers and are able to fly long distances, it is believed. When the kuyali⁴ pod bursts open, the seed flies away. Round fruits roll and thus distribute the seed. Wild banana (Kavadar)⁵ and jīmḥuḍ seeds are transported by water currents. A few seeds, such as the vāghnakhī⁶ and cherphaḷ⁷ have thorns which are a menace to animals. In trying to free themselves from the thorns, animals carry seeds from one place to another. The stamen is called the chov. The longer kind is known as naḷ. It bears fruit, and as the fruit grows the stamen fades away.

The Thakur describes the human body in one of his riddles as ‘the tree with branches below and the trunk above’.⁸

The human system is believed to function in a way similar to the working of the animal system, the human body containing the same parts as the body of a vertebrate animal. Except for

2 Crab’s eye, abrus precatorius.
4 Mucuna pruriens.
6 Martynia diandra.
8 Oroxylum indicum.
5 Musa superba.
7 Zanthoxylum rhetsa.
the obvious differences, the description of the human body is the same as that of the animal system.

There is an interesting song which describes the details of the body. The song is in the form of questions and answers and is called dehabhagache gane—the song concerning the body:

In our body, oh brother,
Where is the bone sixteen cubits long?
To our body, oh brother,
How many doors are there?
In our body, oh brother,
Which part is a cubit and a quarter round?
In our body, oh brother,
Where is the sacred fire that ever burns?
In our body, oh brother,
Which is the bone as small as sesamum?
In our body, oh brother,
Where is the vital vein?
In our body, oh brother,
Where is the flowing Ganges?
In our body, oh brother,
Where lies the dry ocean?
These are my problems, oh brother,
Please explain them to me, oh brother.

The answers are:

The bone sixteen cubits long
Is the vein of our body, oh brother.
And in our body, oh brother,
There are nine doors, oh brother.
The place a cubit and a quarter long
Is the circumference of our head, oh brother.
And in our body, oh brother,
To the left is the sacred fire that ever burns.
The bone as small as sesamum
Is in our penis, oh brother.
And the vital vein, oh brother,
Is in our throat, oh brother.
And the flowing Ganges, oh brother,
Is in the right flank, oh brother.
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And the dry ocean, oh brother,
Is above our heart, oh brother.

The nine doors described above are the eyes, the ears, the nostrils, the mouth, the anus and the penis or the vagina. The sacred fire that ever burns is the heart. The vital vein is in the throat, probably because life is extinct when the throat is cut. I could not get any explanation of the flowing Ganges and the dry ocean.

At another village I obtained a different version about the doors of the body:

To our body, brother,
How many doors are there?
There are ten doors, oh brother.
Out of the ten, brother,
How many are open?
Nine are open, oh brother,
And the tenth is a secret.

The 'secret door' is supposed to be at the apex of the scalp. The song continues to say that the key to the secret door is with the spiritual teacher and that the door opens when the soul leaves its human tabernacle for good.

Animals, according to the Thakur, have an affectionate nature. They also possess the ability to think. According to his zoological beliefs, when her fawn is killed the mother deer rushes at the hunter. When the fawn is caught in a net she is grieved and the grief shows on her face. The mother rabbit is also grieved to see her young one caught in a net, as her cries prove. Tears of grief are often seen in the eyes of cows and female deer. A cow gazes intently at her prematurely delivered foetus. If an animal, forced out of the herd by hunters, manages to escape from them, it tries to get back to the herd. But the important difference between man and animal is that man tends the sick; animals do not. If an animal is shot, others of the herd will run away, leaving it to its fate.

Animals require food, water, shade, air and light. Fish come on the surface to breathe. If water is covered in which there is fish, they will soon die. The air that is breathed in through

* The Sanskrit word for the 'secret closed door' is brahmarandhra.
the nose is distributed all over the body through the porous tissues. And through the same tissues air comes back to the nose to be breathed out.

The body of a beast contains a liver (kālīf), lungs (phuphūs), bile (pītta), heart (dīl), intestines (ātaḍī), stomach (pōṭālā), spleen (pihā), neck (yīv), bladder (mutanī) and duodenum (sātputī).

The food eaten by an animal goes to the stomach through the gullet (ghāṭarū). From the stomach it goes to the duodenum where it is reduced to powder. The duodenum is like a quern and grinds all food. The intestines start from the duodenum and end at the anus, which disposes of waste. Water also reaches the stomach through the gullet. The stomach has porous tissues through which the water is distributed over the body. Waste water is disposed of as perspiration and some trickles through the bladder to be disposed of as urine. The nose is connected with the gullet. ‘As there is only one ridge-pole which supports the many rafters of a house’, so the gullet is the meeting place of the mouth and the nose. There is a piece of glass-like flint in the eyes and the animal owes its eyesight to it. The flint is covered with water, without which the animal would be blind. Two small nerves pass from the brain to the eyes and a large one to each ear. The tail, ‘the drum-stick that beats two drums’, is only an instrument to ward off flies. The lungs keep the body light; and the heart is at the head of the whole system.

Animals that eat dirt, earth and bitter tubers have bitter intestines. Thus, the keng and pātyā fish, and the wild boar have bitter intestines. The rabbit eats fresh kuḍā leaves which are bitter, so its intestines are bitter. But the intestines of fish that eat moss are not bitter.

What the blood is composed of is not known, but the Thakur believes blood gives energy. Semen is not found in slaughtered animals; nor is it known from where it comes. The Thakur suspects, however, that it is stocked in the head. Copulation is not necessary for a hen to lay eggs, but these eggs do not hatch. The skin, flesh and bones of a chicken are formed of the white of the egg (bind) while the intestines and stomach are formed of the yolk (goṭī).

10 Holarrhena antidysenterica.
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The peacock, according to the Thakur, does not copulate for reproduction. He tells the following story to explain how it came to be so:

'A Thakur boy, who was married in the cradle, lost his parents. When he came of age he heard about his marriage and went in search of his wife. During the search he lost his way in a thick forest and found himself at a temple of Shiva which was situated near a lake. He vowed to the deity that he would offer his head to it if it led him to his father-in-law. Soon thereafter, he met an old Thakur who took him to his father-in-law.

'He stayed with the father-in-law for a few days, and then started on his return journey with his wife and her brother. On the way back, he remembered the vow, and asking his wife and brother-in-law to wait a while, he went to the temple and offered his head to the deity. After waiting for a long time the wife sent her brother in search of her husband. The brother saw what had happened, and unable to report such a horrible occurrence to his sister, he killed himself at the feet of the deity. After a time the wife went to the temple. On seeing the double tragedy she prayed to the deity to take her away as well.

'The deity was moved and, giving her a quantity of sacred ash, she advised the woman to apply the ash on the dead bodies to bring them back to life. Unfortunately, the sister joined her husband's head to her brother's body and her brother's head to her husband's body.

'Now the woman could treat neither of the two as her husband, so the deity turned the men into peacocks and the woman into a peahen. Since then the peacock weeps when he dances and the peahen pecks at the tears in order to conceive.'

According to Thakur zoology, the carpenter bee (bhungerä) does not mate to reproduce. It brings an insect into its 'house' and then plasters up the entrance with mud. The imprisoned insect undergoes a metamorphosis, turns into a bee, and breaks open the plastered entrance. There are about half a dozen 'rooms' in the 'house' and the bee keeps an insect in each 'room'. Frogs copulate, but the Thakur believes there is no passing of semen. A sticky substance (jär) on the body of the male frog is responsible for the impregnation. The common
earthworm reproduces in a similar way. The stinging fly (poklā) found in forests is born of the froth on the surface of lakes or puddles. When the teak blossoms the species dies out.

Fishes copulate to reproduce, it is believed. When the female fish lays eggs the male drops 'milk' on the hatching baby fishes to enable them to swim.

A sow has eight teats. Each time she has piglets she loses a teat, and after eight litters she no longer conceives.

The Thakur has utilized his knowledge of animal and plant life for medicinal purposes. He extracts oil from the keng variety of fish and uses it to keep off flies. He uses myrobalan12 fruits as a laxative, kuyali for worms, gunj leaves for throat complaints and shemat13 leaves for wounds. He has herbal medicines for most of the ordinary diseases.

The Thakur has a story14 to explain the origin of the waning and waxing of the moon. The moon, according to him, received a boon from his mother that he would be 'rejuvenated' every fortnight. The Thakur thinks the spots on the moon are cracks. The moon is supposed to have two wives. The senior wife is the star that twinkles near the moon when it is full, and the junior wife is found by his side on the second day of the full moon period.

Of the planets, the Thakur knows Venus and Mars. The latter he calls Phaḍak-vinzaḍī because it twinkles. The Ursa Major group is called Bōj-chor, the four stars being the gold legs of the charpoy (bōj) and the three stars in a row being the thieves (chor) who have come to steal them. The thief in the centre is accompanied by his son.

To the left of Ursa Major are four stars arranged in the form of a plough. This group is named äūt, after the Marathi word for plough. The stars in front are the bullocks, while the ploughman, and his wife who has brought him some bread, are at the rear.

The Thakur knows the position of the Pleiades in the constellation Taurus at dawn during the changing seasons and makes use of this knowledge to tell the time. He calls Pleiades Kāthyā

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11 The Thakur's use of the word 'milk' should not be confused with the scientific term milt.
12 Terminalia chebula.
13 Odina volkner.
14 Cf. S. G. Date, Lokakathā (Ganesh Shala, 1929), p. 55.
or Pātharpunjā. The first term is a corrupt form of the Sanskrit word for the Pleiades, Krittikā; the second, means a collection of stones. In August-September the Pleiades are overhead at dawn. Time is also reckoned from the position of Venus, which appears at dawn during the harvest.

An eclipse is considered inauspicious and believed to bring disease. The polar star (Madhyameru) is believed to indicate the centre of the sky. If a man is unable to see the polar star, he will die within six months. The halo of light around the moon is compared to grain spread in a circle, on the threshing floor, and its appearance is considered very auspicious.
So Sings the Thakur. The beliefs voiced in the song permeate the Thakur’s outlook on the supernatural and his practices connected with it. He takes the view of life current in Hindu philosophy. His folklore reveals curious glimpses into Vedantic philosophy and reflects the fatalistic passivism of the Indian way of life. In his dancing songs, prayers are offered to Shankar, Pārvatī and other deities of the Hindu pantheon.

The Thakur’s supernatural beliefs are mainly expressed in ritual and magical practices. His attitude towards his deities (deva) is one of fear and dread. Each of them is a potential source of danger. He prays to them more to dissuade them from doing him harm than with expectation of some positive good.

His pantheon consists of ten to fifteen deities. Among them deities such as Bhavānī, Kānhobā and Khadērāv are worshipped by the advanced classes. The pantheon also includes Vāghyā, which represents the tiger, and Hiravā, representing the peacock, from the animal world. Munjā and Vētāl come from the spirit world, and Vir represents the ancestors. The majority of idols are of unadorned stone smeared with red lead.

Vāghyā is an image of a tiger crudely carved on a flat stone about twenty ems. by twenty-five. Khadērāv is similarly

1 Cf. N. G. Chapekar, op. cit., p. 319.
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represented. Vāghyā is sometimes carved in wood. Supalyā, Nārāyaṇdev, Bhavānī and Yamāī are metal plaques with the images of the deities impressed on them. Kānavī Cheḍā is a large image of a cobra with five hoods and represents a spirit. Some idols are placed on a low wooden stool with wheels. Stones for idols are brought from caves believed to be the abodes of deities, or else from a river near by. Vīr is a deified ancestor. Vīr is the Marathi term for hero, and even today when an influential member of the Ka tribe dies, he is deified and an idol of Vīr is established to represent him. This is done by smearing an undorned slab of stone with red lead and sacrificing a cock. Ancestor worship prevails among other tribals and even among advanced Hindus.2

Although every Ka household does not keep idols, every family has a family-deity whose idol is kept and worshipped in the original household from which those without an idol are believed to have separated. Thus, Govinds and Bhores have Hiravā as their family deity. It is represented by a bunch of peacock feathers.

These deities receive daily and regular worship only during the Navarātra3 and Divāli4 holidays. They are also worshipped at the commencement of transplantation in the month of Jyeshṭha (June-July). In some villages the deities are also worshipped on Gaurī5 day in the month of Bhādrapad (August-September), a holiday which the Thakurs do not observe as a rule. For the rest of the year they are left undisturbed, unless someone is directed to them by a medicine-man.

Worship is usually offered twice a day, once in the morning and again in the evening, during the Navarātra holidays. During the Divāli holidays it is offered only once in the morning. The idols are first bathed and red lead is applied to those for which it is customary. The usual articles of worship, such as scented wick

3 The word navarātra means nine (nava) nights (rātra). The nights indicated by the term are specifically those preceding the Dasarā day (September-October), a holiday coming at the end of the rainy season.
4 The festival of lights. It comes about two weeks after the Dasarā day and covers six days.
5 One of the names of goddess Pārvatī who is worshipped on this day.
and flowers, are offered and obeisance made with a prayer for the general well-being of the family or for the removal of some misfortune. A coconut is broken and its water sprinkled on the idols. A light is kept burning near by.

This worship conforms to Hindu custom. It is the more interesting for the lack of animal sacrifice. Only when the medicine-man prescribes the installation of deities or enjoins fresh attention to existing ones, the sacrifice of a cock or a goat may form an element in the ritual.

Nana Nirguna of Badlapur gave me an interesting account of how his father once established a deity in their home and later removed it: 'My father once went to the forest, and seeing a bird tried to bring it down with a stone. Unfortunately he missed the mark and the stone hit an idol of Munjā near by. The enraged Munjā made my father ill. Raghav Bangara, the medicine-man from our village, correctly divined the source of trouble and advised my father to establish Munjā in our home. My sister's husband Padu was deputed to bring an idol. He brought a stone from the bed of the Ulhas river and it was ceremonially established in the house by Raghav. Padu picked up the first stone that he came across in the bed of the river because that is the only way idols can be chosen. When Padu brought the stone home, he fixed it to the centre of a plank. The deity was worshipped in the usual manner and, after a coconut was offered, a cock was sacrificed to it.

'The idol remained in our house till my sister was delivered of her child. But when she accidentally touched the idol, the deity was enraged at being polluted and caused my sister to be ill. Again the worthy medicine-man was consulted, and he said that the deity would not tolerate pollution and wanted to leave. Our hut is so small that pollution cannot be avoided. As advised by the medicine-man, we removed the idol and placed it in the forest near the Munjā who started the trouble.

'The Munjā does no harm now. Every year we offer him a coconut, and sometimes a cock in the summer. We do not go to the idol to worship. We simply walk five steps from the house in the direction of the idol and make the offering. That is enough.'

Generally, a stone smeared with red lead and put on the outskirts of a Thakur village represents, as on the plains, the tutelary
deity of the village. This deity, with others, is worshipped each year at the commencement of transplantation.

Devotional gatherings where participants sing in chorus, to the accompaniment of a drum and cymbals (bhajan), compositions usually of the saint-poets of India, are organized nowadays on almost all holidays and festivals. In some cases they have been substituted for the traditional dances. Sometimes special gatherings of this kind are arranged to entertain guests.

The observance of the days specially dedicated to the worship of the manes, which are the full moon and the new moon days in Bhādrapad (August-September), is a form of ancestor worship quite common among the plains people. These days are called dhākāte pitar and mothe pitar. The word pitar means ancestors, and dhākāte and mothe convey the sense of secondary and principal. Thus, the new moon day is considered the more important. Along with rice, pulse and vegetables a crab is also cooked for the offering. On the full moon day a variety of crab called muthā is offered, while another called chimborti is offered on the new moon day. A team of villagers go on the crab hunt. The offering is placed on the roof and water sprinkled over it. A silent prayer is made, and crows, believed to represent ancestors, are invited to accept the offering. Some Ma keep an offering of food at the grave on the new moon day. This is done only once and in the first year, particularly for the beloved ones. The Ka do not observe the full moon day.

Those in whose family a marriage took place in the preceding year, invite villagers to dine and the rice brought back from the quantity given as brideprice is mixed with rice cooked for the dinner.

The Thakur observes most of the Hindu festivals. There is no tradition of the worship of Gaṇapati, the festival in whose honour is turned by townsmen in an important social activity. If the festival is observed by some Thakurs, it is only a recent acquisition and such people are educated, well-to-do and prominent. The Thakur has a story which explains that he gave up this worship, and the worship of the goddess Gauri which is a part of the festival, when he found that it was unpropitious to him. Expensive idols of Gaṇapati were sold to Thakurs in 1968 in the Badlapur market. One was purchased by an in-
SEASONS, PHASES OF THE MOON AND FESTIVALS

14 SHIVARĀTRA

13 MĀḤĪBIJ

12 DIVĀLĪ

10 DASARA

9 NAVARĀTRA

8 MOŢHE PITAR

7 DHĀKĀTE PITAR

4 GOKULĀSHTAMI

5 POĻĀ

6 GAṆAPATĪ (Sp.)

15 SHIMAGĀ

2 HANUMĀṆ-JAYANTI (Sp.)

1 PĀḌVĀ (Sp.)

NOTE: THE OBSERVANCE OF FESTIVALS MARKED (Sp.) IS SPORADIC

NEW MOON DAY

FULL MOON DAY
dividual who observed the festival with éclat and much expense. Another was bought by the Thakurs of Dharole who organized a public celebration on behalf of their hamlet. This shows the waning influence of the belief recorded in the story.

Māhibīj, the festival of the moon, is observed on the day the moon is first seen, that is, on the second day, in the month of Māgh (February-March). It is common among plains farmers, although not found in urban areas. A fast is observed on this day. After the appearance of the moon on the horizon, a small spot in front of the house is dung-washed and the usual objects of worship, such as flowers, food and incense are offered to the moon. Parties of villagers go for hunting on this day. A goat or fowl is cooked for dinner, if the hunters fail to catch a game.

Vāgh-bāras, the twelfth day of the dark fortnight of the month of Āshvin (October-November) is celebrated in honour of the tiger. For four days before this day, boys go from village to village dancing and singing. They fold their blankets to form hooded cloaks and wear them on their heads. They decorate themselves with flowers and are armed with sticks and wooden swords. The dancers are called vāghyā, meaning tigers whom they symbolize. They are given a handful of grain at each house they visit. The two-line chorus they sing runs:

Give ye! Give to the vāghyā!
Let the Vāghyā protect your cows.

The collected grain is exchanged for rice and pulse which are cooked in the forest. Men eat only after an offering of the food is made to the deity representing the tiger. Women do not attend the feast.

This day is observed by non-tribals as Govatsa or Vasubāras, the twelfth day celebrated in honour of cattle. Cowherds form groups and cook and eat food somewhere outside the village, preferably on the bank of a river or a stream near by, where they take their cattle for grazing. The Thakur even when emphasizing the tiger in his term for the day, has the protection of his cattle in mind as is indicated by the couplet he sings on the occasion.

Among the Ka, it is their girls who go from village to village dancing and singing on this day. One of the girls carries a basket
filled with rice. A kind of yam (konaphaḷ) is placed in the rice and red lead is applied to the tuber and to the outside of the basket.

For the Polā festival, observed on the new moon day of the month of Shrāvaṇa (July-August), the cattle are decorated and worshipped.

The Thakur's beliefs in spirits and ghosts and his idiom about them are not different from those of the plains farmers. According to the Thakur, there are four species of ghosts. The Heḍaḷī is a female goblin, black in complexion. Heḍaḷī is the corrupt form of the standard Marathi word Haḍalī. She always appears with her head swathed in a blanket. She changes her form at will. As one Thakur reported: 'You see her walking before you. Then all of a sudden she disappears and you see flames. It is the Heḍaḷī who has turned into flames.' The Khais is a male ghost. He is white, and the stick in his hand rattles as he walks. His back is marked with a furrow-like depression, and his feet, it is said, are reversed so that the heels are in front and the toes in back. This ghost popularly called Bābā also changes form. He may grow tall or short; or he may change into a dog, a hare or even a bull. It is easy to detect him, for in whatever form he may appear, he always stinks of foul meat. The Munjā is a male ghost who never roams about alone like the Bābā, but is always in the company of half a dozen female ghosts (Bāyā) whom he leads. His skin is blue and the female ghosts wear blue saris. The elusive Saḷ is invisible and is as a breeze. He indulges in stone-throwing, thereby hurting people. These species are well known in Maharashtra.

The banyan, fig and yeḷā6 trees are the favourite abodes of male spirits, while the banyan, fig and the pāyīr7 trees are the abodes of the female spirits. The Heḍaḷī sometimes bends the branch she is sitting on with such a tremendous crack that one expects the tree to break. But this is merely her way of frightening people.

The symptoms of a person possessed of an evil spirit are headache, fever and delirium. Such a patient is taken to an exorcist. It is general belief that ghosts cannot affect one who has a piece of leather about him.

6 *Terminalia bellerica*. 7 *Ficus arnottiana*. 
The functionary bhagat or medicine-man is mentioned in this dissertation. He is a common figure in the life of many tribes, even among the plains farmers. Bhagat (medicine-man) is a very broad term. It denotes a diagnostician, a diviner, an exorcist, a medium, a physician, a priest. Many bhagats are proficient in more than one skill. The bhagat is one proficient in bhakti, which is the esoteric art of establishing contact with the supernatural and of divination. Divination is carried on through mediums who are possessed by spirits and also through others who are not possessed.

A medium is called vārekarī, a term commonly used by the plains people. Bahiri, Vêtāl, Cheḍā, and Vāghyā are the deities of which a medium is usually possessed. Although not considered essential, a drum is often played to invoke the deities. On such occasions, it is always played with small sticks and never with bare hands. A medium is considered to be particularly useful when a person is afflicted by an evil spirit. The patient is taken to him for exorcism. Besides flowers, scented wicks, camphor and other articles of worship, a lamp with five lighted wicks is kept burning on the occasion. The lamp must have five lighted wicks only. Only fresh water should be used, and the medium should wear nothing but his loin-cloth. A man, with a small sheet of cloth wrapped round his head, waves the lighted lamp before the medium. Both of them then apply rice and gulāl powder to each other’s foreheads. Someone near by sprinkles water on the medium. By and by the medium begins to shiver, which indicates that he is possessed by the deity. He then lifts up the five-wicked lamp nearly touching his chest with the flame, then puts it down. He calls out the name of the deity by whom he is now possessed, waves the lamp before the patient and talks to him. When the nature of his illness is known, the medium offers his explanation and cure. The cause is the patient’s failure to keep his vow to certain gods whom the medium names. The cure is to worship and present votive offerings to appease the wrathful gods.

A medium is also possessed during a marriage ceremony, when he is expected to convey divine benediction to the marriage party and to point out any irregularity in procedure suggesting ways of atonement.
Some diseases are looked upon by the Thakur as nothing but visitations. When a patient is brought to a medicine-man who is not a medium, the first thing he does is to find out which of his own nostrils is open. If his right nostril is clear, then the disease is due to some physical disorder and the patient is advised to try some herbal medicine. If, however, the left one is clear, evil spirits or deities are the cause of the ailment. Once it is ascertained that deities or evil spirits are active, details are determined by feeling the pulse of the patient.

There are as many pulses at the wrist as there are fingers to a hand. The one below the forefinger indicates life. If this one beats fast it may be safely presumed that the patient will not survive. The pulse below the thumb is never felt because it is dormant. The pulse below the middle finger points to displeased family deities; the one below the third finger, to the smallpox deities, and the last one below the little finger to the evil spirits. The pulse is felt on the right hand of a man and on the left hand of a woman. While feeling the pulse, the medicine-man must mark his own nostril. The belief is that if he can breathe through both nostrils simultaneously, the patient will surely die.

If the family deities are displeased, the patient is advised to apply sacred ash consecrated to these deities. If distance makes it inconvenient to get to the ash, local sacred ash is applied with a prayer. If smallpox deities are responsible for the sufferings, the patient is given strict instructions not to apply anything to the skin. The deities resent that. To divine the cause of their displeasure, the patient is asked to seek enlightenment from a medium.

If the action of evil spirits is detected, charmed ash is given to the patient. If this treatment is inefficacious, a cock or a he-goat is promised to the evil spirit responsible for the trouble and charmed ash is again applied. However, when the promise of a votive offering fails, imprecations are levelled against the callous evil spirit in the name of the god Shankar and his consort Pārvati, the accredited rulers of the spirit-world. The monkey-god Hanumān, who is believed to control the spirit-world of the village, is also invoked against the intractable evil spirit. The evil spirit
is bound by a magic formula when the votive offering is made, so that he cannot indulge in his wicked activities again.

There are two other divination methods used by a medicine-man. In one he uses a metal pot and in the other a winnowing basket. These methods, though used to trace the malignant spirits are particularly employed to seek supernatural help for solving everyday problems. When, for instance, a person or an animal is missing, it is the usual practice of the Thakur to approach such a diviner for advice.

In the first method, the diviner takes a metal pot filled with fresh water and charms it by chanting the appropriate magic formula. While chanting, he rubs some ash round the brim of the pot. He then spins the pot around, naming the evil spirits one by one. The name at which the pot stops spinning is supposed to be the cause of the trouble. When a question is asked, a similar procedure is followed, probable answers being given until the pot stops spinning.

In the second method, a winnowing basket is charmed by chanting the same formula. The diviner takes a little ash in his hand and moves his hand first across the lower surface of the winnowing basket, then across its upper surface. Next, he holds the winnowing basket in front of him in a vertical position with his left hand, and moves a finger round it, chanting the formula the while. When the winnowing basket is charmed, the diviner sees in it deities who reveal to him whatever he wants to know.

My uncle once lost his way in the jungle, and when I approached a diviner, who later gave me these details, he divined that my uncle had followed the wrong path and was somewhere in the jungle trying to find a way out. The divination, however, did not conform to fact, as my uncle was at that time safely on his way home.

The magic formula is taught to a pupil on the Phulaśā day, the fifth in the Navarātra holidays. The pupil, however, is not ready to use his art till he has performed the worship at his initiatory divination on the fourth day of Divalī, when cattle are made to jump over fire. At this worship, the teacher

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* See page 96.  
* See page 96.
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asks the pupil to name some articles hidden under small heaps of rice. It is only when the disciple has correctly named these that he is allowed to practise.

The evil eye, which is believed by a large number of tribes and other communities, is strongly believed by the Thakurs as well. No age or sex is beyond the influence of the evil eye. Even animals are not immune. Its symptoms are obvious. The affected person loses his appetite. He yearns for food but is unable to eat because of an overwhelming sense of nausea. He feels tired, suffers from headaches and his ankles become numb. The victim usually wastes away. Milch animals such as cows, she-buffaloes and she-goats are also susceptible to the affliction. Hemorrhage, a tendency to kick and decrease in the yield of milk are symptoms of the evil eye. Milk which does not curdle is also attributed to the evil eye.

The Thakur has an explanation for the origin of the evil eye. A person acquires the power of the evil eye at birth, or not at all. When the umbilical cord is cut, if the blood spurts into the eye of the infant, that eye becomes evil and has the power to affect men and animals.

Cooked rice is waved before the affected person to remove the effects of an evil eye. This is, also, a preventive measure. A woman coming to her parents with her babe in arms is subjected to this treatment by her mother at the doorsteps. There are other treatments, too, and one of them is resorted to, when an evil eye is suspected to be operating.

The Thakur believes that dreams are a medium of communication with the supernatural. The medicine-man, who plays so important a role as a diviner and as an interpreter of the supernatural will, takes a course of training only at the bidding of the deities in his dreams. So, too, does the female ritual conductor.

The Thakur believes that the supernatural conveys messages or warnings through certain happenings. For instance, a tiger passing through a standing crop, jackals barking while the harvested crop is being worshipped at the threshing floor, and the presence of a member of the Mahar caste on the threshing floor are all considered good omen. A vulture sitting on the roof is believed to portend death for some member of the family. A
little spotted owl\textsuperscript{10} (\textit{pingalā}) or the blue jay\textsuperscript{11} (\textit{tās}) crossing the path of someone on an errand is believed to indicate failure of his mission. Equally unhappy is the result of a jackal crossing one's path from left to right. A hen fluttering and raising dust as it enters the house foretells the arrival of a guest.

The most effective form of black magic is known as \textit{mūṭh mārāne}. Here the Thakur magician uses a charmed lemon as a missile to harm or kill his enemy.

The \textbf{Ka}, much more than the \textbf{Ma}, are notorious for their proficiency in witchcraft and sorcery. Their neighbours dreaded them. Mr. Govind from Kortad in Thana District told me how his ancestors drove away the Kolis who occupied the village then. The Kolis found serpents everywhere and in spite of heavy killings, the serpents grew in number. Ultimately, the Kolis left the village in despair. The magical powers of Mr. Govind's ancestors were responsible for the creation of serpents. People who claimed to have personal knowledge reported to me in 1963, a couple of stories of witchcraft-killings and one of a magician who moved about in animal form. One of them claimed to have found a lock of fresh, black hair in the ashes of a cremated person. Such stories are common in rural India and may not necessarily point to the existence of magicians. The notoriety of the \textbf{Ka} as powerful magicians and their neighbours' dread of them are both on the decline at present.

There are some taboos on animals, birds and firewood. Wood from the \textit{chāmalī}\textsuperscript{12} tree cannot be used as firewood because \textit{chāmalī} means a cobbler woman. The \textit{shūd} tree symbolizes gold, the \textit{bahuā}\textsuperscript{13} and \textit{shivan}\textsuperscript{14} trees are believed to be the abodes of deities, the holy fig tree or pipal is considered sacred, so the wood from these trees cannot be used. A parasitic plant is tabooed because it brings indebtedness to the person who burns it. Roots are not used, as their burning is believed to bring destruction in the family of orientation of the woman who burns them.

Wild birds, such as the kite, vulture, crow, \textit{bhotyā}, and the \textit{bāṇḍāthā}, cannot be eaten as they are carrion-eaters. The heron, \textit{bhringarāj}\textsuperscript{15} and the drongo shrike eat ticks and animal-lice and

\textsuperscript{10} \textit{Nocula indica}.  
\textsuperscript{11} \textit{Coracias indica}.  
\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Bauhinia varillii}.  
\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Cassia fistula}.  
\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Gmelina arborea}.  
\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Lanius malabaricus}.  


are therefore also taboo. The *sāhunki*\(^{16}\) is a pet and is not eaten for reasons of sentiment. This also applies to the sparrow. The parrot, though a pet, is eaten by some. Cuckoo eggs are hatched by crows and cuckoo flesh is, therefore, taboo.

The *sugran*, a species of the tailor-bird, the Indian wagtail or *paraṭin*, and the bat are forbidden for reasons not known. This may be because *sugran* means a skilful housewife, and *paraṭin* a washerwoman. The *pākoṭī* is believed to be propitious.

Of the wild animals, the female *rohī* and the male *niḷ* are taboo because they belong to the category of the cow. The carrion-eating jackal is thought to be unclean and obnoxious, while monkeys, as descendants of the monkey-god, are revered.

This account of the Thakur’s outlook on the supernatural may be completed by a description of some new religious practices which the Thakurs have successfully adopted more recently. The popular deity of the Hindu pantheon to whom vows are made by the plains Hindus is Satyanārāyan.\(^{17}\) The Thakurs have taken to its worship in fulfilment of a vow, and they invite a Brahmin priest to conduct the rites. A large number of guests are invited and, after the rites are over, people engage in devotional music. Some of the Thakurs have learnt narratives from the great epics, Rāmāyana and Mahābhārata and sing them to the accompaniment of string instruments. Such influences cut down the social distance between the Thakurs and their neighbours.

\(^{16}\) *Gracula religiosa.*  \(^{17}\) A form of the god Vishṇu.
Economic standards of the various members of the tribe vary but little. Poverty is the rule; and those with no debts and with enough grain to suffice for a year are considered well-to-do. Debts incurred during marriages and other celebrations are taken as a matter of course, not as a disgrace. A woman's sexual misconduct is overlooked by the husband for reasons mostly economic.

Here and there one finds a Thakur who has received a little education, or who is somewhat of a tradesman, and it is interesting to observe his behaviour. I once met a Thakur who was a carpenter by trade. He used to build houses and make bullock carts. He kept talking to me about some police officers and clerks of the revenue department who, he said, were his great friends. He was obviously trying to impress me as being an important person.

For an understanding of Thakur family life it is necessary to study the Thakur character. The Thakur is a god-fearing, peace-loving soul. The hold of the community on the individual is strong and he does not dare to oppose the wishes of the community as expressed in the decisions of the panchayat. He loves the wild life of the forest, and his love for his cattle is proverbial.

A family is usually formed of a man who is the head of the family, his wife and children. Married daughters must live with their husbands. Married sons continue to live either with the father or, if they do not get on well with their parents, they separate and make a new home. In the majority of cases, they separate sooner or later after marriage—though usually one of
the sons continues to live with the father and supports him in his old age. In such cases the establishment is known to belong to the son. The hope of inheriting ancestral property keeps sons attached to their parents, but there are only a few families rich enough to bequeath any property.

The life of an average Thakur family is not much affected by separation. Slight provocation often leads to a break-up, as the women in the family are generally not very accommodating. For instance, Navasu is the only son of his father, Mahadu Daravada. He lived separately because his wife disagreed with his step-mother. His own mother lived alone. Thus father, mother and son lived in three separate hovels in Badlapur in 1944. Today neither his parents nor his step-mother is living.

As a rule, a son affords protection to his parents in their old age. In a Thakur family where each member works, nobody is a burden to the head of the family. People consequently prefer to have their parents live with them if they are not too difficult to get along with. Economically an additional member is an asset, not a handicap. Sons who live apart and ignore their parents are rare. Nami's brothers have driven out their mother in her old age and she has great difficulty in making ends meet. A younger sister of Nami eloped with her lover and the brothers accused their mother of having encouraged the girl in her disgraceful behaviour. When I asked the old woman she protested vehemently and denied having anything to do with the matter. Usually, only dissensions of a serious nature result in a disruption between parents and the son with whom they live. Public opinion condemns a son who evades looking after his aged parents, unless he does so for grave reasons.

Spinsters and old bachelors, as well as widows and widowers who have no children, usually attach themselves to some near relative. They are generally welcome for economic reasons. Those who would break but not bend, live alone. Old Janu lives with Chango, his brother's grandson. He is a great asset to the family as he tends cattle, brings firewood, keeps watch on standing crops and looks after the children. Another Janu prefers to live alone as he does not approve of the ways of his relatives. I could discover nothing against the latter. The trouble is that old Janu is capricious.
Married brothers seldom live together, but I know of a man, Varagada by name, from Chinchavali who boasts of a family of twenty-five. He lives with his four brothers, their sons and grandsons. They are good agriculturists, employing four ploughs. Big families, however, are rare. Unmarried boys live with their elder brothers and continue doing so even after marriage, so long as the arrangement works out satisfactorily. If one of the brothers is industrious, he may feel the other is indolent and living at his expense. This is a common cause of separation, but after separation they usually stand united in conflicts with strangers.

In a Thakur family every member works, though the women bear the brunt of it. They rear children, and are in charge of the kitchen. They clean the house and the cow-pen, and after attending to the inside work, go to the fields to help their menfolk in the agricultural activities, though they are exempted from the heavier work of cultivation. They bring firewood from the forest. The men generally do the agricultural work, both the arduous and the organizational part. They attend to the construction and maintenance of the house and spend moments of leisure in enjoying the hospitality of relatives and friends. They indulge in hunting and fishing, which are not only a pastime but also a source of food supply for the family.

Raising of loans, planning the distribution of money realized by the sale of cash crops and from other major sources of income, and transactions with outsiders, these are usually attended to by the chief man in the family—the father or ‘the old man’. Cash is often entrusted to the housewife, who also manages the petty purchases and other small transactions for the family. In the absence of menfolk, women do what is usually the man’s job, or are helped if necessary by their elder male relatives. Going on errands, tending cattle and collecting manure, especially cow-dung, is entrusted to children. Old women look after younger children, the old men help in the lighter work of cultivation, spinning and keeping watch over crops. Except for very young children, every member contributes substantially towards the maintenance of the family.

In a Thakur village, nearly all the families are related. Mutual help in farm work, therefore, is easy and a common occurrence. Co-operation is more in evidence among agnates bearing the same
family-name than among others. All the Vaghs from her village helped Kamali Vagh, a widow living independently with her there young daughters, to build a hut. When members of different households work together, the oldest of the group leads and is obeyed, unless he is incapable and someone else proves he has better qualities of leadership.

The women rise earlier than the men who usually get up at about daybreak. Early in the morning, the men gather in small groups round a central fire and spend a long time smoking and gossiping, while the women clean the cow-pen and the rest of the house. Next, the women fetch water from the well and bake bread for breakfast. Charcoal was at one time generally used for cleaning teeth, but scorched tobacco is gradually replacing it. Ka Thakurs do not, as a rule, clean their teeth with anything but water. After washing their faces, the men go to the fields or to the forest to work and the boys in charge of the cattle take them out to graze.

At about ten in the morning the workers come home for breakfast, then rest, unless there is pressure of work, till about half past one when they have lunch. After the meal they go to work again and return at sunset. At the end of the day they bathe, dine, gossip and go to bed. When free of work in the kitchen, the women grind, do some other indoor work or join their men-folk in the fields. This is a normal Thakur day. Heavy pressure of field work, or some other special task such as hunting or fishing, necessitates a change in the routine which also varies according to seasons. A Thakur will never embark on an arduous or long journey without having his breakfast.

When children cry, food, or toys are used to quiet them. A gunjale, which is a ball of wax studded with gunij seeds, is suspended over a child's hammock and makes a common plaything. A bamboo frame with small stones inside it is used as a rattle. Small baskets and plates of telia grass and home-made whirlers of stalks of the Deccan hemp or of wood are given to older children.

Group life is dominant when boys and girls work as cowherds. In this age-group, games are very popular. Vagh-dhekar or 'the belch of a tiger' is an interesting game in which one of the players is the tiger while others dance and sing around him.
The game of sāgargoṭe, common among girls of the advanced classes, is known as zelkhaḍe (catching of pebbles) among the Thakurs and is played not only by girls but by boys, too. Seeds of sāgargoṭā¹ plant of fever-nuts, which are round and smooth, are used as pebbles. The game is named after the plant, and is a competition in throwing and catching the seeds in a number of complicated ways. Hide-and-seek is called dhāpaṭ-ughadī. Smaller children amuse themselves by memorizing questions and answers.

The fact that each member plays a part in running the household has resulted in a friendly family atmosphere where the conventional reservations of the middle classes are conspicuously absent. Father and son smoking together is a common sight. Abusive and obscene language is common, but causes no offence. Even children use abusive, obscene expressions naively in the presence of doting parents. Such terms have lost their edge through constant and purposeless use. Peasants the world over are known for their broad and earthy humour. No wonder if what is felt as indecent or offensive by a townsman is spoken and heard nonchalantly by the tribal Thakur.

Most abuses are rude remarks about sexual intercourse. Thakurs also base their verbal missiles on physical abnormalities, real or imaginary, and on threats to the opponent’s honour and person. Death, corpses and the funeral pyre are other sources of abuse. Human excrement is referred to so freely that the abuses based thereon have lost much of their offensiveness.

The economic activities of the Thakur, as already pointed out, are very simple, and the Thakur boy picks them up early in life. He is consequently treated by the adults as one of them at an early age, and he gains the privileges of an adult at an age when most boys in towns are at school. The lack of privacy in a Thakur house has also contributed to this. I have known a girl of thirteen to live independently with her brother aged eight and no one considered this unusual. They had lost their parents, and their uncle, who lived in a neighbouring village, did not ask them to live with him.

¹ Caesalpinia bonducella.
The Thakurs have no institution of their own for educating their young. Children receive no definite and formal instruction, but learn through imitation, play and observation. Special mention must be made of their unique koldā which are physical feats intended to test the strength and skill of the participants. They are performed during the Shimāga festival.2

The Thakur can count up to twenty with ease, and articles are counted in multiples of that number. Knots are used to aid the memory, tying and untying representing addition and subtraction respectively. The Thakur counts on his fingers, and the Ka draws lines on the wall-screens. By drawing new ones for addition and erasing a necessary number for subtraction, he manages his calculations. As is the case with many an illiterate, the Thakur is unable to tell his age. He does not know even his approximate age nor that of any of his near relations or neighbours.

Parental affection is remarkable among the Thakurs. Whenever I distributed eatables, a part was invariably carried home for the children. When someone returns from marketing, sweets are brought home for the young ones. Beating children, however, is not unusual. Parental affection decreases as a boy grows up, when he claims equal rights and status with his parents. Although a son is preferred, a daughter is never neglected. She receives the proper attention and affection. Old people in the family are not ill-treated, but there is not much genuine affection. I think the old are valued according to their usefulness. The contrast between the affection lavished on children and the indifference shown to the old agrees with the sentiment expressed in the Marathi saying ‘love runs ahead’.

A Thakur’s best friends come from the age-group to which he or she belongs. Old people, however, do not form a separate group, and exclusive groups of old men or women sitting together and gossiping are hard to find. People feel at home and indulge in heart-to-heart talk only in two groups: the family group and the group of friends. Although age is respected, people speak unreservedly in the presence of the old. Direct criticism of the

2 The festival, coming at the end of winter, begins on the full moon day in the month of Phalgun (February-March). Fire (Holi) is worshipped on this occasion.
5. A family chats after a day’s work

6. A grey-bearded bhagat engaged in the esoteric art of divination
7. Thakur women pack bundles of firewood for sale in non-tribal areas

8. A fig branch is carried ceremonially to the marriage booth
9. Traditional dress worn by Thakurs of the interior is a sign of their isolation.

10. The comparative prosperity of this Thakur couple from the non-tribal village of Badlapur is a result of social contact.
11. A youth shows his balancing skill in a *koḍki* exercise

12. A trio demonstrates a variation of the *koḍki*
aged is, however, considered impudent. People are free in their speech in the presence of women, although obscene talk is avoided.

The kitchen is the centre of family life. When friends come, they sit gossiping round the fire in the outer apartment or in the yard. If they are on intimate terms they sit near the kitchen fire. Close friends are treated as members of the family. For instance, Ambo Padir and Rama Vagh are great friends. They help each other in their agricultural activities and go hunting and fishing together. As Rama had no time to spare, Ambo once carried his mangoes for sale to Murbad, which is about eight miles away from their village. Ambo did not mind carrying the heavy load for his friend, and Rama, on his part, trusted him implicitly. Friends are always to be found together at the fireside of an evening.

The authority of the father is supreme in a Thakur household. As he grows old and the son takes full charge of the house and the fields, virtual authority passes on to the latter, the old man remaining only a ceremonial head. If he is a capable one, he also remains a guide and adviser to the family. It is considered the duty of sons to support their ‘old man’ and ‘old woman’, as the parents are called. The latter usually lives with one of her sons. The young men are addressed as ‘boys’ and the young women as ‘girls’ by parents and elders of the family.

A newly-wedded girl must obey the elders in her new home, the mother-in-law particularly. The young wife is called nayi, the new one, by the elders in her new home. As she becomes accustomed to the new environment she tries to get the upper hand. If she is domineering and the mother-in-law is yielding, the former comes into control. If both are obstinate and cannot pull together, the mother separates from her son if she is a widow, or the son and his wife remove themselves to a new home. Thus, Goma Vagh’s mother lived alone in a separate hut and returned to her son on the death of her daughter-in-law. Kusha, Kamalu Padir’s son, on the other hand, separated from his parents as quarrels between his mother and wife became unbearable. He, too,

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3 After this was written, Ambo’s son was married to Rama’s daughter.
4 She died in 1953 at Goma’s house.
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returned to his parents on the death of his wife. The wife's attitude towards her father-in-law is a mixture of respect and fear. All the same, her movements in his presence are quite free. She may remain seated even while he is standing. Within the family she is most free with her husband's younger brothers and sisters, especially those who are of her age. She is usually affectionate toward the children of the family, but keeps a respectful distance from the elders. The freedom of the newly-wedded couple is checked by the presence of elders to whom respect is due. I have seen young couples repairing to some lonely corner outside the hut to whisper sweet nothings.

A man does not worry if his wife is barren, as polygyny is an accepted practice and it is possible for him to have another wife. If a husband is impotent, his wife leaves him and takes another husband, or she commits adultery and the issue passes as her impotent husband's child. A woman does not like to indulge in constant clandestine relations, however, and prefers to leave her impotent husband sooner or later for a better mate. Her adulterous relations serve only as a prelude to a change of husbands. As it is difficult to keep her husband's impotence a secret, her adulterous relations become known and her happiness is ruined. Only when her impotent husband is rich does she hesitate to leave him.

Of the factors which determine the freedom of women, economic independence and easy divorce are the most effective. A Thakur woman is economically independent in the sense that she does not have to look to her father or husband for support. She has control over the money which she earns and may invest it in cattle for breeding purposes or in poultry and may spend it as she pleases. Sometimes her personal property, instead of giving her independence, hinders divorce when the husband does not allow a wife seeking separation to take her personal property with her. Women are generally reluctant to relinquish their self-earned property, unless impelled by strong sentiment. Very few women, however, possess enough property to prevent them from breaking with their husbands; and they do not have to consider their children, for after divorce they are reared by the fathers. Whether affection for children acts as a restraint against separation cannot be said with certainty. My observation leads
me to think that sentiment is powerless in conquering passion. I have seen women leave their unweaned children to the care of their husbands and run away with their lovers.

The socially recognized practice allowing a woman to live with her lover without going through formal marriage rites affords the Thakur woman every facility to break away from her husband. Society does not look down upon her, although chastity is honoured and a virtuous woman known for her conjugal fidelity is respected. A woman taking a new husband is not treated with contempt. Her behaviour, sooner or later, receives social sanction. Men allow their wives to speak freely with strangers unless there is reason for suspicion. Wives are not unduly disturbed when their husbands are known to be unfaithful. As long as the situation is not unpleasant enough for relations to be severed infidelity is ignored.

I know a married woman of about thirty-five who went from village to village in search of a suitable mate. Her husband had taken a second wife and, although he was prepared to maintain both, she wanted to get away from him. She failed in her endeavour, probably because she looked older than she really was, and returned disappointed to her husband. The husband doubtless beat her on her return. Today the three of them apparently live quite peacefully in Badlapur. After a while, perhaps she will again go in search of a husband, this time with more modest expectations.

There is another case of a girl who called a youth bānēṭhā—a black bird. He raped her in revenge and boasted about the incident, which he thought would vindicate his honour and regain his lost prestige among his comrades. The panchayat that followed gave the girl to him in spite of her protests and later he married her. She continued to live with him until his death. She has grown-up sons by him who are still living with her.

Kicking and beating his spouse are to the Thakur only a natural expression of the husband’s resentment. A coy girl receives a beating if she repels her husband’s advances on their wedding night. This is a common occurrence. Terrified brides flee to their parents, only to be brought back. Women tolerate being beaten, not because obedience or submissiveness is considered a virtue or a duty, but because they are physically helpless.
The custom of paying brideprice, the abandonment of which Lecky considers 'one of the first two steps taken towards the elevation of women', makes the woman 'the bought slave of her husband'. This is corroborated by Thakur thought, speech and behaviour. The Thakur thinks he has a proprietary right over his wife and he acts accordingly. In case of a divorce he resents not so much the loss of a wife as the loss of money spent in obtaining her.

Besides being in charge of the kitchen, the Thakur woman has to do much of the agricultural work. By the time she is married, a young girl is expected to be proficient in cooking as well as in the various aspects of agricultural work. Want of sufficient knowledge in either results in her receiving a beating from her husband.

Although women are consulted on important matters, only efficient or aged housewives influence decisions. If a young wife persists in arguing, a bamboo cane is used to silence her.

A woman, especially before she has had her first child, is more at home in her parent's house than in her husband's. In the first year of marriage, girls usually go to their parents' homes for most of the important holidays. I have known girls to keep some of their holiday garments—red bodice or two and some cheap jewellery—packed away in their parents' houses for their use when they visit. Freedom from constraint is reflected in their faces when they dance with their girlhood friends on such visits. Young wives, new to the village, are easily marked out by their shy manner. Many women dance only in their parent's village, choosing to remain mere spectators at a dance in their husbands' village. I once accompanied Bhau Vagh to his sister's where he was going to bring her home with him to spend a few days with their mother. She was about twenty-three years old then and had been married for three or four years. She had no children. Owing to some difficulty, the sister could not accompany us. I still remember the disappointment on her face that day. Women even forget to eat their meals in the excitement over a visit to their parents. I used to see Sakhu, aged about eighteen and married for only a year, glowing with delight on arrival at her mother's home. Before her return journey she made obeisance to the elders and took leave of friends with tears in her eyes. This sentiment, of course, weakens as the woman grows older and her attachment
to her new home intensifies, until finally, with the death of the parents, particularly the mother, the old house ceases to have much attraction. Her interest in the new home, too, grows with her growing children. Bhaú's old mother loved her children and longed to have her daughter home on a visit now and then. She also liked to see her brothers and their children come to her. But rarely did she visit her brother, and whenever she did, she was eager to return home.

The young wife is eager for her husband to take her to the forest with him. This keen desire has, perhaps, resulted from suspicion as forests are the usual rendezvous for extra-marital intrigues. She tries to curb him in his dishonourable activities but is not rebellious if she fails. Although fond of wandering, the Thakur woman is shy to go about with her new-born infant. Her parent's house is the only place where she will go with a babe in arms.

The relationship between brothers depends upon their ages. It seems the greater the difference in age, the greater their affection for each other. When the difference in age is negligible the relationship is rather formal. This is only a general observation and is attested to by my Thakur friends. Brother and sister relationship seems to be deeper. I have seen women haggling with their brothers over small transactions, but such cases are rare. A man has greater affection for the brothers and sisters who have been reared by him. He is especially concerned for those sisters whose marriages he has arranged. Bhāūbīj, in the Divlī festival, is a day for the meeting of brothers and sisters. Some Thakurs observe it, and call it Bhāūbhēṭ. On this day a woman goes to her brother, waves a lighted wick before him and presents him with a black silken waist-cord. The brother in return presents her with a sari, a piece of cloth for a bodice or some money.

The Thakur relationship terms are all standard Marathi words. Jāvaī (son-in-law), sāḍū (wife's sister's husband) and sāḍin (wife's sister) are a few relationship terms used freely as forms of address by the Thakur. They are all terms applied to in-laws whose relationship is more formal. In advanced communities of the region, however, these terms are considered impolite as terms of address and even imply disrespect.
On marriage, a woman adopts the family name of her husband. The Thakur observes patrilineal descent, so that all who have the same name are in all probability the descendants of a common forefather.

Although the Thakur relationship system is in no way a classificatory system today, a few of the relationship terms seem to point to a possibility of the existence of the system in the past. Thus, the father and the father’s brothers are addressed by the term bābā, meaning father; the mother and the father’s brother’s wife are addressed as āī, meaning mother. Outside influence has probably introduced the terms kākā and kākī for a father’s brother and his wife respectively. In Thakur usage, it is the step-father who is addressed as kākā. An uncle older than the father, however, is still addressed as bābā, his wife being āī or at times vādhāī, meaning elder mother. The wife of an uncle younger than the father, likes to be addressed as āī by her nephews. For instance, the wife of Kamalu Padir was so addressed by the sons of Kamalu’s elder brother. On inquiry, I was informed that she resented other forms of address. The husband of the mother’s elder sister is also called bābā. The mother’s sisters, however, are not called āī but māvashī, meaning mother’s sister. Again, a man is addressed as jāvaī not only by his wife’s father, but also by the latter’s brothers and cousins. Contrary to common practice, the Thakur also uses the term jāvaī to designate and to address the brothers and cousins of his son’s or nephew’s wife.

Marriage with a maternal uncle’s daughter is common. The relationship appears to be responsible for the father-in-law being addressed as māmā, which is the term for maternal uncle, irrespective of whether or not the father-in-law is the maternal uncle. Similarly, the father’s sister’s husband is called māmā, and the father’s sister is called phuī, the usual appellation for the husband’s mother. A woman addresses her sister-in-law’s husband as dādā (brother), and his son is often the prospective husband of her daughter. This potential relationship, it seems, has resulted in the parents of a man addressing the parents of his wife as

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5 This term is derived from the Sanskrit word vṛiddhā, vṛiddhā āī meaning an old mother.
Family Life

*dādā* and *vahini* (brother’s wife). A woman’s parents use the same terms to address the parents of her husband.

Cross-cousins address each other as *bhāvo* (male) and *mehuni* (female). A youth and his maternal uncle’s daughter are prospective mates, though the marriage of a girl to her maternal uncle’s son is forbidden. In spite of the taboo, the terms are used to address both the cross-cousins. *Bhāvo* and *mehuni* are commonly used terms in Thakur love-songs and are used only for real and potential in-laws.

In addition to the term *māvashī* (mother’s sister), a step-mother is called *mothī āī* (elder mother) or *dhākaṭī āī* (younger mother) according to whether she is older or younger than the mother. The Thakurs use the word āī for the grandmother. I have also heard children addressing their grandmothers as *vādhāī*, a synonym for *mothī āī*. The term *bhāvojī* is commonly used in the Marathi language to denote a husband’s brother, irrespective of whether he is older or younger than the husband. The Thakur woman, however, addresses only her husband’s elder brother as *bhāvojī* and uses the special term *bāpū* for his younger brother. While *mehuni* and *bhāvo* appear as comic figures in bawdy songs, *bāpū* figures as a helping hand in women’s songs, just as *dādā* does in men’s songs. The wife’s sister is addressed as *sādīn*, literally the wife of *sādū* (wife’s sister’s husband), used in place of the regular Marathi *mehuni*, which to a Thakur suggests familiarity. The eldest son is usually addressed by his parents and their cousins as *bābū*.

Younger people are addressed by their names while older ones are addressed in formal terms. Relatives of the same age-group do not use the formal terms of address, but call each other by their personal names. Within a family group, younger members usually use formal terms for their elders. An affine (*soyārā*), if elderly, is addressed as *māmā*. *Por* is a term of affection used for children. I have heard a woman about thirty-five years old address her husband’s younger brother in this way through affection, though she had two children of her own. Distant relatives are addressed with formality.

Some of the relationship terms of the Ka Thakur are totally different from those of the Ma. The father is addressed as *ābā*. The wife’s edler sister is addressed as *sāsū*, which is the
standard Marathi term for mother-in-law, while her younger sister is called sālī (wife’s sister). Like the grandfather, the great-grandfather, too, is called ājjyā. The grandmother is ājīs. The mother’s sister is addressed as dhākī (the younger one). The son’s wife’s parents as also the daughter’s husband’s parents, are addressed as vyāhī (male) and vihīn (female), which are standard Marathi terms. The step-father is called māvasā (mother’s sister’s husband). The husband’s elder brother is called dīr in the standard Marathi way and the younger brother, bhāvalā (brother). A younger brother’s wife, as also a son’s wife, is called ukhūs or vaḥāre. The latter term is common among the cultivator classes.

Dividing the property of the deceased is not a complex problem for the Thakur. The property, in the first place, is usually exiguous. Secondly, items such as the hut cost very little besides labour, and so are not much valued by claimants. Disputes over property or anything else are settled by the people themselves.

The property of the deceased is usually distributed on the day of the obsequies when, after dinner, the assembled people consider the different claims and give their decisions. When brothers do not separate on the death of their father but live together for some years before they decide to separate, they or one of them may assemble the villagers in a panchayat for deciding on the partition of their property. This usually happens when one or more brothers are minors at the time of their father’s death. The following account is based on twelve case histories which I have recorded.

The expenses for the obsequies are first deducted from the property of the deceased. As these expenses are high, a large portion of the usually exiguous property is reduced in order to meet them. What little remains is divided according to conventions, modified by a sense of equity. In a large number of cases, the one who performs the obsequies bears the expenses through respect for the deceased. This is also done with an eye on the deceased’s property, as the one who bears the expenses has a prior claim.

Both terms are of Sanskrit origin, one from vadhu and the other from vyāvahārikā.
As a rule, the property must go to those of the same family name. It may go to the sons or brothers or to the brothers' sons of the deceased, but never to those related to him through a daughter or a sister or a wife, even if the latter are closer relatives.

The property is divided equitably and amicably among the sons of the deceased. If the sons cannot agree, the house is pulled down and the material divided among them. Such cases, however, are exceptional, as the decisions of the panchayat carry great weight and are honoured. Cattle, grain and utensils are the main movable property to be divided. Forest plots of which the Thakurs are virtually permanent tenants are also fairly distributed. The house is usually retained by the one who undertakes to support the widow and her children. If no one is to be supported, the younger sons get more of the movable property to compensate for their share in the house which is usually retained by the eldest. The son with whom the widow and children of the deceased choose to live gets an extra maund or two of grain or an ox for he has to entertain guests. He also secures a slightly larger share on account of the dependants entrusted to his care. The addition to the share depends on the extent of the property and the number of dependants.

If the eldest son has separated during the lifetime of the father, he gets a share only if he contributes to the expenses of the obsequies. But the sons who lived with the father have the choice of accepting or rejecting his offer to contribute. If he contributes voluntarily, he has no claim to a share. Again, if a son has separated during the lifetime or after the death of the father and has not claimed any share in the ancestral property, he is relieved of the responsibility of contributing to the marriage expenses of his younger brothers and sisters. If, however, he has received a share, a contribution on such occasions is expected from him. The economic condition of the brother who has separated and the status of the family which regulates the expenses are the main factors that determine the amount of the contribution. For instance, Rama Vagh separated after the death of his father and asked for no share. All the same he voluntarily contributed forty rupees which was one fifth of the total expenses, for the marriage of Girija, his youngest brother, simply for love of him. This was in 1948.
Women are not eligible for a share. The widow usually lives with one of her sons. As her presence means an additional worker, even the most niggardly is willing to maintain her. If she cannot get on with her sons, she goes to her father or brother, or lives independently. She has a right to her personal property, her clothes and her ornaments, however.

A daughter, too, receives no share. Her brothers may give her something, perhaps a heifer, but are not bound to do so. The ornaments of an unmarried daughter are her own. She takes them with her to her new home when she marries. Those who have no sons give cattle, ornaments and utensils to their daughters during their lifetime to prevent a part of their property from falling into the hands of distant relatives. Although women are not considered eligible for a share, a widow separating from her dead husband's family obtains some grain; if the family is well-to-do, perhaps a cow from her husband's property. This is to help her start a new establishment. The Ka panchayat leaders allow a widow who seeks separation a share in the property only if they are convinced that she has substantially helped her deceased husband to acquire it. Before giving her a share, however, a serious effort is made by the leaders to persuade one of her sons to allow her to live with him. She, too, is persuaded to accept a son's protection, and the advice is usually honoured. Such occasions arise mostly when the widow seeking separation is a step-mother.

No distinction is made between the children of a wife married according to the first-marriage rites and those of a wife married according to the remarriage rites. Even the children of a wife who is not formally married are not treated differently. But the step-son of a deceased man gets no share as he belongs to a different family.

I have known of a case of adoption, but these are exceptional. The Thakur's meagre property does not permit him to harbour the children of others. Also, Thakur parents are reluctant to part with a son, even if he is one of many, and even if the transfer is in name only. An announcement of adoption is made in the presence of the villagers and the adopted inherits the property of the adopter on the latter's death. A brother's son or a paternal uncle's son is preferred by the Ka for adoption. Relatives from
the wife’s family are not considered a proper choice as they have a different family name. A sister’s son, however, though of a different family is accorded a second choice.

When a man dies, leaving behind him grandsons whose fathers are also dead, whether the property is divided per stripes or per capita is not definite. Thakur custom is not clear on the point, and there have been no such cases in living memory.

There are occasions when a panchayat has to be convened for deciding the ownership of a child. Thus, when a woman bought in auction—not sold or bought but ‘given’ is the term the Thakur uses—deserts her purchaser-husband and refuses to hand over the child to him, he seeks support from the panchayat of his village. The man gives his family name to the child though it may not be his, the wife having been bought when she was already pregnant. If she leaves him when her child is unweaned, it accompanies its mother to her new home. But she is expected to return the child to him when it is weaned. If she tries to evade this, he may, supported by the villagers, approach the woman and her new husband to demand the child. The woman is obliged to give up the child and, in addition, is made to pay a small fine. This is true of any woman deserting her husband and taking her unweaned child with her to her new home. She must return the child to its father, real or putative, when it is unweaned, if he asks for it.

When disputes about the ownership of a child arise, the panchayat decides each case on its own merits. Such cases are usually amicably settled and rarely call for the panchayat’s action. As a rule, the father is considered the rightful owner. As possession is nine points of the law, and as an additional person is an economic asset, a man is not prepared to part with his child when his wife deserts him. The wife, too, from what I have heard and observed, is completely swayed by passion and scarcely thinks of her children. For instance, Ambi left her unweaned daughter for her husband to rear when she deserted him. Again, when she returned to her husband after two years, she left her lover’s son for him to bring up. Very rarely is a mother given custody of her child against the wishes of the father. The panchayat, it seems, meets only to support the father’s rights when the mother insists on keeping her child.
The economic situation predominates over the discussions about the ownership of a child. Kamalu Daravada lived at Badlapur with his wife and their infant son. He took a second wife and left with her for Assam, where they worked as labourers for a number of years on a tea plantation. His first wife married a man from Bhivandi and with her young son went to live with him. Kamalu has now returned to Badlapur and is living there with his second wife. He cannot, I was told, demand his son from his former spouse, because in that case she would demand from him the expenses she had incurred for the boy, who is now about twelve years old. If Kamalu were in a position to pay the money and had a desire to demand the boy, he could perhaps succeed. In that case he would be faced with another difficulty. The boy would probably not like the idea of being separated from his mother with whom he has spent all his childhood, and would soon want to leave his father. As the boy is old enough to think for himself, his wishes have to be considered, too. Were the boy to separate from the father after living with him for a few days, Kamalu would lose the money as well as the boy. That may be one of the reasons why Kamalu does not move in the matter. It is certain that the panchayat cannot compel a grown-up boy to leave his mother and go to the father against his wishes, though it might persuade him to do so.
SOCIAL LIFE

The Thakurs are divided into two endogamous sections, the Ma and the Ka. The two sections look down upon one another—a common feature of the caste system in which groups are closely placed. The Ma accuse the Ka of eating beef, while the latter condemn the former as gelders of bulls. The Ka do not eat beef; nor have I known a Ma to geld bulls. The acceptance of the Brahmin priest appears to be the only and the real cause of secession.

The Ka occupy the north-west tip of Thakur territory. They are not found in the south or in the east. Wada, Mokhada and Jawhar in Thana District are the areas in which they predominate. Ma and Ka villages are distinct. Members of the two sections do not live in one hamlet.

The Thakur chooses higher altitudes for his hamlets while the Katkari prefers the foot of the hills. Fishing, the main interest of the Katkari is, according to the Thakur, responsible for the choice.

The Thakurs prefer to be left alone. Thakur hamlet is exclusive and is consequently known as thâkurvâdi, vâdi meaning a hamlet. This is a generic term, for each hamlet is usually called after the most prominent family in it. Vaghachi Vadi, Telamvadi, Padirvadi, Zuguryachi Vadi, Bhasmyachi Vadi and Dholyachi Vadi are some instances. The use of the possessive suffix ā is optional and is determined by usage. Some hamlets are known by the trees which grow on the outskirts. Thus Mohachi Vadi, Vadachi Vadi, Chaphyachi Vadi or Chaphvadi are hamlets distinctive for the respective trees. Here, too, the
use of the possessive suffix is determined by usage. Pāḍā is a generic term occasionally used as a synonym for vāḍī. Thus Ambpada and Mohapada are hamlets named after the mango and the mahua—a tree with sweet-smelling flowers. Hamlet which is more or less a suburb of the adjoining village is known as the thākurvāḍī or simply vāḍī of the village. Such a hamlet is invariably separated from the village of which it is the suburb by a considerable distance. Junavanichi Vadi gets its name from the abundance of water in the hamlet. Junī means old, and navi, new or fresh. An abundance of ‘old’ water until the advent of the fresh has given the name to the hamlet. Ambo Nirguda, the grandfather of the present headman of his hamlet, was a drunkard, it is said, and always carried bottles of liquor with him. Thus Doraka acquired the name of Batalyachi Vadi, bātalī being the word for bottle. A detached part of this hamlet is called Dagadi as it is adjacent to a rugged pass. Dagadi is derived from dagaḍ which means a stone. Many hamlets have detached sections with independent names. Thus Vaghachi Vadi, otherwise known as Mani—the neck of the forest—has a suburb called Banvadi, which shelters eighteen of the total population of eighty-eight.

The detached tablelands of the north Sahyadri, which are mainly occupied by Thakurs, have gone a long way in fostering the tendency of the Thakur to keep aloof. Even today, the Thakur from a tableland shuns aliens.

In bygone days, the general Thakur practice was to change the location of a village on the outbreak of an epidemic. The villagers would abandon the spot and shift to a new site. Any undesirable manifestation that could not be accounted for in the normal way was traced to the ominous character of the site of the village. Khairvadi on the tableland of Patgaon was abandoned, the villagers shifting to Motvadi which has since grown considerably. The shifting of hamlets was once so common, or rather considered so by outsiders, that when I approached a District Board officer from Thana with a request to sink a well in a Thakur hamlet in Murbad Taluka, the officer offered this Thakur tendency as an argument against a permanent construction.

Sometimes Thakurs move to sites which are not Government land. Such a hamlet which stands on private property is usually
known as numbervāḍī, number meaning private land. Exorbitant rates are often extorted from the villagers of such a hamlet by the landowners who, in addition, take undue advantage of their ownership to influence their tenants in many direct and indirect ways. The Thakur is made to sell his produce exclusively to his landlord. In Karjat Taluka of Kolaba District I know of conflicts arising out of the refusal of the Thakurs to sell their sweet potatoes to their landlords.

The nomadic tendency is now practically obsolete. Even the worst epidemic is no longer powerful enough to dislodge Thakurs from their hamlets. Cholera raged fiercely in Vaghachi Vadi a few years ago, but the village continues to be where it was. Smallpox attacked Lavhali and Badlapur, but people did not abandon their houses. The nomadic tendency is now observed only in the migrations of individual families of the poorer class.

An average Thakur hamlet houses about 20 families of about 100 members. Motvāḍī in Murbad Taluka comprises three hamlets and has a population of 500. Cherphalvāḍī in Kolaba District shelters 350 people in 70 houses.

The residents of a hamlet are usually related to each other, though not necessarily. This is but natural as the Thakur prefers, as far as possible, to arrange the marriage of his daughter with a youth from his own village. In Vaghachi Vadi, the Vaghs are related by marriage to the Padirs, Ughadas and Nirgudas. The Padirs in turn are related by marriage to the Hindolas. Thus, most of the people there are interrelated, even if the relationship, in some cases, be distant. Today, however, the well-to-do prefer girls from rather distant villages to avoid becoming too involved in village conflicts. Thus, Kamalu Padir arranged the marriage of his son to a girl from Karjat Taluka, while the headman of Olman married a girl from Kinhavali in Shahapur Taluka. Sometimes villagers introduce dependent relatives as new members of the hamlet. People generally move to better their prospects and do not settle in a new environment unless they have a friend or relative who would help them in need.

There are many occasions when villagers work or entertain themselves in a team. They work jointly when felling trees or
doing other odd jobs in the forest. They form a hunting party and go fishing in a group. Games and sports, dances, devotional group music and dramatic and other entertainments also bring them together. Communal teas and dinners are common. Common funds and grain banks are maintained. Immovable property is not owned in common. I have, however, heard of one exception. At Kurungvadi in Kolaba District, the Thakurs built a separate hut for dancing.

The Thakur has very little to do with his kinsfolk from distant areas. The isolation is mainly due to lack of communications. Thus a Thakur from Nasik has perhaps not met his kin from Kolaba for generations. Yet kinsmen occupying the intermediate area serve as a bond, and a feeling of oneness is maintained in the Thakur territory. With the improved communications of today, contact between Thakurs of distant places is on the increase. Literate Thakurs such as Rambhau Ughada and the late Rambhau Nirguda have travelled extensively to study and educate their backward brethren. Caste unity is also fostered by Thakur conferences now organized. I attended such a conference organized by Rambhau Ughada at which Ma Thakurs from all directions had gathered. I have also heard of a conference of the Ka organized at Jawhar. The Ma and the Ka, however, have not met yet at a joint conference.

The headman of a hamlet, otherwise called pādekhot or patil is the first resident of his hamlet. The post is an hereditary one and goes to the eldest son. The headman or patil is a social functionary who receives social honours, but is not recognized by the Government. Those few of the patils who happen to be police patils are recognized by the Government in this capacity. Each Thakur hamlet, small or large, has a patil, while a police patil is found only in a revenue village. Thus each Thakur hamlet of Patgaon has its own Thakur patil, though there is only one police patil for the whole area which forms the revenue village of Patgaon. Patgaon has no Thakur patil, but such villages are exceptional and are of mixed population. They are served by the non-Thakur patil. In case a hamlet shifts and amalgamates into a neighbouring village, its patil continues to hold the office and work for the new settlers. Thus, Motvadi today comprises three hamlets and has three patils with distinct areas of jurisdiction.
Though the patil is necessarily a Thakur, being the head of a Thakur hamlet, the police patil is not necessarily so.

The duties of a patil are diverse. As head of the hamlet, he has to receive and look after government servants and distinguished guests. He is also expected to honour the guests and the people of the hamlet with a dinner and a tea party at every wedding performed in that hamlet. He must invite villagers to dine with him on the annual day of obsequies (pitar day) and once again on the full moon day which opens the Shimagā festival announcing the advent of summer. The first of these dinners is called pitartāt bharane—filling up the dishes of the ancestors. Articles of worship for the Holi fire,¹ such as bangles and coconut are provided by the patil. A hen to be sacrificed to the Holi fire is also provided by him.

To compensate for the duties and expenses to which he is put on account of the village, the patil has some honours and the right to get free labour on certain occasions. Thus it is his privilege to perform the main worship of the Holi fire and to ask people to arrange the wood for the Holi fire. He also has the privilege of worshpping the Bhondai pot and the tipari sticks of Bhondai girls during the Navaratra festival.² The stale flowers of the Bhondai pot are thrown on the patil's house each day and on the last day are tied to a stalk of paddy in the patil's field. This is done to bring good luck to the patil and to the village which he represents. He, in return for the honour done to him, gives a bundle of paddy stalks to the Bhondai girls. At every wedding performed in the village, the bridegroom's party has to honour him with a present of half a rupee and a coconut. At each panchayat meeting in his village, he gets a rupee or so according to the amount of the fine recovered. The payment is called pāṭlāchā mān, or honour done to the patil, and is a first charge on the amount to be distributed. If a big panchayat is held outside the village, he is honoured with a small payment there, too.

Most important of all the honours are those done to him by the Bhondai girls and musicians. When the Bhondai girls visit a village, they first sing at the patil's house. The patil is praised in Bhondai songs for being indulgent with his villagers. When

¹ See f.n. 2 on p. 112. ² See f.n. 3 on p. 96.
musicians are invited to a Thakur hamlet, they do not attend to their patron until the patil is first honoured. Itinerant entertainers must first give a performance at the patil’s house to honour him, before proceeding on their round of the village.

In recognition of the honour, the patil serves to those who come to honour him tobacco. Tobacco, however, is not served to the Bhonḍāi girls, who are not supposed to smoke. In the absence of the patil, his wife attends to guests.

The patil gets free labour from the villagers on three occasions in the year: for transplantation; for harvesting; and for collecting hay for burning of the fields for sowing. An additional day is exacted by some patils for cutting and collecting twigs for the burning of soil. One person from each family joins the party of workers who rarely work full-time. They begin work late and return rather early, hardly putting in six hours work. They are fed by the patil twice a day: bread at lunch and rice and curry in the evening on return from work. During the collecting of hay, in addition to food, the patil pays the party of workers a rupee, with which amount jaggery is bought and eaten in the evening. The balance, if any, after buying jaggery is spent on tea.

The duties and privileges of a patil make it clear that the honour is too expensive for one of modest means. When life was simple, as in the past, one did not mind giving half a dozen dinners to villagers in the course of a year. The honour was deemed worth the expense. Not all men can hope for the patil’s post, which is hereditary. Girls aspired to be the wife or one of the wives of a patil. That used to be, until recently, the ambition of all good-looking girls. A vulgar saying suggests that a woman may not be unwilling even to be gossiped about in this connexion. As among the non-tribal people of the plains, this social designation is many times used as a surname substituting the family name; else it is added and put between the personal and family names. Thus, Chango Vagh may be addressed as Chango Patil or Chango Patil, Vagh. The former form shows respect; the latter is used in writing. The term pādekhot is not used in this way. All this shows how highly esteemed is the patil’s position. I know how elated Nagi was when she married Chango Patil, who already had a wife and a young son. She felt so important when I addressed her as pāṭilīnāī (patil’s wife).
The hitherto exclusive and privileged position of the patil is now shared by the well-to-do and the educated. The prohibitive cost of living is making it difficult for the patil to cope with the many heavy responsibilities placed on him. Patilship consequently is today considered an honour not worth undertaking. This is true more about the pādekhāto, the socially recognized headman of a Thakur hamlet, than about the police patil of a revenue village, whether Ma, Ka or a non-Thakur. The latter has opportunities to exploit his position and the ignorance of the people in his charge for self-aggrandizement.

Many times, through poverty or for some other reason, a patil desires to relinquish his office. Then the villagers get together to make a new selection. An influential person in the village accepts the patilship because his position already forces him to give hospitality to guests and, the expenses being inevitable, he prefers to be the patil and take advantage of the honours and the bond labour which go with the office. Jaitu Padir of Padirvadi relinquished his office through poverty. The post then passed to his brother Kusha, who lived with his three younger brothers. After a while, the brothers separated. The youngest brother preferred to keep away from the affairs of patilship, which was claimed by the remaining three. The guests were entertained by whichever host they chose. The three days of bond labour were divided among the three so that each got a day’s labour. Such arrangements, however, are exceptional, the patilship normally going to the eldest brother, unless he chooses to reject it.

Widespread poverty has resulted in general curtailment of entertainment. The occasions for treating villagers are reduced and the number of invitations is curtailed. Even if invited, only near relatives and close friends attend. Others are reluctant to do so. Thus today, even when all are invited, it is implied that only the intimate should attend. Although he sends out a general invitation, the patil prepares food for only a few. Social custom has yielded to economic conditions.

At Patgaon where there is no Thakur patil, most of the honours are done to the non-Thakur patil, although he does not treat Thakurs to dinner during Thakur weddings and on other formal occasions. He used to exact bond labour from the resi-
Thakurs of the Sahyadri
dents of Patgaon, both Thakur and non-Thakur, as long as he was the police patil of the area.

This labour is a sort of remuneration for the service which the patil offers to the village. It is known as bond labour (veth), but the term, it seems, ignores the patil's duties and responsibilities to the villagers and does injustice to him by implying exploitation. From 1947 the patils in Patgaon and its hamlets have stopped 'exacting bond labour'. They have also stopped entertaining villagers. However, they continue to be honoured as the first villagers of their respective hamlets.

The Bhat\(^3\) is a bard who serves the Ma Thakur community. He used to visit the Ka and collect a traditionally fixed payment from every patron in whose family a marriage was performed. The Bhat no more visits the Ka area. At present his place is taken by hermaphrodites. Two of them from Jawhar visit the Ka area and are paid a rupee and about two kilograms of rice by the bridegroom's father and half as much by the bride's. They collect two annas from every other household. The Bhat's is considered a non-tribal untouchable caste. Members of this caste are found living near Nasik. Like the Brahmans each Bhat family has a number of villages wherein its members have a hereditary monopoly to practise. This monopoly, though not recognized by law, is yet honoured by custom. The Bhat sings the praises of his patrons belonging to the area assigned to him. As we are not concerned with his non-Thakur patrons, to whom he offers a similar service, we shall restrict our study to his relations with Thakurs. He is supposed to be the recorder of their history and their past glory. He is also supposed to know their various family-trees and the exogamous status of different families. His knowledge of these things today is, however, very meagre. His is a caste of bards and his knowledge is derived through oral instruction from his father.

The Bhat is uneducated and backward. I once visited a Bhat with the eager expectation of obtaining valuable information. Not being used to the visits of a 'white-clothed' gentleman he was, it seemed, frightened at seeing me approach. To my

\(^3\) Pronounced bh\(\text{\textipa{at}}\).
great disappointment, I found him very reticent, though he was more responsive at our second meeting.

The Thakur family names that he recited were, far from being exhaustive, only a short list. He assured me that no Bhat knows all the names. 'That is humanly impossible', he said. 'There are hundreds of family names, and how is it possible for one person to know them all?' He recited the customary laudatory phrases, a sort of preamble to the list of names which followed. But, he could give me no more information.

The Bhat visits his patrons every year at harvest time. Reeling off a string of praises, he proceeds from house to house collecting grain and money. For marriages performed in a patron's family during the year, he has a right to collect taxes: a rupee for the first marriage and a half for a remarriage, besides a broom and a coil of hemp-string. The right is sanctioned by custom and acknowledged by the patrons. A bodice is at times given instead of half a rupee.4

The impoverished Thakurs are now reluctant to honour the Bhat, who naturally has practically given up visiting his Konkan patrons. He goes round only in his own neighbourhood and collects whatever his patrons offer him. One Bhat told me that the amount of grain he collected in the year 1943 was about two maunds.

Besides the poverty of the patrons, there are other factors which have contributed toward the weakening of this practice. The younger generation of the Bhats prefer local work, not hereditary itinerant practices. The outlook of the Thakur is constantly changing due to the ever-growing contact with the outside world. Becoming less conventional, he is not inclined to honour the practice. Yet another reason offered by a literate Thakur is that the visiting Bhat is often an imposter. The Bhat, as is natural, ascribes the weakening of the practice to no other reason but the poverty of the patrons.

At the annual Thakur fair at Borli in Nasik District, the Bhat is in attendance at the panchayat meeting and summons the Thakurs who are required to appear. For his services he has a right to a share in the amount of fines recovered. People from

4 N. G. Chapekar, op. cit., p. 145.
a distance are summoned by members of the families to whom messenger's work is traditionally assigned.

The literate Thakur who explained to me why the practice of honouring the Bhat is weakening, also told me the origin of the practice. According to him, the Bhat appeared on the scene when the Thakurs first walked down the Sahyadri, centuries ago. When the migrants reached Talavali at the foot of the mountain, they held a panchayat to discuss future plans. A Bhat woman waved a lighted wick before them. The Thakurs gave gifts to her and a few who had nothing to present, cut off their heads as offerings. The assembly granted the Bhat woman a boon that she and her descendants should ever be honoured at Thakur weddings, and since then the custom has persisted. The Bhat is also honoured if he happens to visit a threshing ground, because, as the Thakur says, he is the original title-holder.

According to a literate Thakur, it is not the area but the family which is the basis for the Bhat's jurisdiction. The Bhat, according to him, ought to know the affines and consanguines of his patrons. As he is not able to do so now, his Thakur patron is unwilling to honour him.

The theory about the origin of the Bhat's rights presents some obstacles. In the first place, the Bhat comes from the ghats and has monopoly rights in the ghat districts. He visits the Konkan only occasionally, and as a foreigner. The theory also fails to explain why the Bhat should be patronized by non-Thakurs even in exclusively non-Thakur villages.

I think the Bhat must have been attached to this community since or even before its historic migration. Waving a lighted wick must have been his duty as a bard, and the honour is done to non-Thakurs as well as to Thakurs. It being customary for his women to wave a wick before members of higher castes, they must have extended the honour to Thakurs. Some generations ago, the Bhat probably knew more about this community than he does today. The poverty of the patrons resulted in the Bhat's neglect of his hereditary profession. He now treats it as a mere secondary avocation. Although the relations of the Bhat with the community appear to be of historical significance, today he is rapidly disappearing from Thakur social life.
It is said that the Bhat does not accept money or other remuneration from members of the Kadali family. This seems to be a special privilege of the family; the reason is unknown. I inquired of a Kadali about this privilege, but he emphatically claimed that he himself had paid his Bhat on several occasions.

Although there is no organized hierarchical system of government among the Thakurs, one of the main governmental functions, the administration of justice, is handled by the traditional Thakur panchayats. The panchayat is the sole recognized indigenous way of dealing with flagrant and venial offences. Although it is helpless against an alien aggressor, the panchayat has always been powerful enough to enforce its decisions upon members of the caste. The Thakurs use the same term, panchayat, to denote a meeting convened for propaganda.

The Thakur, as a rule, does not take the law into his own hands, nor does he run to Government courts to seek justice. He looks to the panchayat for redress if the culprit be a member of his own caste and, considering himself helpless, accepts the wrong done to him if the latter be an alien.

When Thakurs feel they have been wronged, they gather together their supporters and proceed to accost the offender. When they reach his village, the accused gets his villagers to support him. The two parties then meet in a panchayat and proceed to investigate. Sometimes the party offended is not interested in proceeding against the offender and, in such cases, the initiative is taken by the leaders of the area. The leadership is arbitrary. A garrulous swashbuckler is considered the best leader. Neither his economic status nor a reputation for integrity is considered important. Twelve villages (bārā pāde) form a unit for the purposes of the panchayat. The stock phrase speaks of twelve villages, but rarely are they twelve. The actual area is traditionally determined. Each Thakur hamlet forms part of some such unit. Villagers from all the hamlets that make up the unit are invited to, and have a right to attend and participate in, the proceedings of a panchayat which concerns a person living in a village from the unit. Even non-Thakurs from the area are invited to attend. I have seen non-Thakur headmen taking an active part in Thakur panchayats, bullying and bossing, perhaps taking advantage of their position.
This is how a panchayat starts. A rumour goes about that a certain person has committed a breach of social convention. When some of the leaders meet casually they discuss the matter and decide to call a panchayat. It is easy to call other important people for consultation as the villages of the unit are not widely separated. The leaders fix a day and send word to all the villages concerned. The Dora, Shid and Gavanda families are the messengers. The panchayat invariably meets in the afternoon at the village of the accused.

Usually the offence is merely an irregularity by Thakur standards, which the panchayat is ready to condone on payment of a fine. What may be a flagrant crime to us does not necessarily appear so to the Thakur. Thus adultery, for example, which to us is a serious matter, is only a venial offence to the Thakur, or perhaps only the first step towards changing husbands.

Although everybody has a right to be present, only those who can spare the time actually attend. Generally, women do not attend, though on occasion I have found elderly women participating in the discussions. They are especially interested when the conduct of a woman is being considered.

The proceedings are opened by a leader from among the guests who explains the charge against the accused. Discussions then follow and sometimes become very heated. The fellow-villagers of the accused support him with all the wit at their command and refute the charge or, when that is not possible, try to minimize the gravity of the offence and the amount of the fine. If the offence be a common one and the fine is conventionally fixed, there is not much dispute. Otherwise there is a great argument. Parallels are cited and circumstances—extenuating ones by the friends of the accused and aggravating ones by others—are advanced. Guests sometimes come armed with sticks to meet any emergency! An occasion to use them, however, rarely arises.

There is no discipline and both sides talk simultaneously. The elders try to keep order, so that ultimately a compromise acceptable to all is reached. In most cases, the discussion centres on the fine which, once fixed, is immediately paid.

A panchayat is expected to take cognizance of any irregular conduct. One involved in an affair that invites a panchayat,
therefore, anticipates it and is prepared to face the trial. A panchayat is one of the main occasions that make the Thakur appeal to the money-lender. I helped Pilya Padir of Patgaon to secure a loan of Rs. 100 because a girl from the consanguineal family of Nirgudas had forced herself into his house after his younger brother, and he expected a panchayat to meet as a result.

When an attempt is made to avoid payment of the fine, various measures are adopted to force compliance. A social boycott is the most effective method. For instance, at an obsequial dinner at Olman, the recalcitrant residents of Tagvadi were served their meal apart from the others, with the result that they were shamed into offering immediate reparation. Drastic measures are also taken if necessary. The house of the defaulter is broken open and ravaged at the panchayat's command. His barn is forced open and the fowls seized to feed the assembly. In extreme cases, the house is set on fire.

The remuneration of the messenger (shipāī) is the first charge on the amount recovered as fine. This is normally Rs. 1·25, unless the fine is meagre in which case it is less. The police patil is next paid the same amount. The different villages are then paid. Each village receives an equal share, the amount of which depends on the sum available for distribution. I have heard of villages receiving Rs. 5 to half a rupee as their share, which is paid either to the headman or, in his absence, to some other elderly man from the village. Distribution is usually made by an elderly leader from the prosecuting party. What remains after all these functionaries and dignitaries have been paid is spent in feasting the assembly. The messenger is dispatched to make the purchases.

Money received by a village as its share is added to the common fund, which, as already mentioned, is spent on a common tea or in buying a goat for the villagers.

The circumstances that call for a panchayat are diverse. The majority of the cases concern irregular sex relations, partition of property being next on the list. Cases of assault and battery, and of sorcery and witchcraft are comparatively few.

The partition of property has been already discussed in the ninth chapter. As for irregular sex relations, the gravity of the offence depends upon the nature of the irregularity. Generally,
it may be said that sex relations which are a prelude to marriage are treated in a routine way, while sex relations violating the rules of exogamy and the established moral code are treated severely.

The most innocent sex offence is that of the unmarried youth who takes his fiancée to the jungle for amorous adventures and boasts about it. This usually happens when poverty makes marriage impossible. Jaitu did this, having no money to marry Bacchi. He paid the fine and Bacchi was 'given' to him by the panchayat. Although they were not married, they lived together as husband and wife. A woman forcing herself into the house of her lover creates a situation, the gravity of which depends upon her matrimonial status. If she be an unmarried girl, a divorced woman or a widow, the case is simple. Such a woman is called sadī or rikāmī, a woman unencumbered by a partner. She forces herself into the house of her lover only because her people do not approve of the match. If the relatives are not hostile, such a pair may be married and avoid the fine and the ignominy attached to elopement. After the payment of the customary fine, the pair may continue to live as husband and wife without social reproach, and marry when circumstances permit.

At the panchayat meetings, a patient hearing is given to the parents or guardians of an eloping woman. They are also helped to take back the woman under their care on payment of a small fine, which is made for their negligence in keeping proper control over the woman. Bacchi's brothers refused to give her to Jaitu unless he consented to marry her, and they retained her after paying a fine of Rs. 5. It was only when Bacchi forced herself into Jaitu's house that they yielded. Jaitu paid Rs. 5 to the panchayat for keeping Bacchi whose brothers told the panchayat that she was as good as dead to them.

Kamali, a widow aged 34, had three daughters, the eldest of them, 14, being recently married. One of Kamali's brothers-in-law obliged her by finding a suitable match for her. He was a ploughman, a widower living with his step-daughter.

Kamali intended to marry her ploughman by the remarriage rites after the agricultural season. But after living with her for

5 Bacchi died some years ago and Jaitu has married again.
about a month, the ploughman left her and went to his former home. He did not return and, it was said, had no desire to do so. During the time he was with Kamali, he managed to seduce two wives of his cousin and left the then pregnant Kamali, who was dismayed at his desertion. Later she gave birth to a girl. Kamali’s eldest daughter bitterly resented her mother’s action. When she visited her mother, she did not exchange a single word with her would-be step-father. The man was missing for a long time and was next heard to have eloped with the two women—the wives of his cousin. No panchayat ever met to accuse him on behalf of Kamali. Kamali, who earns her own living, was not very anxious to pursue him. The panchayat took no action, first because the man concerned was missing, and afterwards, when he was traced, probably because the matter had become stale and his new adventure had eclipsed it. Kamali’s case shows the weakening of the influence of the panchayat. A few years ago such an offender would have been dragged out of hiding and held responsible for the child.

A complex problem is presented when a married woman elopes with her lover. In such a case the husband and his supporters approach the lover and, in the panchayat that meets at the latter’s village, demand an explanation. The lover’s usual plea is that he has no intention of seducing or stealing the wife, but has simply extended asylum to the unhappy woman at her request. He may even assure the panchayat that they can take charge of the woman at any time and that he has no desire to prevent them from doing so. If he is really in love with the woman, he tells a different story. He says the woman has left her husband’s protection and has come to him of her free will and that he intends to extend his protection to her. He gives an assurance that he is prepared to honour custom and pay the usual fine. The woman is next accused. Her usual answer is that she is tired of her husband’s ill-treatment and that she will not go back to him even if she is threatened with death. The husband who has repeatedly brought his wife back and who has failed to persuade her to remain, has already given her up as beyond redemption, and is no longer anxious to take her back. In fact, it is only as a last measure that he thinks of the panchayat and of compensation. A panchayat, therefore, implies separation
and everybody knows that the woman is to be 'given' to the lover and that the only question to be settled is the amount of the fine.

To this question the assembly now turns its attention. If the woman has fled straight from her husband’s home, the case is considered more serious than if she has been separated from her husband for sometime and has now come to her lover from her father’s protection. Though normally the fine is Rs. 36, the amount may be increased to Rs. 100 if there be an incestuous element or a violation of a rule of exogamy.

The educated among the Thakurs deplore this practice of sanctioning a change of husband, which they feel is humiliating. The Sakadbaw conference of Thakurs passed a resolution that a woman who deserts her husband should never be 'given' to her lover, but if reconciliation between husband and wife is impossible, she should be allowed to divorce and then remarry a person of the panchayat’s choice. The resolution aimed at safeguarding the economic interest of the husband in his wife and at preventing a man from seducing a married woman and getting her for the paltry sum of Rs. 36, of which the husband, who has spent about Rs. 100 for his marriage, receives only Rs. 20. The economic purpose could have been served as well by making the lover pay full compensation to the husband. In practice payment of full compensation would probably be hard to enforce. To make divorce for a married woman difficult and marriage with her lover impossible is considered a sure way of keeping married women from changing husbands with the ease of film stars. The woman is not allowed to marry the man of her choice even after divorce only to ensure against the privilege of divorce being abused. Rambhau Ughada told me of two cases where he threatened the woman who eloped with excommunication when she declared in the panchayat that she would not go back to her husband even under threat of death. With all her brave words, however, when the specially summoned Mahars were asked to take her into their charge, she flinched and, finding the panchayat unrelenting, ultimately

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6 Giving a woman over to Mahars, who were considered ‘untouchables’, was tantamount to excommunication. See p. 152.
lost courage and returned to her husband. The measure thus seems to have yielded good results, though it is not known whether the couple is living peacefully or is still having trouble.

It is a time-honoured practice for a man to extend asylum to a married woman and then to secure social sanction for their sex relations by the payment of a fine to the panchayat, and a legal and religious one by performing the rites of remarriage. During the interim—her leaving her husband and her remarriage—the woman lives with her lover and has adulterous relations with him. There is, however, nothing clandestine about the sex relations which are considered more pre-nuptial than adulterous. In the light of this Thakur attitude, it is strange that Damu should have been indicted for adultery and sentenced to four months' rigorous imprisonment. His plea that he was prepared to pay a fine according to custom did not stand. I have not heard of any other case in which the husband was not satisfied with the machinery provided by his society to deal with his grievance and insisted on going to a court of law. Probably, the man whose wife eloped with Damu was instigated by touts. The court of law, however, failed to give him his wife. She stayed with Damu in spite of the sentence. Resorting to a criminal court merely deprived him of a little compensation which a panchayat would have secured. Competent lawyers tell me that had Damu's case been properly presented he would have had a fair chance of acquittal.

So far I have considered irregular sex relations which almost always receive social sanction and later develop into marriage. A more serious view is taken of the pregnancy of an unmarried girl, a divorced woman or a widow. In the panchayat called to deal with such a case, the woman is asked to name the man responsible for her condition. If she keeps silent, third degree methods are used to extort a confession from her. She is made to stand on a heated frying pan, or the nipples of her breasts are squeezed with pincers. To end her torture, she names a man and the panchayat proceeds to examine how far it may rely on her word. This is to ensure against an innocent man being unjustly dishonoured and persecuted. If the general opinion of the members is that the woman is lying and trying to save the culprit by misdirecting the panchayat to an innocent
scapegoat, she is severely tortured. She may be stripped and
whipped. If necessary the man whom she names is also beaten
in an attempt to get the truth from him. If the man she names
accepts responsibility, the panchayat is naturally saved all the
trouble of identifying the culprit.

There is a women's song which describes the sequel of an
irresponsible pregnancy:

Now did the imbecile sister
Become big with child.
Word was sent round
And people gathered in crowds.
The meeting started
And the woman was questioned.
Then whose name did she give?
That of the village patil!

Once the culprit is ascertained, the panchayat examines the
gravity of the offence. If the pregnant woman and the culprit
could and should have been married but for reasons of poverty,
or the opposition of elders, the sinners are redeemed on pay-
ment of a fine. They then marry as soon as circumstances
permit. When a Paradhi woman, a widow from Wangani, be-
came pregnant by an unmarried youth of the same village, he
was fined Rs. 15 and allowed to live with her.

The Ka recover a fine of Rs. 12 from such a culprit and allow
him to take the pregnant woman as his wife. The couple simply
lives as husband and wife and no rites are performed.

Matters seldom go as smoothly as this, however. The man,
in the majority of cases, is not prepared to have the woman
even when there is nothing to prevent the match. Under the
circumstances, the panchayat has two alternatives. It may com-
pel the sinner to accept the woman or may make him pay a
heavy fine and give the woman to someone of its choice. The
former course, I was told, is never followed, probably because
the panchayat knows the futility of forcing partnership on the
unwilling, or perhaps because the offence of the man is not con-
sidered as grave as that of the woman. However, when the man
refuses to take the woman, he is fined and an attempt is made to
find someone willing to have the woman. The amount of the
fine is normally about Rs. 25, and the man who gets the woman has
to pay something to the panchayat. The amount normally varies
from Rs. 5 to Rs. 15. Often, the woman is auctioned and given
to the highest bidder. The bidding naturally depends upon the
age and charm of the woman. The economic interest of the highest
bidder is quite secure for if the woman leaves him—and often she
does—for a lover, the latter has to compensate for the loss to
the abandoned husband before receiving social recognition as the
new husband.

Among the cases of illegitimate pregnancy, the most serious
are those wherein a rule of exogamy is violated or an incestu-
ous relationship suspected. The latter is considered by far the
more serious. When the sinner is found to be guilty of one of
these crimes, he is treated in the same way in which an unwilling
paramour not belonging to any of the forbidden classes is treated.
The man is fined and the woman auctioned or given away as the
panchayat decides. A woman from Chinchavali became pregnant
by her deceased husband's younger brother. The latter treat-
ed the panchayat to liquor, offered a goat and paid Rs. 10 as a
fine. The woman was then sold by auction. When a woman
conceives through an incestuous relationship, or when the conduct
of the woman during the proceedings is annoying, the panchayat
may, to teach her a lesson, give her to an old man. This has,
however, very little practical effect, except that the woman is
held up to ridicule, since she can leave the old man whenever she
chooses. She may live with him only till she succeeds in finding
a more suitable match for herself.

When the rules of exogamy are violated or sex relations are
incestuous, the panchayat exacts large fines. Thus when a
Mengal wanted to marry a Mengal girl he was heavily fined before
being allowed to do so. Recently I heard Thakurs criticize this
procedure. 'A sister is a sister for ever. How can a fine, how-
ever heavy, change her status?' was their argument. There
was also a strong feeling that social sanction should be refused to
this unconventional union and that the girl should be sent back
to her parents, sold by auction, or even excommunicated.

Daji and his brother's widow lived as husband and wife.
He was fined Rs. 100 by the panchayat, which thus virtually
sanctioned his incestuous sex relations. N. G. Chapekhar has
recorded two instances of incestuous relations awaiting action by a panchayat. One concerns sexual relations between a mother and her son, and the other between a brother and sister. I also have on record a case in which a young man had sex relations with the daughter of his paternal uncle. In this case, the panchayat beat both the offenders, fined them and warned them to behave. All the same, the two ran away to Bhivandi and lived there as husband and wife. Another case I came across was that of a woman who eloped with her husband’s brother’s son. The panchayat was helpless against them as they escaped to a distant tea plantation.

If a woman becomes pregnant by a man from a village of some other unit the panchayat is helpless, as outsiders can be taken to task only for harbouring married women. Under such circumstances, which are extremely rare, the panchayat can do nothing except auction the woman.

Panchayats called to deal with women who have become pregnant as a result of obviously unlawful sex relations, or with married women who have eloped with their lovers, attract the largest attendance. These panchayats bring together people from both the units—those of the wronged husband’s unit and those of the lover’s who gather to support him. Thus, such panchayats are attended by two police patils and people from a maximum of twenty-four villages. Both patils are paid their customary shares as are also the villages represented at the panchayat.

The general Thakur tendency is to hush up such matters as fornication and thus prevent a crisis. Fornication gets or rather is purposely given publicity, as in the case of Jaitu, only when the relations are intended to develop into marriage. Otherwise those who happen to be in the know are bribed into silence. This is also the case with adultery. When a woman elopes with the intention of changing husbands, she lives with her lover and openly indulges in adulterous relations with him; but in the case of clandestine relations where the woman has no intention of leaving her husband, nor the lover of taking the woman as his wife, people are silenced with a little hush-money.

Thus when an unmarried boy from Patgaon was caught in the company of a married woman of the same village, the villagers assembled in a panchayat and recovered a fine of Rs. 25 from the boy’s father. Nothing was done to the girl, it seems, because she had no father to hold responsible. The girl lived with her mother, who was a poor widow. It was presumed that the case was considered as being closed by everybody concerned. The villagers were expected to keep the affair to themselves, but I heard the story from people of the adjoining villages and it may have even reached the ears of the husband.

When a woman is forced to have intercourse she usually keeps silent through humiliation. If she complains, or the incident is made known some other way, a panchayat meets to deal with the case. As usual, the culprit is let off on payment of a small fine, unless he wants to marry the woman, in which case that proposition is given full consideration.

Molestation of women is sometimes exaggerated to extort greater fines. I remember a big panchayat which once met at Vaghachi Vadi a few days after the Dasarā festival. About fifty Thakurs from a nearby area, headed by their non-Thakur police patil, tried to accost the Thakurs of Vaghachi Vadi because the boys had misbehaved with the girls of their village. These girls had visited the area on a Bhondāi round, it seems. The specific charge was that the boys threw lechā—seeds that stick to clothes—at the girls, in spite of the decision of the caste against this practice. There was also a rumour that a girl had been molested. The people of Vaghachi Vadi mustered in strength as the panchayat took a serious view of the matter. The non-Thakur police patil of Patgaon was also present as Vaghachi Vadi is in his jurisdiction. The youths who were accused of having misbehaved were brought from the forest where they were tending cattle, and the girls who complained of molestation were asked to identify them. The atmosphere was tense. The guests demanded Rs. 60 by way of a fine. The Thakurs of Vaghachi Vadi were prepared to pay only Rs. 1.25 and have done with the affair. The guests then reduced their demand to Rs. 40 which they put down as their minimum. The Patgaon patil explained the seriousness of the charge: 'A girl has been molested by these boys', he said, 'and if a complaint
is lodged in the court, the charge is so serious that the accused will not even get the benefit of bail. It is a serious case and I, as patil, will have to take cognizance of the complaint, if lodged with me, and report to the police officer or take the accused to Murbad’. So he advised the Vaghachi Vadi Thakurs to compound the case and have done with it.

The Thakurs of Vaghachi Vadi refused to accede to the unreasonable demand of the guests and stuck to their offer of a rupee and a quarter. The meeting ended without coming to a decision and the guests left, threatening the Thakurs of Vaghachi Vadi with dire consequences. They had all come armed with sticks to meet any emergency.

Later I heard that the guests and other villagers were exaggerating the boys’ mischief to extort money and that they were deterred in their attempt by my presence at the panchayat.

So far I have discussed the methods by which Thakur panchayats treat various types of unlawful sex relations. The tariff of fines for these offences is practically fixed. It may vary from place to place but the change is not appreciable as the economic conditions of Thakurs are more or less uniform in all parts of their habitat. Circumstances which invite deviation from the general rule will be considered later. Given below are the amounts of fines, determined by convention, for various offences.

1. Fornication Rs. 15
2. Harbouring a married woman with the intention of getting her to divorce her first husband and marrying her, if the woman was married to the abandoned husband by the first-marriage rites Rs. 60
3. The same offence, if the woman was married to the abandoned husband by the remarriage rites Rs. 36
4. For having illicit relations resulting in the pregnancy of an unmarried woman, a widow, or a divorced woman Rs. 25
5. Incest or intercourse with a woman from a consanguineal family Not determined, but may extend to Rs. 100

6. Incest or intercourse with a woman from a consanguineal family when such relations result in the pregnancy of the woman Rs. 100

7. Adultery Rs. 5 to Rs. 40

8. Rape Rs. 25

Fines are paid either as hush-money or else to set a seal of approval on unlawful sex relations. Thus, when a fine is paid for harbouring a married woman, it is not paid so much for harbouring her as for receiving social sanction for the change of husbands. If the woman is not allowed the change she desires, but is sent back to her husband, the lover goes free or, if fined, the fine is not very heavy. In the latter case he would probably have to face a charge of adultery.

Of the Rs. 36 paid by a man who wants a married woman for his wife, Rs. 21 are paid to the abandoned husband. Of this, Rs. 20 are paid as reimbursement of the brideprice and Re 1 as compensation for the gaṛa— the insignia of wifehood. After his remarriage with the woman, the man sends this rupee to the abandoned husband. Rs. 15 go to the panchayat. When the woman is sent back to her husband, therefore, the question of reimbursing the husband does not arise. The lover consequently can put himself right with the panchayat by paying a maximum fine of Rs. 15. Even when Rs. 60 are recovered from the lover, the husband is given only Rs. 21, the remainder accruing to the panchayat.

The Ka have recently increased the amount of compensation to the forsaken husband from Rs. 20 to Rs. 40 in order to check the practice of changing husbands.

The panchayat rarely has occasion to meet for the purpose of dealing with theft. Such occasions arise when small boys persistently steal fruit and vegetables from other people’s backyards and fields. They are warned, and when warnings are of no avail, the matter is reported to the patil who threatens them with punishment. If they persist the villagers assemble
and if guilt is proved, impose a fine on the fathers or guardians of the boys. The fine is about a rupee and a quarter for each culprit. It is imposed only to make the guardian feel the need for looking properly after his wards. These are the only cases of theft heard of and are rare, for cowherds are tempted to steal melons and cucumbers more from fun and a spirit of adventure than from any desire for the fruit. They enjoy tormenting a quick-tempered owner.

The peace-loving Thakur beats his wife occasionally which is treated as common domestic occurrence. Cases of assault and battery, like cases of theft, are rare.

Sorcery and witchcraft are generally practised by old women. When villagers are convinced that some evil is the work of an old witch, they decide in a panchayat to put a stop to her wicked activities. Her tongue is pricked and she is made to drink the water of a tannery. These are considered sure methods for nullifying her magic powers. She is then driven out of the village.

When a cow is beaten so ruthlessly that it suffers permanent disablement or death, action is taken against the offender. The offence is treated by the Thakur more as a sin than a crime, and the culprit is as anxious as the villagers to perform expiatory rites.

For the purpose of expiation, the sinner is segregated for twenty-one days, during which period he is confined to the cow-pen. Then he is taken to a sacred place such as Bhimashankar or Trimbakeshwar where, after a shave, he bathes in the sacred water. A Brahmin priest is asked to perform purificatory worship, after which he and his friends return home.

On his return home, where people from adjoining villages are already assembled on invitation, the sinner is tied to a strut in the cow-pen, as a cow is tied, and is then made to eat a dish of rice with his mouth, without the use of his hands. Thus, he is made to simulate a cow. The leaders then eat a meal in the presence of the sinner, who is now considered fit for social intercourse.

Rama Nirguda of Dora Kala pelted a cow with stones; as a result the animal died. He performed the expiatory rites and the function was attended by the Thakurs of the four neighbouring villages.

The Ka impose a fine for killing a cow or beating it to death, the amount varying from Rs. 5 to Rs. 10.

If a woman is polluted by sexual intercourse with a Muslim or a Katkari, whether through acquiescence or against her will, she must go through a purifying ritual. This consists of placing the woman in a big earthen jar around which hay is burned. The sin is thus considered to have been consumed by fire and the woman steps out redeemed.

Although oaths are administered ordeals are not employed. The latter are unknown to the Thakur. When I explained what an ordeal meant, an aged Thakur took a rationalistic view and expressed surprise at the idea. An oath is still a powerful living force in the Thakur's mind, though the dread of perjury, like other dreads from non-material sources, is on the wane.

The Thakur swears by the cow. In a formal panchayat the accused is asked to hold the tail of a cow, usually a black one, and take an oath. An alternative procedure is to make a saucer-like receptacle out of cow-dung, stick a spike of the sacred basil into it, and light it as an oil lamp. The person taking the oath holds the lighted lamp in his hand and makes obeisance to the sun. He makes a statement or answers questions put to him and his words are believed as having been uttered under oath.

The Ka have a different way of administering an oath. The man is given a cake of dried cow-dung with grain and salt on it. He is then made to place the cake upon his head and speak. Perjury is supposed to lead to a death in the family.

The panchayat wields great power because it is the voice of the community asserting itself against those who violate time-honoured practices. The sanctions behind the panchayat are based on social cohesion, with the weakening of which the influence of the panchayat declines. Even today the panchayat is more powerful in the interior than on the outskirts of bigger villages and towns, because the structure of the community is more closely knit in the former. Reprobates from the interior
seek asylum in towns and larger villages which they find safer for licentious behaviour. Badlapur and Bhivandi serve as typical illustrations. The community has only a nominal hold on its members in these places, which the more conservative Thakurs from the interior look down upon as rabbit-warrens. A change of abode to distant areas, even if it is not to towns and larger villages, affords protection to those who violate social laws. I know a Thakur who moved from Kolaba District to Murbad and then to Shahapur Taluka to evade facing the panchayat. Another left Patgaon for Kasara.

The panchayat is an organization common to most Hindu communities. Jät basalye—literally 'the caste is sitting'—is how a panchayat meeting is referred to. The panchayat is also called jät-gangā, a term which suggests the purificatory powers of the collective body. Thus the panchayat is the traditional court of justice of a caste which expresses itself through its leaders. It keeps a watchful eye on the behaviour of its members and sees that they do not violate time-honoured customs. The whole community comes together in enforcing its decisions, with the result that the sanction becomes so powerful that none of its members dare to dishonour or oppose it.

A man's world is restricted to the people among whom he moves, the people who form his community. The more or less isolated Thakur has intimate relations only with the people of his community. His relations with non-Thakurs are only superficial. His habitat and his environment are favourable to isolation. The panchayat, consequently, is a far more powerful force in Thakur life than it is amongst other communities.

The attitude and power of the panchayat depends upon its capacity to enforce its decisions. A strong panchayat will be always assertive while a weak one will try to be accommodating. Ingrained traits of the community are reflected in the attitude of its panchayat. The Thakur panchayat is guided by a desire to avoid a crisis. It loves peace as much as justice, which is almost always translated in terms of money. This is because the justice which the panchayat seeks to defend is often an economic adjustment rather than moral justice. For instance, a change of husbands is sanctioned when the abandoned husband is properly compensated. All the same, moral turpitude is resented
and punished as is clearly evinced by the fine recovered by the panchayat over and above the payments which are more in the nature of a compensation.

The panchayat avoids a crisis by trying to be reasonable. It asserts itself by imposing a fine. In routine cases the fine is imposed according to the schedule, so that there is no bargaining. The economic condition of the offender, however, receives due consideration. Thus Kanha Katvar was allowed to take back his wife on payment of Rs. 5 when, after living with her lover for two years, she wanted to return to her husband.

Another factor influencing amount of the fine is the attitude and status of the accused. If he is a habitual offender a severe and deterrent fine is recovered. Or, if he is defiant and aggressive toward the leaders, he is taught to be courteous with a heavier fine. The motive is also considered; for, one who has inadvertently erred is treated with sympathy. An influential person receives the consideration denied to less fortunate members of the community.

That leads us to another important question: the motive that guides leaders in their conduct of panchayat affairs. Theoretically, defence of justice and caste traditions are the avowed motive. In practice, however, the panchayat has degenerated into a tool with which unscrupulous leaders extort money. The natural consequence is corruption in the discharge of justice.

The Thakur is conscious of the degeneration of the panchayat. He knows that the fine in many instances is nothing better than hush-money. In fact, a fine paid to the village in a case of adultery is called gāv-dābī, meaning hush-money paid to a village.

That the panchayat is anxious to avoid a crisis does not mean it will tolerate being ignored, submit to humiliation, or give way to determined opposition. The panchayat is prepared to be accommodating provided its authority is acknowledged and its leaders treated with courtesy and respect.

Once, a woman in Tagvadi changed husbands. The Tagvadi people exacted a fine from the new consort and allowed the woman to go to him. The Thakurs of Olman and Khandas, enraged at being unlawfully excluded from the panchayat, proceeded to Tagvadi to take suitable action. To their dismay, the villagers of Tagvadi rushed at them and drove them off.
A few days later when the Tagvadi folk visited Olman to attend an obsequial function they were asked to sit apart, were insulted in every possible way, so they had to apologize for their past insolence.

On another occasion the wife of a man named Thombara from Agashi eloped to Kuderan with her paternal aunt’s husband. The leaders from Olman went in search of her, but the Kuderan villagers refused to give her up. The leaders eventually succeeded in intimidating the Kuderan folk into submission. When the woman was asked about her intention, she insisted she wanted to marry her uncle whose first wife was living with him. The leaders enraged at this highly incestuous relation beat both the man and the woman. In spite of their efforts the woman continued to live with him, and used him as a camouflage for her continued illicit relations with a Muslim petty contractor. After a few months she dropped all pretenses and, cast out by her community, she lived openly with her Muslim lover until her death in 1962.

Beating, destruction of property and excommunication are the punishments resorted to by the panchayat to enforce its decisions. These punishments are extra-judicial and the leaders would suffer if sued in a court of law. However, fear of people’s wrath deters offenders from proceeding against the leaders. The excommunicated are treated as dead to the community. The formal way of excommunicating a woman is to place her in charge of the ‘untouchable’ Mahars.

Specific families are entrusted with specific panchayat duties. The families and their respective duties are dealt with in Badlapur as follows:

‘Among these people, members of the Devaparadhi and Rajaparadhi families have a right to call a panchayat. The Paradhi, Pirkad and Nirguna are the only families whose members may speak at a meeting. The amount of the fine may be fixed by a member of the Khandavi family only. The common fund of the caste should be maintained by a member of the Thombara family, while excommunication should be managed by one of the Vara family. When a panchayat decides to inflict corporal punishment on an offender, the punishment should be given at the hands of a

* Ibid., p. 150.
member of the Hola family. Drinking water for the assembly should be provided by a member of the Shende family (he is paid five pice for the service by the caste). Food should be provided to the assembly by a member of the Tumana family who collects grain from members of the caste for this purpose. Purificatory rites should be conducted by one of the Dudhamara family.

Among the Ka, members of the Dighe family act as judges, and the Padher, Taral and Dambali work as messengers.

I have witnessed a few panchayat meetings and have observed that the conventional duties of families laid down by the caste are never strictly observed.

Through its traditional panchayats, the caste deals with judicial and executive functions only. There is little evidence to show that it has ever tried to make laws for the whole community or that it has ever made any conscious effort to modify traditional laws to suit changing conditions. It is difficult, perhaps, for people from different areas to gather for deliberation. In addition, the changes in conditions were not so marked a few years ago as they are today, so the need for conscious effort was not so keenly felt.

Nevertheless, a pioneer attempt in modifying the traditional rules to suit new conditions is made by the conferences of Thakurs organized by educated members of the community. The modern Thakur does not like the idea of sanctioning a change of husbands, and some resolutions reflect disapproval of the practice.¹⁰

One evening while visiting Vaghachi Vadi in the harvest season, I saw a young boy going from house to house, checking the animals in the pens. On inquiry I was told that this was done to protect the sheaves which lay on the threshing-floors from being damaged by stray cattle. For each missing animal, the villagers had decided to impose a small fine of Rs. 0.12 on the owner.

The Thakur's dread of jail has contributed appreciably to the strength and prestige which the panchayat enjoys even today. The Thakur would pay any price to prevent prosecution. Unfamiliar atmosphere, ill-treatment believed to be meted out to

¹⁰ This is a record of change. No valuation is intended.
prisoners and obligation to cut the hair are believed to be the causes for this dread.

However, the Thakur has begun to distinguish between a political and a criminal offence. I have known a few political offenders and they are proud of having been jailed on political grounds. Like advanced classes, the Thakur honours the political prisoner and condemns the criminal. Although imprisonment for a non-political offence is condemned, released prisoners are not treated with contempt.

On his release from jail, a convict must perform purificatory rites. He goes to a holy place, such as Bhimashankar or Trimbakeshwar or, if the season be unfavourable, to a nearby river. He is tonsured either at home or at the holy place before the purificatory bath. On his return he drinks a small quantity of cow's urine. Even political offenders are not exempt from these rites.

In Thakur company, the presence of women and children does not disturb the men. There are no social reservations. Women and children are equally free in the company of men, though women, particularly young married women, avoid a gathering of strangers. Boys generally take their first lessons in smoking while out grazing cattle in the rainy season, and they never try to hide the fact from their elders. Smoking has become a necessity to the Thakur. Women are free of the habit. Only a few elderly women are addicted to smoking, and they do not mind smoking in the presence of strangers.

There are many factors that determine social status. Economic condition is the first consideration. Well-to-do Thakurs wield influence. Education is another powerful factor, and being scarce it is all the more powerful. Thus Rambhau Ughada who has passed the Marathi school-leaving examination has become a leader of great influence in his community. As in other communities, age and integrity command respect. In a small informal gathering, once an old Thakur refused to drink tea from an unwashed pot from which others had drunk. He said he was fasting, as it was a Saturday. An impudent youth challenged him, saying he had seen the old man eating meat on Saturday a few weeks before. Those present resented the bold remark despite the fact that the boy spoke the truth, and advised the youth to
refrain from dishonouring an elder. Influence in the neighbour ing communities, which in turn depends upon the various qualities just described, is another factor which raises a man's social status.

Of late a new factor has taken on importance. Political activity is highly esteemed as it signifies social service, integrity and selflessness. Although selflessness is honoured, I think it is a rare virtue among the Thakurs. When I attended the wedding of Malu Vagh's daughter, Malu was running about getting the required things while other villagers, including his near relatives, were enjoying a hearty smoke. This is by no means an isolated instance. To work co-operatively is common, but to work for others without any expectation of return is rare among these people. That may be one of the reasons why social workers are looked upon with awe. Selflessness, like education, has a scarcity value.

I must also record another experience to avoid doing injustice to the Thakur. When Pali, the daughter of Daku Paradhi, was suffering from prolonged labour in childbirth, she had to be taken to Badlapur, a distance of about 14 miles. Practically every youth from the village accompanied her and helped in carrying her to the dispensary. It seems that people come together to help each other in times of distress more readily than on normal and festive occasions. Although I feel that selflessness is rare among the Thakurs, such an experience makes me think. Perhaps the selfless service that their life demands is not such as would catch the attention of a townsman.

Age, good character and selflessness bring prestige to women. Other factors that influence social status are denied to them for the reason that they have no education and no independent property worth the name. Their status depends mostly upon that of their husbands.

Leadership does not depend on social status. A leader must be a skilful debater and conversationalist, and a shrewd opportunist. The average Thakur local leader of today is a vain individual, almost a braggart, without integrity and selflessness. Some of these leaders pleaded guilty in an open panchayat which accused them of misappropriation of common funds.
Boys play their part in society at the early age of fifteen or sixteen. This is but natural in an agricultural community, for at this age a boy begins to do all the work of a grown-up man and considers himself entitled to adult privileges. The grown-ups also accept him without reserve, so that in panchayat meetings and other gatherings boys are treated as equals.

The Thakur appreciates the hospitality of friends. But he is able to enjoy company only in off-season after the harvest is over and the grain stored. From this time until the advent of the rains the following year, he is at leisure, with only a few intervening periods of work. If a Thakur is asked where he is going he will say, 'Pâhuṇā jātoy', literally, 'going as a guest'. He is also fond of wandering in the forests. Whenever free from work, he will either go to the forest or visit a relative or friend.

The Thakur is a liberal host and is renowned for his hospitality. I walked through Shahapur Taluka while travelling from Borli to Murbad, and during my journey found my Thakur hosts to be polite and generous. Unsophisticated as he is, the Thakur makes no distinction between Thakur and non-Thakur guests. I was received courteously everywhere and everybody tried to make me feel at home. I met with only one exception, a man in whom these qualities were conspicuously absent. He boasted that he knew pleaders from Shahapur and Bombay and had even seen the High Court! He had no time for me, he said, no time even to guide me and my companion to the village well. The Thakur who was journeying with me was in the habit of drinking hot water. When he asked for some, the man's wife told him there was no fire. Our Thakur guide, who had undertaken to accompany us as far as this man's house, was much perturbed and advised us to move on, being good enough to put his services at our disposal. I describe the attitude of this man as it represents the inevitable effects of sophistication. In contrast to this was the treatment we received at the house of Rambhau Ughada, though he was not then at home. The hostess personally looked to all our needs and comforts. I was told that because Rambhau Ughada moved in high circles, his wife was accustomed to receiving guests of high social status.

Once I sent Bhau Vagh to Neral with a letter to a Brahmin friend of mine. On return Bhau told me that the man was not
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‘one of us’ and was no good. Later I learned that his judgement was based on a remark which he had overheard my friend make to his wife, telling her not to mind if the bread she served to Bhau was stale as he was only a Thakur.

Water for washing the feet is the first thing a Thakur offers his guest. This is necessary as the Thakur rarely uses footwear. The host then spreads his blanket or offers a low wooden stool to the guest and requests him to be seated. If the guest be of high social standing, a charpoy is offered to him. Drinking water and tobacco are brought. If the guest has walked a long distance he is also offered tea or bread. Tea-drinking is a recently formed habit and has not yet penetrated to the forest tracts to any great extent. Even when a guest is offered tea, it often has to be bought at the eleventh hour. My Thakur friends have frequently taken tea and jaggery from me to entertain their guests. People from the village gather to meet the guest in the evening on return from work. Special dancing and musical programmes are arranged in his honour. During my wanderings, people used to visit me at every village, and every evening I was coaxed to speak to them about the war and the political situation. Even when I needed rest, I had to meet and speak to the people, who would gather round me to show their hospitality.

If a visitor arrives when a Thakur family is dining, he is invariably offered refreshment. If the newcomer is a Thakur, he is requested to join the family at dinner. The Thakur is very uneasy if a guest, though hungry, refuses food in his house. When I wanted to leave Borli I was unable to secure a guide. At about ten in the morning my host offered me provisions and requested me to cook for myself. I was rather anxious to leave as I had finished my work, and said that I would have a meal on reaching my destination. That disconcerted my host considerably, and telling people of my alarming decision, he managed to procure a guide for me.

No reverence is shown to age, when economic interests clash. Even at panchayat meetings respect for age does not deter youths from speaking out their own point of view. The Thakur will always inquire after old people and children on meeting a friend or a relative. He is not accustomed to using the respectful vocative plural. No matter what the social status is of the person
he is addressing, he will always use the singular. This is his way and no offence is meant. Contact with advanced classes is, however, teaching him to change his ways, and today he is rapidly adopting the refinements of the language.

The mutual relations of villagers are not always cordial. The destitute despise the well-to-do, the progressive are annoyed by the behaviour of the reactionary, those in the background covertly criticize the unscrupulous leaders, profligates condemn the stingy, the stingy condemn the profligates, and the idle and frustrated condemn everything and everybody.

What is true of one village is equally true of a group of villages. Thus, prosperous villages, those with a large population of well-to-do families, are envied by the poverty-striken ones, and reactionary villages are despised by progressive ones. As I lived in a village for a long period, the people of a neighbouring village considered me with suspicion. Later I came to know that they identified me with the people of the village in which I lived and with whom they were not on good terms.

The Thakur’s social manners are dignified and respectful. In company he will always request others to begin their meal before he does, and the participants formally invite each other to dine. When food is offered to a guest he always protests with the terms, ‘kayālā’ or ‘āhunde’, the former expression meaning ‘why’ and the latter, ‘let it alone’. This implies that the service is superfluous, that the guest is quite comfortable without it and that the host should not trouble himself. The Thakur will not join a group for a meal unless invited to do so, and will never of his own accord ask for food. After finishing his meal, he always asks permission before departing.

It is considered bad manners to leave a meeting before it has adjourned, and the height of impudence to do so without asking leave of the assembly. I was present at a meeting which the inhospitable man to whom I have already referred left while the proceedings were still going on. The next day I heard Thakurs criticize his behaviour as unmannerly. At festivals and meetings it is considered bad form to ignore elders, rushing ahead of them. On such occasions, and during hunting expeditions, the instructions of elders are followed without demur. It is considered disgraceful to dispute about one’s share when meat is distributed.
When music parties meet on a formal occasion, each party speaks of its merits in conservative and modest tones while eulogizing others.

The modesty of the Thakur is reflected in the dancing song:

*We have come to see,*  
*And you have made us sing!*

Even if a Thakur is destitute, he does not like to say that he suffers from want:

*And all the flour is exhausted,*  
*Oh! exhausted!*  
*But how can I say it is exhausted,*  
*Oh! how can I?*

The Thakur says *rām-rām*\(^{11}\) when greeting a friend. This is a formal manner of greeting and is not observed by those who are on intimate terms. The informal way of greeting is to ask a question about the well-being of relations and friends. Even when a Thakur arrives late to a meeting or rises to address it he introduces himself saying *rām-rām*. I have seen a group of men join a panchayat while the deliberations were in progress. Everybody greeted the assembly with a *rām-rām* before taking a seat. Women never use any form of greeting. When leaving, the Thakur, whether man or woman, says, ‘*Basā āmhi yetu*’, literally, ‘be seated, we are coming’. Thus he suggests that those present should not disturb themselves on his account, nor should they try to see him off, which they do all the same. The term *yetu* (coming) is an euphemistic substitute for ‘going’ and is used to avoid the not very pleasing idea of parting with friends. Women make obeisance to elders before leaving.

A woman makes obeisance to a man by kneeling and touching the latter’s feet with her forehead. In the marriage ceremony the mother-in-law makes obeisance to her son-in-law. This conflicts with the general rule that only youngsters should make obeisance to elders and not vice versa. The obeisance in marriage may be explained by the fact that as the bride and bridegroom are

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\(^{11}\) Rām is the divine hero of the great epic describing his exploits. It is considered meritorious to utter his name and Hindus utilize the occasion of greeting to earn merit.
supposed to represent the god Vishnu and the goddess Laxmi during the wedding, the obeisance is meant for Vishnu. This interpretation, however, fails to explain why the woman does not make obeisance to her daughter who represents Laxmi. Also when a son starts on a long journey the mother makes obeisance to him. Even when women make obeisance to men during a wedding or at an obsequial function, they do so without any particular attention to age. The practice probably indicates the inferior position of women. Else, the Thakur is ignorant of the implication of juniority associated with obeisance.

_Bhet_ is another form of greeting. It is a formal embrace in which the greeters hold each other’s arms and embrace once to the right and once to left, so that their heads cross and their shoulders touch. It is observed by both men and women before departing after a formal occasion. At a formal gathering, after a marriage ceremony for instance, men and women greet the adults in this way, regardless of their sex. There is no rule for the use of these two forms of greeting. But only one of these is used at a time, each person using the one or the other according to his choice. The present tendency, especially with women, is to make obeisance.\(^{12}\)

_During my stay in Vaghachi Vaḍi, I witnessed some incidents which deserve to be noted here. When Rama Vagh was unexpectedly released from jail, his astonished wife wept at first seeing him. Whether her tears expressed her overwhelming joy or whether they were more for the sake of form, as weeping is expected of a good wife, is hard to say.

When Pali was taken to the Badlapur dispensary for treatment, her father, who could not accompany her due to his advanced years, kissed her on both cheeks as she was about to leave.

_Thakur_ notions about propriety may be judged from the following incident. A Thakur police patil felt offended because people proposed to entrust the _pādekhrot_ of their own hamlet with the distribution of gifts at a wedding. The same patil was openly charged by the panchayat with the misappropriation of a common fund. He nonchalantly pleaded that after all he

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\(^{12}\) Most of the manners and etiquettes described here are also found among the neighbouring agricultural classes.
did not misappropriate much and what little he did, he never tried to deny. He was not at all disturbed by the open charge of misappropriation!

There are a few idioms and riddles that reflect the Thakur’s opinion of his two powerful exploiters, the government and the money-lender. Thus, ‘the elephant could pass, but its tail could not’ describes the money-lender, while ‘the he-buffalo that eats through both mouth and anus’ is the government. Again, ‘one answer for the money-lender and two for the government’ is how the Thakur compares the two. Of the exacting Brahmin employer he says, ‘the Brahmin says and thinks no work is done, but he does not know how fatigued and worn out the labourer feels!"

‘The Katkari is very unclean and his body smells. He is a notorious thief. He kills cows and eats beef. He even eats rats and mice. The Koli is clean and brave. He is a dacoit and the Thakur is afraid of him. Most of the “white-clothed” castes are swindlers. Yet Gujars, Marwadis, Sonars, Muslims, money-lenders, and landlords regardless of caste, are sharks. They use false measures, sell inferior and adulterated stuff, and charge exorbitant prices. The Brahmin is intelligent. The Mohammedan is a bully who believes in the rod. The Thakur is honest and straight, but unintelligent and timid.’ This is old Kamalu Padir’s judgement of the Thakur and the people around him. The description is graphic and leaves nothing for me to add.

The Thakur has nicknames for some of his neighbours. The agriculturist Kunabi is called shepatyā or lāmboṭā, as his loin-cloth hangs down in front, and the Muslim is called a musalyā or lāndā. Musalyā is a corrupt form of Mussulman; lāndā is a circumcised one. The latter term is also used by advanced Hindus. But one distinction ought to be noted. The implication of contempt in the use of the term by the advanced classes is totally absent in Thakur usage. The Thakur uses these terms quite nonchalantly even in the presence of Muslims. The two sections of Salokh, a village in Kolaba District, are spoken of as Landyancha Salokh, and Thakarancha Salokh, and no offence is insinuated. The Muslims around him believe that the unsophisticated Thakur means no ill will when he uses the term which seems to have lost its original vituperative significance through constant, naïve use.
The Katkari receives by far the largest share of epithets. Kātvād, vāl, bibav, sorā, bisar are a few. A bibbā is a marking nut, and the Katkari is called a bibav because he is as black as a marking nut. Sorā is a term of affection used by the Katkari for his children.

The Parit (the washerman caste), the Katkari, the scheduled castes (the former 'untouchables'), and all non-Hindus—of whom the Muslim is the most familiar to the Thakur—are, to a varying degree, considered unfit by Thakur society. The Thakur will not eat food cooked or touched by any of these, nor will he allow them to enter his kitchen. The outer apartment is closed only to the people of the scheduled castes. These excepted, the Thakur will allow a member of a tabooed class the use of his utensils, but after such use he will make it a point to wash them thoroughly. He will not enter the house of one from a scheduled caste. But he will move freely in the houses of others. Modern social currents have, however, affected the Thakur and his attitude towards untouchability is gradually changing. Some time ago, the school-teacher at Vaghachi Vadi was a Mahar, but no one was disturbed, nor was the attendance at school affected on that account.

I was told by my Ka informants that formerly the Ka would not eat at the Jawhar palace, meaning that they would not eat food cooked by a Koli. Today, however, they do not mind eating at the palace. I know that the Ma have no objection to dining with a Koli.

The terminology used by the Thakur to denote alien elements that come his way is interesting. A clerk of a forest contractor is called sheff (head of a business establishment), and a constable a havaldārsāheb, a havaldār being a head constable. Tātyā is a term used for the revenue assistant and for the forester. All higher officers and important 'white-clothed' gentry are called by the highest title known to the Thakur, that is, sāheb. Brahmin landlords are called tātyā, while Vani, Sonar, Shimpi and Muslims of a higher order are all shefs, probably because they belong to trading classes. An educated man is again a sāheb.

Although the Thakur fears the 'white-clothed' landlords, he is free and easy in the company of fellow-cultivators such as Kunabis, Kolis, Warlis and Katkaris, probably because of their economic equality and cultural affinity.
To sum up, the Thakur is shy of aliens and avoids them as far as possible, mixing with them only when it is necessary. He is never at home in the company of outsiders. The tendency to be aloof and self-contained is, however, undergoing a rapid change. Outside contact is affecting his way of thinking, although social custom remains ostensibly the same.
ARTS AND AMUSEMENTS

The arts and amusements of the Thakur do not cover a very wide field. He has a craze for dancing. Wicker-work of an artistic nature is perhaps his only aesthetic creation worth mentioning. He has ample time at his disposal during the off-season and he utilizes it in playing games of various kinds and in his favourite sport of hunting. He is also fond of riddles, puzzles, and cat's cradles, of which he knows a large variety.

The Ma men and women never participate in a mixed dance as the Ka do. The Ma men’s dance is called the kāmbad dance in some places, though in many areas the term is unknown. The Ma women’s dance has no particular name. Shimagā, Gokul Ashtami\(^1\), and Vāgh-bāras are the three festivals during which the Ma men dance. During the Shimagā festival they dance the phulbājā, on Gokul Ashtami, the Govindā, and during the Vāghbāras festival, the vāghyā dance. The comic opera in which a young boy in female attire dances to the accompaniment of instruments played by his companions, is the only instance of solo dancing among the Thakurs.

Unlike his Katkari neighbour, the Thakur has a definite season, the rainy season when it is customary for him to dance. This season is preferred because people are usually to be found at home. Dancing out of season, though not customary, is not considered irreligious or unsocial. The Thakur has no objection to dancing in the off-season when a special recital is arranged for some interested visitor. The phulbājā dance, which is a recent

\(^1\) The birth anniversary of Lord Krishna.
acquisition, has become a regular feature of the Shimāgā festival. Thakur dancing parties are invited by non-Thakurs to take part in processions and to entertain them otherwise.

The day on which village deities receive their pre-transplantation worship (sāth), opens the Thakur dancing season. The Thakur does not start his dances until he eats the māṭh vegetable sown with rice in his rice plots. If the vegetable is not ready, the sāth worship and the opening dance are postponed until the plants are sufficiently grown. The season covers four months, almost coinciding with the rainy season, the closing dance being performed on the new moon day of Āśvin (October-November). Holy days during this season receive special attention and the nights are spent in dancing. Normally, people do not keep late hours. The usual time for dancing is the earlier part of the night, although on occasion, especially to entertain guests who participate, there are dances during the day.

It is supposed to be the privilege of the headman to make all the arrangements and to invite the people of his village to the opening dance of the season. But no formal arrangements are thought necessary for the dances that follow. They are usually planned at informal meetings. A house is selected with an eye to suitable accommodation, the rainy season making it impracticable to dance in the open. The biggest house in a village is usually the headman’s and village dances are generally performed there. Cattle are moved to a neighbour’s house to provide space for spectators. Even when there are no rains, open yards in front of the huts are not preferred because the Thakur thinks that dancing in the open is not effective and enjoyable.

There is no rule about the number of participants in a Thakur dance. The greater the number, the better the effect. But the size of the area available usually limits the number to fifteen. Even as few as five or six participants may start the dance and people join in as they arrive.

When youths visit neighbouring villages on such occasions they sometimes adorn themselves with bright jungle flowers which they wear either behind their ears or in their caps. Women too wear flowers when their dancing parties visit neighbouring villages. They also wear a clean white sheet over their usual dress on these occasions.
There are no limitations regarding age where dancing is concerned. An old man dancing with his grown-up sons is not a rare sight. It is a general belief that enthusiasm for dancing increases with age. To an extent this seems to be true.

At the beginning of a man’s dance, the drummer beats his drum and the participants form a circle, though not around the drummer, mainly for want of sufficient space. Even when the dance is performed alfresco, the same procedure is followed; that is, the drummer sits outside the circle.

After the circle is formed and the participants are ready to begin, the leader of the dance starts to sing a prayer-song (nāman or gān). The Thakur invokes Mother Earth and begs her not to be angry with him for treading on her as his step is light. In some of these prayer-songs the Thakur expresses his gratitude for his parents, brothers and sisters, and for the cow. Prayers to Gānpati and other deities are also offered.

While singing, dancers stand in a circle, facing inwards, and keep time to the drum by beating their right feet on the floor.

After the song, the dancers put on chālī. These are jingling bells strung together and worn round the ankles. The dancers resume their positions in the circle and the dance proper begins. The leader, assisted by one or two others, sings a line or two of his song which are repeated by the rest of the dancers. Singing is accompanied by varied movements which grow brisk as the rhythm quickens. The dancers, one behind the other, now slowly move in a circle. They stamp their right feet as they go round, their bodies swaying. The movement of the left foot is mechanical and unemphasized, and the general movement is normally anti-clockwise with certain variations. It is slow till the first round is completed. Then the drum picks up a faster beat and the movements become brisk to correspond with the rhythm.

There are not many variations to the movement. The dancers sometimes step back, sometimes squat and jump up with a jerk and turn in the opposite direction. Or they place their hands on the shoulders of their neighbours and move as one man. Again, standing behind each other they may place their hands on the shoulders or hips of their comrades in front and move in a circle with intermittent jumps. The movements grow more and more brisk until the dance reaches its climax and the
dancers finish with a sudden clap. The next lines of the song are then sung and the dance proceeds. The dancers do not leave their positions during these intervals but stand informally in the circle. Changes in words, movements and tempo relieve the monotony, but the team-work is not impressive.

When exhausted, the dancers retire to rest. They are entertained during this interval by some more energetic members among them who sing what is called gidha (derived from the Sanskrit word for song, gītā) or present skits. The gidha songs are not accompanied by dancing; the actors who present a skit sometimes dance as they sing. The dance merely comprises jumping and gesticulating.

At the close, prayers are offered to the gods Shankar, Pārvatī, Vishnu, to Mother Earth, the sun and the moon, and to the assembly. These prayers are accompanied by dancing.

An interesting innovation in the traditional kāmbāḍ dance is the acrobatic feats performed by young boys who stand on the shoulders of dancers and engage in a variety of movements.

The dance has a healthy social, psychological and physiological effect, and fosters brotherly feeling. It creates a lively atmosphere which dispels depression. It is also an educational institution. Stories from ancient epics told in the dances expound morals and the questions asked are a source of general knowledge. The dancer also acquires an elementary knowledge of music and rhetoric. Moreover, the dance affords an opportunity for self-expression. It is here that the Thakur gives vent to his pent-up feelings without restraint, and this cathartic aspect is strongly brought out in some of his skits.

The dramatic representations (songa) of the Thakur reflect his opinions of the castes in his neighbourhood. Typical peculiarities are caught by the observant eye of the Thakur and presented in a farcical way. Thus the cobbler is presented as a poor worker 'who makes sandals that do not last'. The inefficient mason, the tyrannical constable and the forest guard, the Brahmin hypocrite, the oilman who works his bullock to death, the Mang who is ever in a hurry, the Kunabi woman who makes a fuss about trifles, are all represented in the dramatic representations in farcical situations.
The study of these skits is interesting and enlightening because they hold a mirror to the life and ways of the Thakur. The most striking point about them is their vulgar tone. In spite of the predominating obscenity, there are a number of typical Thakur characteristics reflected in these short sketches, and practically every aspect of Thakur life is represented. Hunting, bond labour, the deserting wife, the Brahmin priest and a host of living problems and intimate details of Thakur life are represented. The Thakurs’ sense of humour is obscene. But what seems obscene to us is far less so to the Thakurs.

Although the Thakur uses exaggeration as his mainstay of humour, other methods are not ignored. Thus we find inconsistency and paradoxical situations, as in the presentation of an old pregnant woman. Thakur humour does not stop at mere play on words. On occasion some of the audience are roughly handled for the amusement of the others. In fact in these presentations humour is created more by action than by speech.

Satire, burlesque and invective are observed in some presentations. In others, the abject and oppressed condition of the Thakur is truthfully portrayed, as in skits on the forest guard. Is this an escape? Does the Thakur avail of this opportunity to vent his smothered feelings? The Thakur probably presents himself truthfully because he feels safe.

The phulbājā dance, also known as the Koḷanīchā nāch or fisher-woman’s dance, calls for two youths to play the parts of a fisherman and his wife. Dressed in Koli or fisherman style, they dance in the centre, while the other youths dance around the pair in a circle. Outside the circle dance a ‘footman’, and a ‘horseman’ riding on a ‘horse’ made of bamboo laths covered with teak leaves.

In the Govindā and vāghyā dances there is no team-work and each one dances as he chooses. There is no musical accompaniment either. The dancers shout ‘Govindā’; a practice of the plains people, while for the vāghyā they sing a couplet. Movements, which are crude, spontaneous and arbitrary, consist mainly of jumping and waving of hands.

1 One of the names of Lord Krishna whose birth anniversary offers the occasion for this dance.
When Ma women dance, they group themselves into two rows, facing each other. The girls in each row form a chain, clasping hands. They swing their arms backwards and forwards, keeping time to the song. These songs are called dāvaṇīchī gāṇī, and participants do not move their feet when they sing. The songs serve as a prelude to the dancing that follows.

After a few such songs, the women rearrange themselves in a circle and the dance proper begins. They move in an anticlockwise direction, and keep time by clapping. Half the number leads the song and the rest repeat after them. Thus, participants divide themselves into two groups, forming two semi-circles. Each group swings as it sings. They generally face the centre, though at the start they move one behind the other. They bend slightly at the knee and waist. The more vigorous movement consists of placing palms on knees and skipping back and forth. They also perform a frog-like movement. Occasionally they retrace a few steps, walking backward, but the main movement consists of a side-step. Although there is no musical accompaniment, they keep good time. They have no formal way of terminating a dance.

Phugadī,3 simmā4 and other dances popular among girls of the advanced communities are performed by Thakur girls. In the former of these, two girls hold each other’s hands and, putting their feet against each other’s, whirl round. In the latter dance, girls arrange themselves in pairs, stand in two concentric circles, move round and sing. As she moves, each girl strikes her hands rhythmically on those of her partner in the other circle.

Bhonḍāī parties provide another opportunity for young girls to come together. Bhondāī is a corrupt form of bhonḍalā which denotes the figures of deities drawn on the ground or on the wall. The term also denotes the songs sung on the occasion. The Thakur girls draw no figures but they take a pot to represent the bhondalā. The term bhond signifies ears of corn and the singing, coming at the harvest season may be a thanksgiving service addressed to the god of food. During the first five days

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4 Ibid., p. 67.
of the Navarātra festival\(^5\) young girls form a team and go from village to village singing Bhondāi songs. Over the usual sari and bodice, they wear a sheet around the loins, draping it over the shoulders. One of the team carries a copper pot with sesameum flowers. The discarded ones are thrown on the roof of the village headman’s house every evening. The girls go from house to house, stand in a circle and sing in time to the tipari — a pair of small sticks beaten against each other at regular intervals. Bhondāi songs form a separate class in Thakur folk-songs. Some of the songs describe the different aspects of the Navarātra festival and some are amorous.

At each house the party receives a handful of grain. On the fifth or last day, the girls and the headman worship the pot in the evening and offer rice and curry to it. The headman also worships the tipari sticks used by the girls. On the last day, instead of the stale flowers being thrown on the headman’s house, they are tied to a stalk of paddy in his field. The headman gives the girls a bundle of paddy stalks which are either threshed by the girls themselves or by somebody who offers his services with an eye on the straw. After the worship, the girls take rice and pulse from the collected grain, cook and eat in the headman’s house. The headman does not join as it is a girls’ dinner. His wife and children join. All other grain are exchanged for rice and, some day after the harvest, the girls prepare sweets from the rice and distribute them among villagers.

Mixed dance once popular among the Ka is getting out of vogue. Women wear coloured sheets over their shoulders to cover their breasts. Men and women stand in separate rows facing each other and dance to the tune of their favourite wind-instrument tārapī. These dances are named after the main movement in the dance, and are vigorous.\(^6\)

Most Thakur games are also common to the plains people. His popular pastimes are wrestling, ātyāpātyā where players try to cross marked areas guarded by opponents who try to catch them while they try to cross without being caught, vitidândū

\(^1\) See p. 88, f.n. 1.
\(^2\) For a detailed description, see A. J. Agarkar, _op. cit._, pp. 53 ff., 74.
played with two sticks, hitting the smaller one with the bigger, and lezim, the dance of boys with the jingling bows. The Thakur delights in cock-fighting and buffalo-fighting. Kond and kodki, the games described below, are claimed by him to be indigenous.

Two players, called 'kites' are important in the game of kond. They stand outside a circle marked with ash while the rest of the players crowd inside. The 'kites' try to drag a player out of the circle, while the players try to drag a 'kite' inside. The circle is just large enough to accommodate the players and this makes it practicable for the two 'kites' to fight against a superior number. The ash on the circumference must not be touched by the players inside. The game is continued till one of the sides is completely overcome.

kodki or kodke means a puzzle. These games afford a trial of strength and skill and are played during the Shimagā festival. Here are some of them:

1. *Nādagīchā khej* is literally 'a bear's game'. It is a sort of tug-of-war between two players. A rope is tied to the waist of a player who tries to reach a particular spot in spite of his opponent's efforts to hold him back by pulling at the end of the rope.

2. A wooden pestle is placed with its ends resting on the shoulders of two boys who stand facing each other. A strong rope hangs from the centre of the pestle. A player, squatting below the rope, grasps it and without changing his position tries to climb up and touch the pestle with his knees. Great skill is required to preserve balance. Another variety requires a player to lift a pestle with two players sitting on it, one at each end.

3. Two players lie supine, head to head, holding each other under the armpits. One of the players bears the other on his back and lifts him up. The arms remain interlocked the while. As a variation, the player, instead of bearing his companion on his back, bears him on his chest and rises.

4. Another variety requires a player to bend over while another stands on his hands which are resting on the ground. The squatting player tries to pass through the legs of his companion and return to his original position. The companion, standing on his palms all the while, tries to prevent him from doing so.
5. Also, a man stands with his feet on the palms of a squatting player. He holds the player’s head to keep his balance. The player rises with the full weight of his companion on his palms.

6. Occasionally a man squats with his hands tied to his knees. Another lifts him up like a bundle and places him on his back.

The Thakurs usually play at their riddles, puzzles and cat’s cradles at the time of the obsequies, when they have returned from the stream after performing the rites and are waiting for dinner. This entertainment also serves to dispel the general gloom.

The Thakur is fond of riddles and his knowledge of them is vast. Almost everyone knows a few, but some are known for their repertoire. I know a man who will not stop till he has asked a hundred of them. A Ka youth asked me about twenty riddles as he paused to greet me on his way home from the farm.

The Thakur words for riddle are kuyele, meaning wonder, jikone from jinkane, to win, and humyân from humânā a riddle.

These riddles present a picture of Thakur life. Many of them concern agricultural and other everyday activities. Thakur weapons and implements, cattle and poultry, vegetable and fruit, wild plants, beasts and other forms of life, his favourite hunting, his dress, house, and his ideas of astronomical phenomena, are all amply represented in these riddles.

His keen observation and his powers of graphic description may be noticed in many of them. Thus, one riddle describes salt as the sweetest thing on earth, while in others, the sun is described as the light of the house and as being more valuable than a kingdom. Women’s dancing is humorously ridiculed by reference to the hermaphrodite as the originator of the dance.

There are some riddles with double meanings, outwardly innocent, but with obscene inner meanings. Thus ‘one prone, one supine’ are tiles; ‘one stroke, the flower shoots up, second stroke and the flower drops down’ refers to iron and flint; ‘looks red and attracts the mind, lift up the leg and it gets inside’ is

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7 Riddles are also called kokashāstra which, in standard Marathi, means the science of erotics. I am told of a booklet of riddles entitled kokashāstra, published years ago. I do not know why this term is used for riddles.
answered by the shoe; and dropped like a stone and flowed like water' is a hailstone.

Some articles are described in more than one way. Thus a coconut is 'a water-hole upon a tree', 'one with three eyes', 'the flower behind and stem at the fore', 'a dog that urinates in a shrine', and 'water in a rock'. Besides being 'the wife's best companion' and 'the master of the house', a lamp is described in the riddle, 'a post on a pillow, a dish on the post, a flower on the dish, and dust on the flower'. The description of the palm tree as 'a cow of wood and the calf of earth, milked after her throat is cut', presents the process of tapping toddy. A quern is variously described as 'one who eats food but does not drink water', 'one who evacuates as he runs', and as 'a bullock without horns, eating heaps of corn'. The amusement is increased when one riddle is answered with another which has the same answer.

Many riddles are borrowed. They are found in general use among the advanced classes. In this category come the riddles which describe the ten-headed demon, Ravan. Even ideas which are foreign to Thakur life find a place here. A locomotive is described as 'the black one with a crook in its neck and with thirty-two chicks following her', and an umbrella is 'a fist-sized bud opening into a basket-sized flower'. Some new ideas are given a Thakur guise when they are presented in riddles.

There is an interesting riddle which offers an example of what is in Sanskrit literature called kartrgupta alankār, that is, a figure of speech in which the answer lies concealed in the question. It runs:

The long rope runs from here to the seashore;
The smooth road runs up and down;
The sweet flute faces the same quarter
And the mirror runs close to the ground.

With a 'chopane' beater beat each line round
And the answer is easily found.

A road, a flute, a mirror, and a chopane, which is an apparatus with which to beat the ground, are the objects which answer to the first four lines respectively.
The Thakur word for puzzle is kolāṅde. He has a variety of puzzles which he makes from leaves and petioles of different trees, from bamboo sticks and chips, and other easily available material. I shall now describe some interesting puzzles.

The Puzzle of the 'Pālas' Leaves

To make the puzzle of the pālas leaves, about an inch of the central fibre is carefully separated from the leaf. It is folded at the centre and passed through a bead made by carving a piece of the stem. The portion on both sides of another leaf is torn away from the central fibre, keeping the ends intact. One of these portions is rolled and passed through the loop of the folded fibre of the first leaf. The bead is now pushed into the loop and the rolled portion of the second leaf is unfolded.

The test lies in removing the bead without tearing any portion of the leaves. This is easily done when the bead is pressed down and the upper leaf removed by rolling an end-portion.

The Puzzle of the Beads

A hole is made in the middle of a bamboo about thirty centimetres long and a centimetre in diameter. A string about a metre and a half long is folded and passed through the hole. The loose ends of the string are now passed through the fold and pulled, so that the string is fastened to the bamboo with the two ends protruding from the loop at the centre.

Cylindrical beads, about half a centimetre long and half as much in diameter, are made of bamboo. Usually nine such beads are used. The two loose ends of the string are together passed through a bead, which becomes the central bead. The two ends of the string are now separated and four beads passed through each. The loose ends are tied one at each end of the stick, which is grooved at these points to prevent the string from slipping.

The apparatus is now ready. The string is tied at two ends of the stick with a loop at the centre. There is the central bead passing through a double string with four beads on each
side passing through a single string. It is required to pass a bead from one side to the other without untying the string.

The central bead which passes through the double string is the chief impediment. It is pushed over the loop so that other beads can pass from one side to the other without difficulty. For this purpose, the folded end of the string at the centre is pulled to loosen the loop, and the central bead and the other beads which are to be transferred are passed through. The double string just above the central bead is pulled so that it drags the loop to the upper side of the hole. The loop has now a double string on one side and a four-fold string on the other. The central bead is passed up the loop to the four-fold string and the beads to be transferred are passed through the loop to the other side. The central bead is now drawn back and all the steps retraced until this bead is in its original position. The required beads are now transferred to the other side.

The Puzzle of the Bamboo

Two thin bamboo laths, about twenty centimetres long and one to half a centimetre broad, are made. They are thin enough to be pliant. One end of each bamboo is split about fourteen centimetres, the remaining length being left uncut. On the uncut side, four incisions are made to divide the breadth into five parts for a length of about twelve centimetres.

The five-part end of one of the laths is held between the middle and third fingers of the left hand, palm up, while the two halves at the other end are turned down and held, one between the third and little fingers and the other between the middle finger and the forefinger. The other lath is similarly held in the same hand. The laths are moistened at the start to insure pliancy.

Held between the middle and third fingers and facing each other are the five-part ends of the two laths. The innermost part of one of the laths is lightly and gently taken out so that it springs up like an arch. The innermost part of the other lath is now taken out and inserted in the arch of the former part. The remaining four parts of each lath are alternately taken out one by one and inserted in the arch of the part previously taken out.
The apparatus is now ready, and when removed from the fingers it looks like a dome with four pillars, with five horns shooting from the dome on two sides.

It is required to disentangle and separate the two laths. To do this the horns are pressed against each other until the figure turns into two flat laths intertwined. A light pull separates the laths.

The Puzzle of the Disc

A number of holes, usually from fifteen to twenty, are made round a twenty-centimetre disc parallel to the circumference. A cord sixty centimetres in length is inserted in each hole and knotted on one side of the disc.

At the centre of the disc two holes are made about two and a half centimetres apart. Two similar holes are made at the centre of another eight-centimetre disc.

The smaller disc is now placed over the centre of the larger one so that the two holes of the former are directly above the two holes of the latter. A thinner cord about two metres in length is doubled and the looped end is inserted in one of the holes of the smaller disc, then through the hole of the larger one and again passed up through the other two holes. The loose ends of the cord are then passed through the loop and pulled so that the loop is secured on the smaller disc. The loose ends of the thinner cord and of the thicker ones are now all braided to about ten cms. from the ends, and the apparatus looks like a hanging sling.

The inner disc is to be removed without undoing the braid. To do this, the loop on the inside of the smaller disc is loosened by pulling the looped end of the thinner cord. The looped end is now inserted in one of the holes at the circumference of the larger disc, the knot below is passed through the loop and the looped end pulled back so that the thicker cord is enclosed within the loop of the thinner cord. The procedure is continued until, one by one, all the thicker cords are enclosed in the loop of the thinner cord. The braid is now passed through the loop to the other side and the disc is easily released by simply pulling out the thinner cord.

Cat's cradles are more popular with the younger people. The following are some interesting ones from my collection:
13. Puzzle of the disc (p. 166)

14. Puzzle of the *paḷas* leaves (p. 164)
15. Puzzle of the beads (p. 16)
16. ‘Removing a Ring’ (p. 168)
17. The 'Magic Knot' cat's cradle (p. 169)
1. The ends of a string, about sixty centimetres in length, are tied together. The loop is passed over the middle finger and forefinger of the left hand. The string is pulled from between the fingers and from below the near end of the loop. The string to the right is now passed over the thumb. The thumb and the forefinger are closed together.

It is required to take out the string without opening the closed fingers. This can be done if the string is first taken off the middle finger. Then it is released. It is then hastily taken off to avoid the simple solution from being observed.

2. A sixty-centimetre loop is passed round the forefinger and the middle finger. It is then given a turn and passed round the thumb. It is again given a turn, this time in the opposite direction, and passed over the three fingers. The forefinger and the middle finger are placed on the tip of the nose and the string is taken off the thumb. Then it is released.

3. One end of a string about two metres in length is tied to the neck of a person. The other end is loosely tied round the ankle. In between there is a single knot.

It is required to undo the single knot without disturbing the end positions of the string. For this, the knot is first loosened and the loosened portion of the string passed from above through the loop at the ankle. It is then passed over the foot and again taken out of the ankle loop from below. Now, when it is passed over the foot once again, the knot is found to have been undone. The ankle loop and the neck end of the string retain their original positions.

4. The ends of a string about two metres long are tied together to form a loop. It is then put round the neck.

It is required to release the noose without taking it off the head. This can be done if the long loop is once turned so that the strings cross. The strings are folded at the cross to form a circular loop with double string below and a single string above. The loop is turned upside down so that the single string turns down and the double one turns up. With a little practice, this can be managed in a single movement. The circular loop is passed round the neck by pushing the head through. The loop close to the neck is now pulled off and the string released.
5. The ends of a string about a metre long are tied to form a loop. It is next stretched between the two great toes. The farther string of the loop near the right toe is pulled in with a right hand finger so as to pass over the nearer string. A little to the left, the nearer string is now pulled in with a left hand finger and passed round the right toe. The right hand finger is now taken out and the legs stretched so that the loop is released without the string slipping over the right toe. This is done rapidly to give an air of mystery.

6. *Removing a Ring.* A fifty-centimetre loop of a string a metre long is held as in No. 5 in the great toes. Before putting the second end of the loop over the great toe, a ring is passed over the loop.

It is required to release the ring without removing the loop from the toe. To do this, the ring is moved to the left. The procedure then followed is as in the cat’s cradle described in No. 5. When the nearer string is passed over the right toe, the ring is moved to the right, and again the same procedure is followed on the left side of the ring. Now, the nearer string is passed twice round the right toe and the farther string is held at two points in two of the right hand fingers. When these fingers are removed and the loop stretched, the ring falls down, with the loop remaining stretched in the original position.

7. *The Magic Knot.* Knots are tied at both ends of a string a metre long to form loops about two and a half centimetres in length. One loop is put on the right hand thumb and the other on the left little finger. From the right thumb the string is passed over the palm and behind the little finger. From the left little finger the string is passed over the palm, and from between the thumb and the forefinger it is turned back to come out again from behind the little finger. The right hand middle finger is now inserted in the string over the left palm, and the left hand middle finger inserted in the string over the right palm near the thumb. The string is now stretched.

The left hand fingers, except the thumb, are closed up and the string behind the hand is released from over the fingers. The little finger of the right hand is also simultaneously released. When stretched, the string gets tied up. However, when the
middle fingers are released and the string is stretched, the knot
is undone.

Thakur art is seen in the wicker-work that he does for amuse-
ment—a labour of love with no expectation of monetary return.
Playthings are usually made by cowherds—both boys and girls—
during their leisure hours when they are out tending cattle.
Small baskets and dishes for children to play with and ornamental
wrist-bands are most popular. I have seen a cap made for the use
of the 'horseman' in the phulbājā dance. It was a round cap with
a knot at the centre, something like a police officer's cap. A
pliant variety of grass called telyā grass is used for making these
articles. A tobacco pouch is also made of this grass.

Simple oversewn coil, figure of eight and lazy sqaw are the
varieties of coiling⁸ used in the making of these articles.

Once the agricultural season is over, time hangs heavily on
the Thakur's hands. On the other hand, the forest and its
denizens are there with a prospect of appetizing food. So he
turns his attention to hunting, his favourite sport.

When water is not available in the forest, a hunter cuts a
twig of teak, ukshi,⁹ dhānvel or karavand, and slakes his thirst
with the water flowing from the cut. Every tree when cut,
is supposed to yield water, but the quantity is not enough to
quench thirst. The trees referred to yield about a litre of water
from one cutting. The water from the dhānvel creeper slightly
irritates the tongue.

The Thakur uses bird-lime and a variety of traps to catch
birds. Nets, spears, his traditional bow and arrow, traps of
different kinds, and gun are used for catching or killing bigger
game. Day by day, the gun is replacing all other weapons.
The bow and arrow is common among the Ka. Among the Ma,
it is used in parts of Kolaba District. Dogs are sometimes emplo-
yed on hunting.

The sticky sap of the Indian and glomerous fig trees, of mahua
and the prickly pear are used for bird-lime. Birds are brought
down with a stone released from a notch in a bamboo bow. The
noose for catching birds is called an usātane.

⁸ For a description of these and other varieties of coiling and plaiting
see Notes and Queries on Anthropology (1929), p. 248.
⁹ Calycoperis floribunda.
The net which the Thakur uses for catching big game is called vāghūr. The net is made from hemp fibre and the knot used is sheet bend which he calls phās-kudī or vāghūrgāth. Villagers go hunting in a team and the beaters lead on the quarry to the net. The entangled creature is beaten to death with sticks.

Some flesh is roasted in the forest and an offering of it is made to the forest deities. This offering is called sūta. Cooking is done either in the forest or at home. The heart, lungs and some flesh from each limb of the animal are cooked in the forest. This is called pāul. It is afterwards distributed to children. Some flesh from each limb of the animal is also cooked at home and the owner of the net offers it as an oblation to the Thakur deities. It is then distributed to the people. Sweet oil and onions must not be used in the cooking of this flesh, and the pan in which it is cooked must be taken off the fire before the meat is placed in a dish. These taboos, if violated, are believed to prevent the hunters from securing game the next time. Also, the bow and arrow must not be touched by women.

When a flock of lāhurī birds, a variety of quail, is caught, a pair is set free. This is to ensure further procreation.

The flesh of a deer is distributed equally among the hunters. In the distribution of a wild boar, however, the archer gets an extra share. The owner of the net also gets an extra share. The Thakurs have no objection to eating tortoises or iguanas.

10 From the Sanskrit word vāghurā.
Although the account of Thakur family and social life that I have presented is based on what Thakurs have told me, I have from time to time described illustrative incidents from actual life. To that extent my account may be said to represent both the ideal and the actuality of Thakur life. But to get a clearer picture of the aspirations and achievements of the Thakurs an analysis of their folk-tales and their folk-songs will be helpful. While folk-tales and folk-songs sometimes present the aspirations of a people rather too idealistically, their casual daily conversations enable us to understand them better. Therefore, I shall present here some dialogues and soliloquies from my collection of them.

It is relevant to record the Thakur’s evaluation of himself and the general impression of him from the neighbouring people. He considers it humiliating to be called a thief, although he would not mind being accused of dacoity. The Thakur is noted for his slow-wittedness and stubbornness among his neighbours. This characteristic has earned him some nicknames. Thākūr ni khūr is an expression which compares him with a horse’s hooves (khūr), implying his poor intelligence. Thākūr ni lākūḍ likens him to a log (lākūḍ). He is also called kadakdoke or hard-headed.

The aspirations of the Thakurs as shown in some of their folk-tales and folk-songs indicate a rationalistic philosophy. One of the tales current among the Thakurs clearly states the doctrine that fate or luck helps those who help themselves. Their expectations revealed in some of the tales are rather modest. A reward of Rs. 50 plus a gratuity of Rs. 5 given to a hero who kills
a tiger is considered quite generous! Even a king in their imagination cannot do better than have rice and curry served at a marriage feast. It is only God who can grant a gift of such delicacies as pedhā and jilebi which I have never seen Thakurs eat during my long and frequent residences with them. In one of their songs they wistfully refer to girls carrying home huge bunches of bananas cut from the wild banana trees. This reflects the yearnings and the wish-fulfilment of a people whose food supply is limited. Some of the marriage songs describe the bridegroom’s father as carrying with him loads of pearls and coins to scatter in the marriage pavilion. Others describe the bridegroom’s palanquin as being made of gold with poles of silver. Even these songs express the wish-fulfilment of the Thakur. Or, probably, they have come to him from the advanced classes through his non-tribal farmer-neighbours.

The following dialogues and soliloquies were recorded without the Thakur speakers being aware of my writing them down. They are, therefore, spontaneous. The situations usually concern common problems such as lack of rain and the consequent failure of crops, a damaged threshing-floor, a burden to be carried by a youth, a search for a runaway wife or a search for a bride, a complaint against a neighbour’s cattle or merely one villager’s envy of another.

Hindola (21), a resident of Mohogharvadi, had called on his wife’s elder sister (30) at Vaghachi Vadi in search of his runaway wife. He arrived when his wife’s sister and her husband were about to set out for their farm. A friend happened to be there and joined in their conversation:

**Husband**: Here I am. Has the girl come here?

**Sister-in-law**: She has come here. But I shall take her to our parents. Then you may do with her as you will. I will not allow you to take her away from here. Let her go to her parents and then you may take her from there. Here she is at her sister’s. She is not living with a stranger. She has left you through sheer disgust. If you take her home now, you will beat her, and how can we prevent you? Better take her from her parents. We shall leave her with them. Your brother scolds her, your mother scolds her. How will she get on?
Husband: She does not want to live peaceably, has a dozen ways of being nasty.

Sister-in-law: We used to think that the girl had married into a good family. But your people are so queer. If she brings firewood, your people say the load is too light!

Husband: Well, I did not get her for nothing. I have paid for her.

Sister-in-law: Do others get their wives for nothing? After all she is a mere child. She works according to her capacity.

Sister-in-law's husband: Brother, please keep quiet. I shall take her to her parents tomorrow and then you may take her from them. You are beside yourself at present.

Husband: But even if I beat her, is she not mine? I am not beating somebody who is not mine. Who is there amongst us who does not beat his wife? Don't you do it yourself?

Sister-in-law's husband: Everybody does, but then . . .

Sister-in-law: That is why you people cannot get brides for your boys.

Friend: Why should girls run away if we are well-behaved? We are what we are. That is why they run away.

Husband: Show me my wife. Don't conceal her, and if I don't find her there with her parents, beware!

Sister-in-law's husband: You seem to be put out, brother. Be quiet and go home.

Sister-in-law: For a man you talk too much. You Hindolás are very vain. That is why your brides do not remain with their husbands.

When Girija Vagh was married, the maids were displeased with their payment and tried to delay work. Kamalu Padir and his son Kusha (85) were there, and Bhau, Girija's elder brother (85), was also there. Their conversation about the amount of payment and the attitude of the maids was as follows:

Kamalu: If the maids demand a rupee and a half, are they justified? You must abide by convention. You are not usurers.

Kusha: Then we might engage ordinary labourers as well. Why vahulis when you are so unaccommodating?
Kamalu: You should have told us earlier, I should say.

Kusha: Originally it was 4 annas (Re. 0·25). Due to increased costs the payment was raised to 8 annas (Re. 0·50). We are following the accepted practice.

Kamalu: You should have cleaned the utensils. They will be soon required. Water is not far to fetch. Others engage only two maids. We have four of you!

Bhau: Sakhu, you go and work. We belong to the groom’s family. We have to face all difficulties. How can we shun our responsibility?

Kusha: It is really the menfolk who instigate trouble. And then they would say they are not concerned.

Nami (28) and Kamali (25), two married women from Vaghachi Vadi, talked thus at the village well:

Nami: That girl! She is a great flirt. Comes here to her mother so often.

Kamali: Really! Why do you say so? She looks so innocent.

Nami: Observe her well and you will see. She is happy when that Kanha comes. Laughs and jokes with him. He, too, never misses an opportunity to see her alone.

Once a group of Thakurs was sitting by the fireside at night after dinner. Dhau, Kalu Padir, his brother Ambo, Rama Paradhi and Bhau Vagh, all belonging to the same age-group, thirty to thirty-five, were there. Dhau was complaining to Kalu, that the latter’s bullock had eaten some of his standing crop:

Dhau: Please do warn your cowherds, young boy. Your bullock eats my ragi.

Kalu: It cannot be my bullock. He has no teeth. What do you say to that?

Dhau: Please don’t leave him unattended. Cattle is becoming a great nuisance these days. Let my ragi shoot into grain.

Rama Paradhi: Even when two or four ears are eaten, one feels so uneasy.

Ambo: How is the dung of the cattle? Ragi will never hide. If it is eaten today it is sure to be found in the dung tomorrow.
Mahadu Vagh (45) from Padirvadi was visiting Kamalu Padir (61), who was on the look-out for a suitable bride for his son. Mahadu Vagh wanted to know if Kamalu would approve of a girl he knew:

Mahadu: A girl from Mahadu Vagh’s family is available. I can’t say whether you would approve of her. I am Mahadu Vagh and his name too is Mahadu Vagh.

Kamalu: Whom does she look like? Like Kamali from Padirvadi?

Mahadu: Yes, yes. She may resemble Kamali; yet, she is a little fairer, I should say.

Kamalu: Is she from Mahadu Vagh’s family?

Mahadu: From Mahadu Vagh’s family? She is his niece.

Kamalu: Is she the child of a remarried wife?

Mahadu: Yes. But the wife was first married by the first-marriage rites. She lost her first husband and was then remarried to her present husband. The girl is Parasha Vagh’s daughter. One was given in marriage to Ambo and this is the second one. He had only two daughters.

Guinea worms had become a pestilence in Motvadi. It was at this time that Balu Paradhi (80) from that village reported to a group of Vaghachi Vadi people about the disease: ‘These Chaphvadi people! They practised some black magic to ruin us. They employed a Muslim of Salokh for the purpose. As a result, our village was infested with guinea worms. All the boys and girls were affected. The whole village suffered. Then we asked Krish, a master (a Maratha primary teacher) to try some antidotal magic. He successfully combated the mischief. He is really an expert. Knows the art well’.

Sakhu Vagh (15), who was married for about a year, used to pay frequent visits to her mother. It was one such visit that evoked the following remark from Kamalu: ‘This is our practice. A woman, especially a young wife, longs to go to her parents now and then. She will wait for eight or ten days and then run to her parents. If a bridegroom is selected for her who lives a long way away she cannot run home frequently’.

Cattle spoiled the threshing ground of Ambo Padir (82) at Vaghachi Vadi. He expressed his resentment thus: ‘Why speak
of these cowherds! The whole of my threshing ground has been spoiled. The whole floor is scratched. We, too, tended cattle when we were young. Is this the way to tend cattle?'

The bridegroom's priest does not like the father of the bridegroom to select a girl from a village which is not in his jurisdiction because the marriage rites are performed by the Brahmin priest of the bride's village. The following is Kamalu's criticism of the attitude of the Brahmin priest of his village. The latter tried to create difficulties when Kamalu wanted to select a bride for his son from a village in Karjat Taluka.

'If the bride's family is from the same village, the Brahmin priest will help fix the engagement at all cost. But if the bride's family is from a far-off village, the priest will do all in his power to put spokes in the wheel. Such are the ways of Brahmin priests'.

Kamalu and I were going to Vaghachi Vadi from Badlapur. On the way we halted at Mohogarvadi. It was the middle of July but there was little rain. Kamalu, addressing our host who was complaining about the damage done to his crops by the drought, said: 'Who can help it? It is the same for all of us. One must resign oneself to what the Lord has decreed'.

Kalu (28), a strong and well-built youth of Vaghachi Vadi, boasted about his strength before a mixed audience sitting around the fire: 'I carried on my head, unaided, two loads of firewood as big and as heavy as three loads carried by women'.

Before turning to individual personalities, I present a few facts, chosen from the case histories in my collection, about the sex life of some Thakurs.

Ambi, a woman of 32, was married at an early age to Kanha. When she was 24, she took a fancy to a man named Ambo who lived in an adjoining village. She eloped with him, leaving her infant daughter with the father. She lived with Ambo for two years, bearing him a son. Eventually she tired of him and, leaving his little son to him, she returned to her husband who, being very poor, was rather pleased to have her back. She now lives with her husband and complains that he is always suspicious of her.
Mukti became pregnant when she was an unmarried girl of 15. The villagers assembled in a panchayat and she was asked to name the man responsible for her condition. She named a young man who pleaded innocent. The people concerned were sure that the man involved was different, that the relation was incestuous, but every one was anxious not to expose him. It was for this reason that, contrary to the usual practice, the Thakurs of the adjoining villages were not invited to the panchayat. When the youth named refused the responsibility, he was fined. The fine, it is said, was paid by the real culprit through this youth.

Mukti was then sold by auction. The auction was conducted by a panchayat and the folk of the adjoining villages were invited. She was given to the highest bidder, a young man named Chango, who offered Rs. 20. Mukti’s child was brought up by Chango and was given Chango’s surname. The child died when it was a few months old. Although Chango and Mukti lived as husband and wife, no marriage ceremony ever took place.

After living with Chango for a few years, Mukti left him and went to live with a man named Budha, a widower. Budha gave Rs. 15 to the panchayat besides paying Chango Rs. 20 to make up for what Chango had paid at the auction.

Today, Mukti lives with Budha without any formal marriage ceremony and has four children by him.

Ambi (32) was originally married to an Ughada. She ran away from him after two years. She then wandered from place to place for the next two years. During that period she had intercourse with innumerable men, their ages ranging from 20 to 60. It is said that she did not leave any youth in the vicinity unspoiled. In one village there was a youth for whom she had a strong passion. The youth was about to be married and the men from the village disliked the idea of her living with him. To save him from her clutches they decided to torture her and make her leave the village. With this aim in view, she was taken to the outskirts of the village one night and seven young men raped her. The method, however, was ineffective and she continued to live with the youth until she got tired of him. Once a man beat her for refusing to succumb to him, but she was adamant. She also lived with a man named
Damu, who was prepared to pay a fine to Ughada as is customary but Ughada would not accept it. Criminal proceedings were instituted and Damu was sentenced to four months' rigorous imprisonment.

After living with Damu for a while, she eloped with a man named Kalu. Damu brought her back two or three times, beat her, and inapplied to stay. Influential people advised her on his behalf and tried all possible ways of convincing her that her conduct was wrong, but every time he brought her back she ran away at the first opportunity. Damu at last gave in and Ambi is now living with Kalu, who paid Rs. 25 as a fine to the panchayat. Even when she was living with her husband, Ambi was notorious for her illicit connexions.

Daji and his brother's widow lived together as husband and wife. There was a great commotion in the community over this incestuous relation and rumour had it that the woman would be tortured and sold by auction. Daji, it was said, would be heavily fined and perhaps his house would be set on fire. Nothing of the sort happened, however. Daji, it is believed, managed to bribe the leaders and, after paying an exorbitant fine of Rs. 100, was allowed by the panchayat to keep his sister-in-law as his wife.

The general run of Thakur life is much limited compared to that of the advanced classes from urban areas, in various spheres of human activity such as educational, social and economic. There are few who achieve anything outstanding, and are worth observing, for they serve as examples to others. I investigated the lives of some Thakurs, of which I found only four worth following to the end. One of these Thakurs was an uneducated self-made, well-to-do, old man, the other an educated social worker, the third a midwife, and the fourth an educated Ka Thakur. The first three life-sketches are of Ma Thakurs.

KAMALU PADIR

Kamalu Padir,¹ the first of these, was my chief informant. He was a shrewd old man who knew the ways of the world and always tried to gain by experience. Parsimonious and;

¹ Kamalu Padir died in 1948.
industrious, he had risen from poverty to be a landlord, and
lent money and grain on interest. People thought that he had
risen to this position partly by illicit gains, but more by the luck
of good harvests. He had a household of seven people, all
equally parsimonious and diligent.

In narrating his story he said: 'I was born—I do not know
when. People say I am old, and I do feel old. But how can
I tell when I was born? I was born at Vaghachi Vadi. That
is our native land. We have lived there for the last five or six
generations. I do not know whence my forefathers came; pro-
bably from the ghts. My mother's name was Kanhi. She
came from the family of Shids from Kuderan. My father was
Malu Padir. There were three children. We had one more
brother who died as a child. My elder brother, Jaitu, was five
or six when I was born. I was about as much when Mali was
born. I was tending cows then. But I was not a confirmed
cowherd, and at times got out of it. I was named Kamalu. I
may have been given other names, but now I do not remember
any. My father died some three years after the birth of Mali.

'We had hard times after the death of my father. When
he was alive we had some land, a few head of cattle and a little
yard with a small hut to live in. But after father's death, the
creditor took away everything. He was a Gujar. My mother
was a deaf, slow-witted woman. People actually addressed her
as Bahiri, meaning deaf-one. I do not know if father had really
taken a loan; but the Gujar took away everything: the hut, the
land, the grain, the cattle. Even our utensils were not spared.
Mother then pulled down our stack of straw and built a small
hovel. To support us, she worked as a labourer. Her brother
had given her a heifer, and we had, in due course, two calves
from it. A piece of land was mortgaged by my father to a
Brahmin who took all the grain, leaving nothing for us. Then,
at my mother's request, the Kalan (a member of the liquor-dealer
caste) from the village paid off the Brahmin, and bought the
piece of land. He only took 10 maunds of grain as rent, leaving
10 to 12 maunds for us.

'Dada worked with the plough. I tended cattle. Then the
Kalan gave us two heifers on terms stipulating to give us every
alternate of their calves. Mother bought a goat for us from the
savings of her wages. In those days everything was so cheap. Two or three rupees would buy a goat. Mother said: "Boys, you are now grown up. I shall give you a she-goat to tend. There will soon be a number of kids and they will be of help to you". The she-goat, by the grace of God, was a very good one. She fed her kids and still gave us about a seer² and a half of milk.

When Dada came of age, mother sold a bullock, supplemented the proceeds with a small loan from the Kalan, and got Dada married. I was about thirteen then. Dada lived with us for about two years after his marriage. Then the usual squabbles started. The old woman would scold him for indolence and negligence, and he would answer back. Then he separated. The trouble started one morning and he left us that evening. That is always so with us Thakurs. Trifling incidents easily lead to disruption. On the day of his separation Dada gathered our neighbours to form a panchayat for the division of our property. But what was there to divide? Merely salt, chilies and such other sundries. Dada was given his share. He stayed with a friend for two or three days while he erected a booth and then moved there. By and by, he built a small hovel.

Now there were only three of us in the house, mother, myself and Mali. I was too young to work at the plough but used to tend cattle. Mother had prepared two or three seedling plots. We had no bullocks old enough for the plough, so we hired a pair from a landlord and started using them the next season. As Dada had left us, we had no one to work the plough. We could have hired a ploughman, but we could not afford it. How could we engage a ploughman when we were living on wild roots and vegetables? So I had to do the work. Mother would stand by and instruct and guide me. Our poverty was extreme. For days we had to manage without grain. My mother alone earned and there were three of us to feed.

Nearly forty years have now passed since I was married. It was seven or eight years after Dada left us. Two bullocks had to be sold to meet the expenses of my marriage. My marriage cost about Rs. 80. The two bullocks which we sold brought us that sum, so we did not have to borrow. Everything was so

² A seer is 0.93 litre.
cheap in those days. About Rs. 60 would meet the expenses of a marriage ceremony. After my marriage we had an additional person to help us in our work, and we started increasing our agricultural activities. The first year we cultivated two plots, the next year two more were cultivated and so on. By the grace of God, grain began to accumulate. My wife, too, was a good worker. She did not keep running off to her mother.

'Things progressed well and after five or six years we had our first son, Kusha. Mother was alive then. That year (1916) we cultivated sweet potatoes and the crop brought us Rs. 80. We sold a bullock to supplement the amount, and the land was recovered from the Kalan.

'Mali, my sister, whom we call Bai, was given away in marriage to a Wagh from Beja about a year after my marriage. She lived with him for a year or two and then ran away to a man named Sarai from Sarai Vadi. Wagh died recently. He used to visit me. He was a good fellow. I, too, used to visit him when I went to Beja. Those were good-natured and simple fellows, the Waghs. Bai would get away from Beja and come to our house practically every week. Mother had beaten her twice or thrice, but would she change her ways? Sarai was a married man, but his wife left him when Bai went to live with him. She went to Chinchavali and found herself a husband there.

'Bai continues to live with Sarai to this day, and has five or six children by him. Three died young, a boy and two girls, I believe. Her eldest son is married. Two of her sons are still young. Two of her daughters are also married and one is still a girl. The younger of the married daughters has left her husband and now lives with the son of my wife's elder sister. This nephew of mine is already married. Mali resents her daughter's doing. She is naturally inimical towards her new son-in-law. They abuse each other. Bai's elder daughter was also after this fellow. But she did nothing about it and her younger sister ran away with him. This fellow, my nephew, had to pay a compensation of Rs. 40 to the first husband of his new consort. These lovers are not yet married, although they live as husband and wife. My nephew pays a keeping fee to our village each

* See p. 77.
year. His first wife stays under the same roof. She has a son and a daughter.

'That landlord's clerk from Badlapur was wicked. He appropriated our land. There was a lot of grassland, but few paddy-fields. He did not give us a single red pice. He beat my poor old mother and abused her. He would say, "Whose field is this?" And mother would say: "It is mine. Although it is mortgaged, I shall have it reconveyed some day." Then he would say: "A horse copulated with your mother, you wretch! Speak out, whose field is this?" So he beat her and had it put down in black and white. Then he conspired with the Mahar of Patgaon, who collected hay and prepared a seedling plot over-night. And the clerk said: "It is my field, I have the right of prescription". What could we do? Then the clerk started collecting rent from us. I am cultivating the field today. I give two maunds of paddy by way of rent.4

'My son Kusha was not weaned when my mother died. He had just learnt to walk. Until his marriage I had owned that piece of land reconveyed from the Kalan. Now I had to mortgage it again to meet the expenses for his marriage. This time I pledged it to a Kumbhar from Kalamb. Thus I ceased to own any land. I had a government plot of four or five acres of grassland. I paid a yearly rent of about a rupee for the plot. Eventually, I got my paddy-land reconveyed from the Kumbhar. I also purchased my old land from the Gujar of Pashan. Formerly my house was a small hovel. But nine or ten years ago I built a good roomy house. I brought wood for my house from the forest contractors working nearby.

'It is now nine or ten years since Kusha and his wife separated from us. His wife was encouraged by her brother, Chango, who said: "What will you get? There are so many brothers." Then she would not work properly. My wife would scold her and she would tell her brother. The women quarrelled for two or three days. Then one evening Kusha and his wife went to stay with Chango. Within a few days Kusha built a small hovel. The people from our village settled his share. He was given two

4 From what I know I have doubt about the veracity of this story
or three maunds of grain, but nothing else. The utensils had already been stolen. There was a broken copper pot (handā) and two small pots. That was all. Recently my daughter-in-law died. I was told she suffered from anaemia and that she needed immediate attention. But what could I do? I consulted the best medicine-men, but unfortunately she did not recover. Kusha returned to me after her death. He is now married again and lives with us. His new wife has a daughter by her former husband. The child lives with her mother's parents. Sometimes the girl comes to stay with us.

'Formerly, I used to visit Kalyan, Badlapur, Murbad, Neral and Bhimashankar. I knew nothing of the country beyond these areas. But recently I have travelled a little. I have been to Borli, where I went to the Thakur fair, and have also been to Poona. I visited a friend up above the Nane Ghat. I remember Poona very well. I saw a cinema show there.

'When I was eight or ten years old I was seized by a spirit and became ill. I used to get fever and suffer from headaches, becoming delirious. I was not able to recognize people. I would get up and start running away. Then they would bind me down. I would shout all sorts of nonsense, then become unconscious. People told me these things afterwards. Then a medicine-man was consulted, and my mother killed a goat and many fowls as advised by him.

'I also suffered from diarrhea. I was married then. Mother was also alive. This was not the doing of a spirit. It was something else; some malicious person practising the black art. Mother used to say it was Bandavanya of Dholyachi Vadi who did it. Sacred ash was brought from a medicine-man. Two or four fowls and some coconuts were offered, and after a week or so I began to improve.

'After that I kept pretty well for a long time, until the time of Kusha's birth. Then stomach aches started of which I now have mild attacks occasionally. I have kept quite fit all these years, although I do have fever occasionally.

'I find that I cannot turn milk into curds. Or if it is churned to buttermilk, it yields no butter. This is the result of black

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8 It seems Kusha was not given his proper share.
art! I cannot say who is responsible for these nefarious activities. It is surely not an outsider, but must be somebody from our own village.

Once, when my wife was asleep at night, someone cut a lock of her hair. As a result, her hair began to fall out. This is also black art. Then my wife became ill and was sent to her sister. There she recovered. She was given some herbal medicine. A medicine-man was consulted, but without effect. The herbal medicine effected the cure.

Only last year Kusha was down with fever. Apparently someone had wooed the forest deity Vāghyā for the mischievous job. They speak of Vāghyā, but it is not Vāghyā’s doing. There are evil spirits hereabouts. People blame Vāghyā to shield their own wicked designs. But it is the invoked spirits who do the mischief. Kusha suffered from diarrhea. He had high fever and would try to run away in his delirium. He was at death’s door. But God helped him out. The medicine-man and his herbal medicines were of no avail. I made no votive offerings, but asked a priest to offer worship to our Maruti." Throughout his illness Kusha was kept in Maruti’s temple. He would not have survived otherwise. All of us were there to attend to him.

‘I have heard many stories of ghosts, but saw one only once when I was quite young tending cows. That day four of us cowherds were taking our cattle to graze in the early hours of the morning. On the way, we saw a male ghost. It stank of meat. It had a white turban on its head and a blanket hanging from the turban. It had a stick in its hand. The cattle were frightened, but it went on its way and did not disturb us. We were quite unaffected by this meeting.

‘We used to work as bond labourers eight or ten years ago. We worked for the landlord, the forest guard and the village headman. We do not do it now. For the landlord, we had to go to Badlapur and proceed to Devloli, about two miles further on, for harvesting. Women also worked as substitutes for their

* The temple is at Vaghachi Vadi.
menfolk when the latter could not come. Each family had to supply one worker. No wages were paid to us, but we were supplied with food. Once we were taken to Dhanki to carry the landlord's coal bags because the landlord was a forest contractor. We worked there for two or three days. We were fed well. But wages? We saw not a pice.

'Guards of the forest department, when they come to recruit bond labour, use a threatening tone. But I have not heard of their having beaten anybody. They merely try to browbeat people with foul language and a general overbearing attitude. This tendency to bully is, however, on the decline. But they do ask for fowls even today. Last year we worked for them in the forest. And have they paid us anything for it? Nothing to this day!

'Many times have I threatened people, but I have not beaten anybody yet; nor have I ever been beaten. I have fought in courts of law a number of times. Once a forest officer attached my house. Then the matter was taken to court. I engaged no pleader, but did the work myself. I won the case. The forest officer was found to be a liar. He was immediately transferred. I had to spend about Rs. 10 in the matter, and was occupied for about a month and a half. I could not attend to agricultural work. But my wife was diligent. She shouldered the responsibility well. The forest officer is now quite friendly with me. If he sees me even from a distance he stops to greet me.

'A village headman also took me to court once. It happened at the time of the Mhase fair. A few wayfarers were enjoying my hospitality. They were gamblers, but I did not know this. One day a Mahar from Patgaon gambled with them and lost. The guests relieved him of some of his ornaments. The victim complained to the headman and the latter came to my house with the Mahar, beat the guests, dragged them to Mhase and handed them over to the police. He stated that I had a hand in the affair. I was interrogated. I said: "These people are complete strangers to me. So many people come to my house during the fair. Some I know, but many are strangers. As a Hindu I cannot deny common hospitality to anybody." It seems the officer was convinced. He let me off. But I had to appear before the taluka magistrate. When questioned by him, I said:
"This headman wants to exact bond labour from us, a day for transplantation and a day again for harvesting. If we go on doing free work for others, how about us? Yet if we say nay to him he tries to get us into trouble."

Then the magistrate looked to the headman for an explanation, and the latter said: "Well, I feed them and give them an anna each". The magistrate thereupon asked him to stop the practice, and threatened to put him in a cell. The headman is quite friendly with me now.

'Once, Khunya from Patgaon left some grain with me for safekeeping. But the landlord's clerk took it by force. What could I do? I was not so bold and well-informed in those days. But now, who dares to play such tricks with me? Khunya lodged a complaint against the landlord and I was cited as a witness. Then the landlord terrorized me so much that I was frightened and told a lie. The decision, naturally, was unfavourable to Khunya. He afterwards sued the landlord, but failed. Everybody was under the thumb of the landlord. What did the landlord give me? Only scoldings and abuse. He didn't give me a single copper pice.

'I have never beaten my wife. She is never negligent in her work. So why should I beat her?

'Speaking of liquor, there was a time (1935) when not a house in our village was without a tin or two of it. Two or four times we have faced an excise raid. I was a confirmed distiller. My wife knew it. Why, everybody knew! During one of the raids they found half a bottle of liquor and a pitcher of mahua flowers in my house. I was caught red-handed. They browbeat me and made me bring the other requisites for distillation from my improvised jungle distillery. I was sentenced to a month's imprisonment. My wife and Kusha walked to Murbad to see me, but they got there rather late. I had been removed to Thana. I was prepared to pay a fine and get off. But Kanthya who informed the excise officer, pressed for imprisonment. The fellow wanted a free drink, you see. And when I refused, he went to the excise officer.

'There was yet another informant from our village. That Ambo! I don't know why he should have been unfriendly toward me. I had done him no harm. He knew about the raid,
yet he gave us no intimation. People afterwards scolded him for his treachery.

"Jail life was not so bad, though. I was made to work in the garden to water the plants and keep the garden clean. But it is jail after all. One is always homesick. With me was a Bhil youth from above the ghats. He was a good companion. There were two or three Kunabis, and two or three Katkaris as well. There was also a Thakur from Ainachi Vadi. He was convicted for the same offence as I. The Bhil youth was a warder. He used to give me good food. "Give more vegetables to the old man," he would say.

"One morning, the jail constable said: "Thakurs, come along." The Thakur from Ainachi Vadi was released the same day. We were given two loaves of bread each. The constable accompanied us to the railway station and bought the tickets for us. He told us to get off at Kalyan and proceed by bus. It was late at night when we reached home. Everyone was so happy to see us. Next day I had my head shaved and walked to Bhimashankar. I also invited a few people to dinner, drank cow's urine and ate some dung for expiation.

"Illicit distillation can never bring riches. I used to earn a rupee or so, but it was immediately spent on chillies or salt or some such thing. Whatever you earn is immediately spent on little luxuries.

"I have not much faith in the trance of a medium. Dhau, however, is a tolerably good medium. He is good at countering the evils of black art. He administers charms; and if there is a case of sorcery, he relieves the patient of its adverse effects. But he does not tell the future.

"This year one of our calves was attacked by a tiger. It had the calf pinned down, but my nephew hit it with a big stone. That sent the tiger away reeling. The calf was bitten on the neck, which swelled to the size of a pumpkin. I would not have dared to attack the tiger!

"I have only a faint recollection of the famine that we experienced continually for two years when I was a child. It was terrible. There was no rain, no crop. We ate bread made from bamboo flowers. We would work somewhere as labourers and buy the flour from the bazaar. Our stomachs would ache and swell
with that wretched food. But what could we do? One had to
keep body and soul together.

‘When I was a small boy I climbed a mango tree near a well.
Other cowherds, older than I, were sitting below in the fork of
the tree. Suddenly I fell. I fell right at their feet and they
caught me. I was not hurt, but since then I didn’t climb trees,
unless they were very easy.

‘Kusha’s son Ganpat died when he was about three years old.
He appeared to me in a dream and said: “Hostile persons prac-
tised black magic against me and so God took me away.” Saying
this, he began to weep. Then my wife and I went to the grave-
yard and dug up his grave. To our great dismay, Ganpat was
alive and weeping! My wife picked him up and carried him
home. I woke up at this point.

‘A week ago I had a strange dream. As I was returning from
my field, I found a lamp burning in the graveyard. I walked
a little further and looked back. There was a wild animal! I
walked a few paces still further and looked back again. It was our
dog!

‘I have seen tigers and serpents in dreams, but now don’t
recollect much.

‘I have witnessed many panchayats and have taken a leading
part in a number of them. But what can one say of our pancha-
ayats except that they extort money and feast lavishly? If
money is not forthcoming, they terrorize with all their might:
“Get hold of that fellow, give him a good hiding!” But once
they are given good things to eat, all is over. Justice is presumed
to have been done!

‘Today our condition is far better than when I was a child.
A Thakur is not easily intimidated now. Formerly we quailed
at the sight of a landlord or a forest beat-guard. No doubt
we are not as happy as our forefathers were. They were the kings
of the forest. But then the last generation saw the depth of
misery. The landlord and the forest guard persecuted us beyond
all imagination. Today our people are mustering up their courage,
and one finds a few literates in each village. Forest guards behave
more as friends than as superiors.’ Women, too, are changing.
Achievements and Aspirations

They are more faithful. The practice of leaving their husbands appears to be on the decline.

'Formerly, our rulers were Hindus. Now the British rule.' Our Hindu raj was conquered by them. How do I know whether the British are at Delhi or elsewhere? The present administration is no good. A curse for the poor! The Congress fights for the poor. Gandhi Mahatma is our king. We first knew about the Congress when congressmen began holding meetings in our area. Ideal administration, according to me, would mean less taxes, freedom to move about in the forest—for us and our cattle—a cheap market and just enough independence to live. That is all.

'Live in such a way, I would say, that people, after your death, will say something good about you.

'Progress, according to me, means education. One must travel a little, know something of the world. One must try to behave as the "white-clothed" people do. Without knowledge, life is a waste.

'I have received no education. How can I tell what the next generation will be like? The only thought that occupies us is how to make both ends meet. Like hired bullock, we have to move when pricked. How can we have high thoughts?'

Rama Rambhau Krishna Ughada

The following is a translation of an autobiographical sketch which Rambhau wrote for me. It gives insight into the working of an educated Thakur's mind. As an informant, Rambhau rendered me great help.

'About a hundred years ago our ancestors lived at Panjare in Akola Taluka of Ahmednagar District. It was about the same time that some of the Ughadas descended into the Konkan and established themselves at Nadagaon in Shahapur Taluka of Thana District, and a few moved to Chinchale in Igatpuri Taluka of Nasik District. Ughadas still officiate as headmen at Panjare and Chinchale. Of the two families, the Ughadas of Panjare are more closely related to us.

'My grandfather, Hari, lost his lands through poverty."

* The story was narrated in pre-Independence days.
There were two brothers, and the descendants of one of them are now living at Ajnup in Shahapur Taluka. They wandered from place to place as they were obsessed with the idea they were haunted by evil spirits. My father, too, moved from place to place after the death of my grandfather. He lived at Chimanichi Vadi in Murbad Taluka for about two years and at Talyachi Vadi for nearly three years. That was from 1912 to 1917. For a short time he lived at Darodyachi Vadi near Neral.

'I was born on 10 May 1906 at Eklahare in Murbad Taluka. My father had lived there since 1902, but I do not know where he lived before that. My maternal uncle came from Hiv in Shahapur Taluka. Contact with him was lost when my father started moving from place to place. Of his family none survives today.

'There was a primary school at Getachi Vadi in Patgaon which I joined in the year 1912. Shri. Raje, a gentleman of Kayastha caste, was then the school-teacher and I used to live with him. He tutored me from 1913 to 1917. Then I went to Neral with my father and joined the Marathi school there. After a few days I went to the boarding school specially maintained by the District Board for the use of hill-tribes, and continued to study there till I passed my final examination in March 1922. I had developed a keen desire for education as a result of my association with Raje, with whom I spent my childhood. When I attended school at Neral, I used to carry the luggage of visitors to Matherran, and the remuneration I received sufficed for my pocket expenses. I used to work on Saturdays and Sundays when the school was closed.

'On leaving school, I thought of opening a grocer's shop. Then I thought of trying for a government job. But my culture revolted against service which meant slavery. I knew how government servants used to harass my people and take undue advantage of their ignorance and simplicity. I thought I would develop the same qualities if I were one of them.

'My first wife was from Vadacha Pada near Eklahare. She belonged to the Paradhi family. We were married in 1928, divorced in 1932, and she died in 1935. We had no children and she did not remarry after the divorce. Today, no member of the Paradhi family remains. I have a brother-in-law, but he
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has absconded. The only near relatives I have today are a cousin of my uncle and his two sons and daughter. They live in Ajnup. My aunt died about a month ago. Two other cousins of mine live at Patol in Shahapur Taluka.

In 1939, I married a woman of the Khandavi family. They belong to the headman's family of Patol. She has a daughter by her first husband, but she has no children by me. The Khandavis are also called Dhokate. My wife has many relatives. Her parents are living and she has brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, cousins and nieces. My distant uncles and cousins live at Nada- gaon in Shahapur Taluka.

I had to do something for my maintenance and so started business on a small scale. I carried vegetables to the Bombay market.

In the old days, there were hardly any literate people amongst us. Rama Kusha Padir of Olman and Namdev Zugare of Khandas were the only literate men known to us. The former was a landlord and the latter a primary teacher. To go to school was considered a punishment by our people in those days. I had a talk with Namdev Zugare regarding the necessity and urgency of educating our younger generation, and he agreed with my views in the matter. He spoke to Rama Padir about me.

It was at this time that I began to think seriously of taking an active part in social work. At times I would leave my work to take part in caste panchayats. My experience with the panchayats was quite contrary to the ideas I had formed about them earlier. As I attended panchayats I learnt more of the evils that had taken root in our community. By and by I realized that it was not only lack of education that was responsible for the degeneration of my community, but that our selfish and unscrupulous leaders were equally the cause. The decisions of these corrupt leaders were invariably influenced by the illegal gratification they received from interested parties. If anybody dared to protest, they would fabricate evidence with the help of interested outsiders and take criminal proceedings against the insurgents. As a result, the community lost all courage.

The behaviour of government servants was exasperating. The way they addressed us was humiliating. Abuse and beatings were normal. A government servant would not leave our village
unless he got liquor to drink, fowls for dinner, and a little money under some pretext or other. Bond labour was the rule. If you protested, a beat-guard would confiscate even your firewood and prepare to proceed against you. Each year the government servants had to be paid some baksheesh, lest they harass the cattle of the Thakurs.

The persecution of the revenue assistant was equally annoying. Nobody backed the Thakurs. Pressure from other communities and the tyranny of the bumbledom reduced our community to a deplorable depth. The money-lenders took advantage of our timidity, bullied us, deprived us of our lands and our cattle, and reduced us to slavery.

I was curious to know if the customs and practices of the Thakurs from the Konkan differed from those of the people of the ghats. I also wanted to visit the various parts of Maharashtra where our community has spread. With this intention I decided to travel and make a survey of the community. During my visits I hoped to hear the grievances of the people and chalk out a plan for reform. In 1932 I saw Rama Kusha Padir of Olman and discussed my plans with him. In those days, Rama Padir was a well-known leader in the Karjat and Murbad Talukas. Besides, he was educated, well-to-do and influential. I needed such people for my work.

Rama Padir organized a meeting of Thakurs at Padirvadi in Patgaon. I presided and we discussed matters of social uplift and education. That was the first meeting I addressed. I was visiting the place after twenty years. I lived there as a boy, and when I went there again I was a young man. The meeting was a great success and people were well impressed with my speech. I felt very happy that day. Kambu Nirghuda of Patgaon pressed me to stay with him for a day. Next day Kambu organized a meeting at Mengalvadi near Mohaghar which was largely attended. This meeting, too, was a great success. My speech was only a repetition of what I had said on the preceding day and, naturally, I was more eloquent. Then I addressed panchayats at Kuderan and other places in the vicinity.

In Pandyachi Vadi a girl had become pregnant as a result of illicit relations with a Thakur. The leaders were helpless to move in the matter as the culprit was backed by a rich Muslim
contractor. I went there, organized a panchayat, dealt with
the matter successfully and thus reduced the influence of Muslim
contractors.

Then I toured Karjat Taluka, visited Thakur hamlets and
addressed meetings. Next I visited Dhamni and thence pro-
ceeded to Chouk. In that area, a man of the Dhangar caste
had illicit relations with a Thakur woman whom he used to
visit every night. He wielded great influence and nobody
dared to accost him. Fortunately, I happened to stay at the
house of this woman and decided to watch for an opportunity.
Soon the door opened and I saw a faint light. I gussed that
the lover had come and I moved ahead to catch him. He was
lying with the woman in his arms, but as I caught his hand,
he jumped up and escaped.

When I returned to my bed, I noticed that the intruder had
stolen my clothes and my cap. I lighted a lamp and with the help
of my friends started searching for my clothes. I saw my cap
lying at the door of a neighbour, who told me that he suspected
this was the work of the Dhangar. The next day I lodged a
complaint at Karjat; and when the police constables searched
the Dhangar's house they found my clothes there. I had about
Rs. 5 in my pocket, but I said I had Rs. 11. Through fear
of being tortured, the Dhangar paid me Rs. 11. The proceedings
continued for two months and he was sentenced to three months'
imprisonment. During the period I had to stay in the vicinity.

I then toured Pen Taluka and collected information about
my community. The men there wear coloured loin-cloths and
allow their hair to grow long. They also wear gāthale round
their necks and got on their wrists, although these are women's
ornaments. Their upper garment is also coloured. It is difficult
to tell a man from a woman in this area. I addressed pancha-
yats here and did a lot of propaganda for the improvement of
social behaviour.

In 1938, I visited Bhor State [now merged in Maharashtra]
and went to Cherphal. There I met a literate Thakur by the
name of Bangara who appreciated my views and my plans. He
was happy to receive me. Chima Shingava also helped me in
my work. Both these friends had sent me an invitation when I

A tableland.
was touring in Pen. One or two others associated with us and we left for Gangavan Pathar near Nagothana to do social work. Then I went to Alibag and Janjira [now merged in Maharashtra] and addressed a number of panchayats in those areas. I spent about a month at Gangavan Pathar. I addressed panchayats in various villages and tried to introduce reform in female attire. Shingava and Bangara helped me in this. Thakur women who visited Nagothana were stopped and asked to wear the sari in the manner of the higher castes. But one Daravada of Patryachi Vadi refused to introduce the reform in his household. He never agreed with us.

'Once there was a panchayat meeting at Gangavan. A certain Thakur had taken a second wife. His first wife wanted a divorce. In the panchayat the husband agreed to give up his right over her, and the question arose as to whom she should be given. The woman was very audacious. She boldly stepped forward, caught my hand, and said that she would marry me and no one else. It seems her father secretly encouraged her. "My first husband was the choice of elders," she said. "Now this one I choose of my own free will." The leaders decided to give her to me and took Rs. 2 from me as is the practice amongst us. I did not like what had happened. It was contrary to my ideals. But whenever I felt depressed on this account, the woman and her father consoled me and tried to win me over to their way of thinking.

'About this time a meeting of the Thakurs of Sudhagad Taluka was organized by Bangara of Cherphal. The manner of wearing the sari was to be discussed. Everybody thought that the discussions would lead to blows. The meeting was not expected to be peaceful. We started discussions at about six o'clock in the evening. As I rose to address the meeting, a member of the audience stepped forward and assaulted me. Free fighting ensued and I received serious injuries. We thought of taking legal action against the assaulters, but as we had not acquired official permission for the meeting, we thought it better to keep silent. My in-laws would not allow me to move out alone. Someone or other always accompanied me wherever I went. But one day I was all alone. I thought over the matter and decided to leave the area. I immediately left for Maval in Poona District. This was in the year 1934.
I left Nagothana. The woman who lived with me as my wife was from the Paradhi family. Nobody knew my whereabouts until I wrote to Bangara and Kashti from Poona. I told them that the woman was forced on me by the panchayat leaders, that I was not to blame in the affair, that I was never married to her and that if she was humiliated, the leaders were responsible and not I. I thus severed relations with this woman—relations which would have obstructed my plans. Besides, she would have made me look ridiculous in the eyes of the world.

In 1932, I visited my relatives at Talyachi Vadi. I also met Rama Padir at Karjat in 1933, and once again in Poona in 1934. In 1933 I went to Badlapur to visit a friend named Paradhi, and met N. G. Chapekar there and discussed the problems of our community with him. During that period I collected about Rs. 45 from Thakurs for the purpose of buying tiles for the Borli temple.

In Maval there are very few Thakurs. I did not take long to tour Maval, from where I proceeded to Khed. I visited many Thakur hamlets in Khed, went to Bhimashankar and after bathing in the sacred waters of Bhima proceeded to tour Junnar. I liked the ways of the Thakurs of Junnar. They appeared cleaner in their habits and in their morals. I loved to stay there and visit the villages again and again. I spent a great deal of time in the Otur area. We used to go on shikar with a big net to catch hares and peacocks.

Next, I went to Sangamner Taluka in Ahmednagar District. Life there was akin to that in Junnar, and I spent much time in shikar. A meeting was organized at Dolasne Pathar in this taluka when I spoke on the importance of education and social service. More than 500 people attended the meeting.

I proceeded to Parner and Rahuri Talukas where I organized and addressed meetings. From there, I went to Akola Taluka and worked in co-operation with Sakharam Madhe, an educated and influential person from the area. People from the Rajur area appeared backward, probably because they occupy a hilly tract. The behaviour in this area is more akin to that in the Konkan. We had, therefore, to spend a lot of time in organizing panchayats. I addressed a big meeting at Devthan in this area and stressed the importance of education. The people
seemed to be much worried by servants of the forest department. Yet the 1930 movement and the Jungle Satyagraha had made the people bold, and I helped them to get their grievances redressed.

Leaving Rajur, I addressed a meeting in Sinnar Taluka, and then proceeded to Nasik. After bathing in the sacred Godavari and visiting the sacred temples, I decided to proceed to Khandesh.

In the panchayats that I addressed, people gave me about Rs. 8 for travelling expenses. I received, as already mentioned, Rs. 11 from the Dhangar at Karjat. People on the ghats collected contributions and gave me Rs. 6 at places. As far as possible I carried about Rs. 30 in cash with me so that I never felt handicapped for want of money.

The people in this area appeared more devoted to religion. Devotional music seemed very popular. From Nyahadongri I went to Rohini, Hirapur and Chalisgaon. From Chalisgaon I returned to Manmad and proceeded to Daulatabad and Latur in Hyderabad State [now in Maharashtra]. There are a number of Thakur families in this area. The people ate wheat, bajri and jowar. I found it difficult to digest the food. Eventually I became accustomed to it. Tamāshā (a bawdy, comic opera) seemed popular in this area, and the people appeared to be happy. As the people in this area are literate, the tyranny of government servants is not so pronounced here as in the Konkan.

I finished my tours and returned home in 1935. Then I visited my former home, Nadagaon in Shahapur Taluka, and found that all my teachings had left no impression on the people. So in the company of a few leaders, I again toured the taluka and organized panchayats and addressed meetings. I visited each Thakur village in Shahapur Taluka, but to no effect.

According to Thakur custom, men and women could live as husband and wife without performing any legal marriage ceremony. The literate amongst us deprecated this practice. It nullified the sublimity of the marriage tie. In a panchayat at Nadagaon we decided to work against it. About five miles from Shahapur, in Mahuli area, there were half a dozen Thakur

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9 The bulrush or spiked millet; *pennisetum typhoides*.
10 Guinea corn; *sorghum vulgare*. 
hamlets notorious for couples who were not legally married. Some of them were parents of several children. We decided to marry these people by religious rites. In one day about forty marriages were performed. In every village such couples were being married. We met with great success. It was at this time that I met Gangaram Gunaji Mane, the social worker of Shahapur. He encouraged us, attended these functions, and helped us in every way.

'I did my best to introduce reform amongst our people but they seemed to be indifferent. They used to say: "These leaders come, give us advice, and walk away. They are not to be found when we need them to back us". Again, interested government servants told our ignorant people that we were Congress workers, that they would be arrested and imprisoned if they followed our advice. I thought over the matter and decided to fight the injustice of officialdom. With this object in view, I thought of starting an organization for our people. But then they were so ignorant, so timid. In addition, the tyranny of the money-lenders and government servants had left no strength, no spirit of opposition in them.

'So I decided to join the Congress, and in 1937 became a regular Congress worker, serving under the auspices of the Shahapur Taluka Congress Committee. The Congress was then fighting the Local Board elections and my brother-in-law, Dhaul Rama Vehele of Birwadi, was the Congress candidate for a seat reserved for us, tribals. He succeeded against a Thakur who was put up by the landlords. One of these landlords, who himself had lost to a Congress candidate in the general constituency, bore a grudge against me and saw his opportunity for vengeance when a marriage was arranged between me and a divorced woman. The landlord instigated the first husband of the woman to take criminal proceedings against me. We had to postpone the remarriage ceremony. Dhaul Patil, the father of the woman and I were the three accused. The proceedings continued for eleven months and all of us were discharged. The remarriage ceremony was performed about a week after we had been discharged, on 25 September 1939. It was performed at Patol and was attended by about five hundred guests from different areas.

'As I have already said, I was an active Congress worker in
the year 1938. During this year I complained against a police constable who had unjustly beaten an innocent Thakur. The constable was immediately transferred.

In 1938, I spent most of the time in establishing voluntary schools in the taluka. I succeeded in starting about forty schools. Gangarambhau Mane was the president of the organization that ran the schools and I worked as the supervising officer. I did this work until about 1942.

During this period, a revenue assistant from Mokhada was found extorting bribes from Thakur cultivators. I proceeded against him and he was dismissed. I also proceeded against a forest overseer from Wada Taluka for similar reasons and he too was dismissed. Later, I proceeded against a Panjabi forest overseer working in the Khardi range for accepting illegal funds, but the complaint was withdrawn when he returned the amount to those from whom he had extorted it. In 1939 a forest overseer from the Shahapur range had unjustly recovered a fine of Rs. 100 from poor peasants. I handled the case and made him return the amount to the peasants. A range officer disliked such activities of mine and reported to the district superintendent of police that I was in the habit of lodging false complaints. The superintendent sent a police officer to inquire into the matter, but he could find no evidence against me.

In 1943, I agreed to do propaganda work for the Grāmasudhāraṇā Manda[ organization for the improvement of villages] of Bombay at the request of the secretary of the organization. The breeding of cattle, poultry and veterinary relief were the special activities of the organization, and my people derived much benefit from these activities. I organized a village uplift association at Vahale in Shahapur Taluka which in a short time became the centre of village activities in the area. I collected about Rs. 600 for the association from officers and moneyed contractors. The association built roads and wells and looked to the sanitation of the village. We bought superior breeds of fowls and introduced them in the village. We also bought a stud-bull to improve our indigenous breed. Improved seeds were also introduced. A grain bank was started with the help of the special officer for aboriginal tribes.

In 1943, I started an association for the backward peasants
from hilly tracts. On the holy day of Pāḍvā\textsuperscript{11} in 1944 the organization was named “The Aboriginal and Hill-Tribes Association”, and it functions today under this name. Narayan Ragho Ambale is the president of the association and I am the secretary. There are eleven members of whom two are Katkaris, two Warlis, two Kolis and five Thakurs.

With the help of Shri. Bal Gangadhar Kher\textsuperscript{12} a grain bank was started at Velavli Pathar. The bank is useful. In the year 1941, five grain banks were started under the auspices of the Rural Development Board in this area. Our association undertakes to give free legal aid to the deserving poor. It helps members to secure bullocks for agricultural work, supplies them with seeds and other agricultural necessities, helps them to secure a stud-bull for improving the indigenous breed, and tries to introduce reform in the social behaviour of the villagers. I often have to leave my agricultural work and attend law-courts on behalf of these people. At present, I have three cases in hand. One is against a police officer who extorted Rs. 200 from an agriculturist, the second also against a government servant who accepted a bribe, and the third against a contractor for neglecting to build a well properly.

On 9 February 1942, I organized a Thakur conference at Sakadbaw. It was largely attended and its resolutions carried great weight.

I lost my younger brother when I returned to Shahapur. My elder brother accepted a job at Hadapsar, near Poona, and my parents went to live with him. So today I am alone in the Konkan.

When I returned to Shahapur after my tour of Thakur areas, I had a mind to live at Nadagaon, but my brother-in-law was engaged in charcoal-burning and needed my help. He was elected to the District Local Board and could not spare much time to look after his business. I worked with him for a year.

In 1941, I worked hard to see that my friend Narayan Ragho Ambale was re-elected unopposed to the District Local Board. This year [1944], I was pressed by my people and my

\textsuperscript{11} The first day of the year.

\textsuperscript{12} Former Chief Minister of Bombay.
colleagues to represent them on the Board. I was elected unopposed.

' My words, I thought, would carry no weight if I were to move from place to place. So I decided to limit my activities to Shahapur Taluka, and since 1936 I have been living at Patol engaged in social service. Most of my relatives are in Shahapur Taluka and I preferred this area for that reason.

'I was convinced that however earnestly one may work, unorganized individual effort meets with no appreciable results. So I joined the Congress in 1937. Fortunately the Congress was in office then and did a lot to alleviate rural misery.

'In 1942, the Congress was declared illegal, and the people experienced a sudden change. As a result, I had to reorganize my association to keep my social activities going. I used to get Rs. 30 a month when working as a supervisor for the primary schools in our area. But when I gave up that job in 1948 I had to take to farming to support myself. We are a family of two, my wife and myself, and we maintain two ploughs. Social work prevents me from giving sufficient attention to cultivation. Sometimes I have to move from place to place, which keeps me away from home for days together. Correspondence also takes up my time. Thus I am greatly handicapped in my agricultural work, but that is inevitable.

'The lands of my forefathers at Nadagaon were usurped by landlords years ago. I am trying to get them back for my relatives, and I think I shall succeed as the present landlord is amenable.

' My people are in the dark about the real nature of the Hindu religion. Their belief in spirits is unshakable. They have more faith in the sacred ash than in medical treatment. I have always tried to teach them to be rational in their outlook and behaviour, and have endeavoured to impress upon them the efficacy of proper medical aid. If they insist on the sacred ash I do not oppose their wish, but I do implore them to take medicine along with the ash. I have introduced sacred books like the great ancient epics among the literate brethren. These books are didactic and have a moralizing effect on readers. I have also impressed on my people the view that the gods whose festivals we celebrate are worshipped because they lived and died
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for mankind, that we ought to follow in their footsteps and engage in meritorious acts.

'I am convinced that when working for social reform, one should not expect immediate results. The people here, especially a backward community like ours, are rather conservative and do not change their outlook overnight. The change is always slow. So I have decided to concentrate my activities in a small area in the hope that if I succeed in this area the reforms will spread to adjacent areas. With this view, I have made Shahapur Taluka the centre of my activities and I am working here for the uplift of my people. I am happy that my work is meeting with success'.

KUSHI BANGARIN

This woman, as her life-story reveals, is a ritual conductor and a midwife. She tells us the circumstances in which she started her practice and her interesting experiences.

'I was born at Zugaryachi Vadi. My father lived and died in this very village. My mother's name was Kamali and my father's Bhika. They were married by the first-marriage rites. I have no brother. I had four sisters of whom three are living. They have large families. The one who died left behind her a son who is now living at Chaphyachi Vadi with his wife and four or five children.

'I have given birth to eight children. Only four of them are living, three sons and a daughter. I have a grand-daughter from a deceased daughter. Another daughter, who is about thirty, is given in marriage to Goma Gorha, a resident of my village. Her daughter, Bhagi, who is about four years old, is congenitally deaf and dumb. My eldest son may be about eighteen and the youngest about ten. I may be about fifty-five, but I have no real idea of my age.

'The normal interval between two pregnancies in my case used to be three to four years. My parturitions were easy and safe. My children were born in their father's house. I never went to my parents on these occasions as my father hesitated

13 The feminine form of Bangara.
14 See p. 58.
to accept the responsibility. Well-to-do people do bring their daughters home for delivery as they think their daughters will be well fed and better looked after under their personal supervision.

'We are cultivators and I live in a small hovel. My father, too, was mainly a cultivator and used to work as a labourer to supplement his agricultural income. We also work as labourers when there is no pressure of agricultural work. My parents were of a loving and amiable nature. Neither of them ever beat me or even slapped me.

'My father possessed a large number of cattle. I used to tend them until I was married. That was when I was about nine.

'I experienced much hardship in my childhood. My parents worked hard to make both ends meet. Yet we had enough grain only in the harvest season. We used to live on wild onions when we could get no grain. In summer, we prepared a stirabout from karavand berries in the morning and ate bread only in the evening. We always ate whatever was available before going to bed. One cannot sleep on an empty stomach.

'Two or three times have I seen crops destroyed by locust. Some years ago, when there was famine in our area, I saw well-to-do cultivators living on wild onions. Even unpalatable wild tubers were used as food. At Murbad, rice was available at 12 seers (11 kilos) a rupee. That was a special provision for the famine-stricken people. We used to buy rice at Murbad. There were many occasions during those days when we had to do without food. Conditions now are much better. There has been no famine since then and we have not yet suffered from utter destitution. It is also easy to secure work now, and the wages help us when grain is scanty.

'Poverty seems to be our lot. I suffered poverty when I was with my parents and I am suffering from it with my husband. So it is always poverty! It is not that we have to go without food, but there are many occasions when we do not have enough to eat.

'We are heavily in debt. We have borrowed 8 maunds of grain from Tivarekar—the woman landlord of Tivare. She is a good woman and does not oppress her tenants. In addition
to this grain, I have borrowed Rs. 16 from Kashi Bangarin and have taken on credit salt, chillies and other provisions worth about Rs. 5 from a grocer. We have also to pay Rs. 16 for two blankets bought on credit.

'I used to procure and carry firewood for beat-guards when I was a girl and lived with my parents. That was bond labour for which no payment was ever made. I have carried firewood to police constables at Khandas. Everything free. Now there is no outpost at Khandas. Even today I carry firewood to servants of the forest department and we are never paid. The headman of Dongarnhave also extorts bond labour from us. Our cattle graze there, and we bring kārvi reeds from the Dongarnhave area. That is why he forces one person from each family to work for him one day in the transplanting season, or he demands our service for harvesting. A landlord from Nandgaon, too, extorts labour from us. He advances us grain at the usual rate and makes us prepare sweet potato beds for him and work for him in the fields. He feeds us twice daily, bread in the morning and rice for lunch, and pays each person two annas a day. He does not give grain to those who do not prepare sweet potato beds for him or who do not go to work in his fields. He had given me a maund of grain. I wanted more but he would not give it. "No grain", he said, "if there is no sweet potato bed prepared for me". He pays us, no doubt, but the payment is unreasonably low, and we have no choice but to work for him and accept what little he chooses to pay.

'We are a quiet, peace-loving family. My husband never beats me. I used to beat my children when they were young. But now I don't. If I tried to they would protest and prevent me from doing so as they are now grown up.

'My husband has been in jail once. It is said that my husband and a few others of our village assaulted an excise officer who had surprised them while they were engaged in illicit distillation. Sixteen people were taken into custody, tried and sentenced to various terms. We engaged a pleader. We spent about Rs. 3,500 on the case. Prior to these convictions, our people were quite well off. But this business totally ruined us. We had to sell our cattle, our grain and our sweet potatoes to repay
the creditor from whom we borrowed the money for our defence. Many of us had to sell our lands too. My neighbour Kashiram sold his land and paid off Rs. 900. Since then there has been no raid.

'I used to go to Bhimashankar before my marriage. I was then tending cattle and it was only after harvesting that I used to be free. Father never liked to take the children to Bhimashankar with him. But I used to worry him and he had to give in. Since my marriage, I have visited Vade-Ghode, Junnar and Manchar in Poona District. My neighbours go to these places frequently for marketing and I have accompanied them on some occasions. I used to go to Thana to see my husband when he was in prison there. I never went alone. Others of my village had relatives in prison at the same time and we used to form a party and go together. We were allowed to interview the convicts once a month, and we went every month. Since my husband's release, I have not been to Thana. I have been to Shahapur Taluka, where I visited a relative.

'About twelve years ago, the people of our village placed leaves of gram plants in the river one morning, and they waited till late in the evening for the poison to work. But the poison failed and the people returned disappointed. Very early next morning I went to the river all alone to see if the poison had worked overnight. I was amazed to see large fishes floating on the surface of the water. They were so big that I dared not catch them. I ran to the village and informed the people, who hurried to the river and caught all the fishes. They did not fail to give me a share.

'When I was young, I used to climb mango trees to pluck the fruit, but I never met with a fall. I used to be very cautious.

'Once, in my childhood, I was on the point of death. I had high fever and suffered from epileptic fits. It was not a physical disorder. Some evil soul had worked against me. My father took me to a medicine-man who cured me. The medicine-man was too powerful for the malicious soul. He asked my mother to keep a lead figure to represent the spirit.\(^{15}\) My grandmother had

\(^{15}\) See p. 57.
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given my mother a cow and the spirit accompanied the cow. We no longer keep the figure; it is with us, but no longer "living"; is "dead" now. We no longer offer it any food. That is because we have no cattle, and my parents, too, are dead.

'I once had an attack of smallpox. My hands, feet and face were affected. But the eruptions were superficial and the scars are no longer visible. One of my sons died of smallpox. My daughter, too, died of the same affliction.

'Last year a serpent bit me. Kashiram cured me with some herbal medicines, though effects of the poison had reached my head. He massaged it with ajwan, and he massaged my feet, too. I knew nothing of this as I was unconscious, but the people who gathered around me told me this later. All had lost hope. Kashiram even said: "The old woman is failing. Her body is getting cold."

'I have seen a woman die of a serpent bite. She had been reaping her field. As she was returning with the sheaves on her head, a serpent bit her. She could hardly reach home ere she collapsed. Dehu was out hunting crabs when he was bitten by a serpent. He died in a short time. As Kamalu Zugare climbed a palm tree a scorpion bit him on the chest. He died after he was taken home. Many cures were tried. He was even taken to Agashichi Vadi to the god Kālabhairav at Mhatre's house, but all efforts proved futile.

'Once my sister and I thought of collecting some kandol fruit. The Sun had set and it was quite dark. The fruit was in the hollow of a big mango tree. I climbed the tree and my sister, standing at the foot of the tree, held a lighted torch and guided me. As I climbed I saw a pair of feet hanging over my head. I looked up and there was a human figure. Its hands were hairy, its hair loose, and it held fast to the tree. It took my breath away. I jumped down, and started running. My sister followed me though she had no idea of what had happened. The figure on the tree was a female goblin.

'I was once tending cattle. As I was about to return in the evening, I saw a stray goat, and holding it by the horns I brought it home. I thought the goat was Paradhi's, but Paradhi's goat
was already in the pen. It was a female ghost appearing as a goat. A woman who died in childhood is buried near Kashiram’s field and it seems she appears in different forms to frighten unwary persons.

“My husband is a medicine-man. We have a Čedā16 an idol of the deity in our house and possesses him. When he is possessed, it speaks through him and helps other people in their difficulties, but not members of our own family. A medium cannot help his own family. We must go to some other medium when we need the help of a deity. My husband also practises divination. He uses a brass pot for the purpose. When my hands or feet ache he divines the reason and gives me sacred ash to use. This gives me immediate relief.

“Many times I dreamed I was flying in the air. Then, reaching a cliff, I would come down with a heavy fall. When I was suffering from smallpox I used to see smallpox deities in my dreams. “Get up,” they would say, “and bathe your child.” That used to wake me. But where was the child? It died long before.

“Two or three times goddess Saṭvāī talked to me in my dreams. She wore a blue sari. I was lying in my bed and she stood by my side. “Get up”, she said. “Why do you sleep? I have come specially to advise you. You may safely work as a ritual conductor (punjārin). You should have no apprehensions. Begin with your grandchild when your daughter is delivered. You shall succeed.”

“I decided to follow the advice of the goddess and started practising as a ritual conductor. Many children served by other ritual conductors have died early. But I am proud to say that all the children I served have lived long. Before placing the child in the basket, I pray to God Almighty, god Shani and the goddess Saṭi, and apply sacred ash to the forehead of the child. I do not receive much for my services. For a boy I get 4 annas and for a girl, 2 annas. A well-to-do father may give me half a rupee, but that is rare. In addition to the money, I get a handful of pulse, half a kilo of rice and half a copra. That is all.

“I also practise as a midwife, and was accidentally introduced

16 See p. 96.
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to this profession. A woman from our village began her labour when the regular midwife was away. It was not possible to reach her. I went to the woman in childbirth and sat by her. This was not her first delivery. She was a mother of two or three children. I did all that a midwife does. The woman’s sister-in-law assisted me and the delivery was easy. Since then I have become a regular midwife.

‘My maternal uncle was adept at extracting a dead foetus from the womb. He used a sharp knife for the purpose. He would cut the head and shoulders of the foetus, turn it if necessary, and remove it. He worked blindfolded so that the woman’s person might not be exposed to his sight and she might not feel embarrassed. All the same he never tried to remove a live foetus lying athwart the womb. He could remove a calf from a cow, too. The thought that there would be none after him to practise this art worried him. He told me so and advised me to learn the art from him. I liked the idea and acted on his advice. I watched him at work on two occasions. I was sitting close by him so that I might not miss any detail. I could learn no more from him, however, as he died shortly afterwards.

‘On the strength of this knowledge, I started. Yet I have never tried to extract a dead foetus. I am not so clever. I once removed an infant that lay athwart the womb. The woman was the wife of a Shid from Pimploli. On Friday the pains started and I was sent for on Sunday. I applied mahua oil to my hands and turning the infant in the proper way, gently removed it. The rest of the cases I treated were normal. I attended to all my daughters during their confinement. I have assisted about sixty women during the twenty years of my practice, and more than half the children of my village were attended to at the time of their birth by me.

‘For the first five days after delivery I am required to massage the mother and bathe the child once a day. I receive half a rupee for my services.

‘My mother once gave birth to an infant with a caul enveloping its head. It was dead when born and was placed under a basket. This was done only to honour the custom.
‘I have buried the placenta of two women in a manner contrary to the normal way as a measure to stop future pregnancies. But this had no effect. The women bear children every year.

‘If my children have enough gruel to eat for the rest of their days, I shall be content. That is my only desire, my only prayer to God.’

**Rama Kondu Govind**

Rama (27) is an agricultural assistant working under the block development officer at Kalyan. He lives in the heart of the town in a small room, about four metres by two, a mere lean-to, for which he pays a monthly rent of seventeen rupees. In his room he has three chairs, two stools, one cupboard and an iron cot. He has a kerosene gas stove, too. Pictures of Hindu gods and photographs of political leaders and of family members adorn the walls. A coloured photograph of his parents stands out prominently among them. He uses a wrist-watch, has utensils of stainless steel and his wife wears some very modern ornaments. The following is his life-story as told by him.

‘I was born at Kortad in Mokhada Taluka of Thana District, twenty-seven years ago. Our family is there for many generations. My father, who lives at Kortad has two wives. The elder has two sons: myself and my elder brother Sonu. The younger one has only one son, Mohan, who runs a grocery shop in a village near Kortad. My father is not literate. Sonu has studied up to fourth standard in a primary school. Mohan was doing his matriculation when he left the school. His wife studied up to the primary third. She was in the backward class hostel at Mokhada. Vasant, Sonu’s son (7) is with me and is in the third standard.

‘I received my primary and high school training at Bordi, Palghar and Jawhar [Thana District]. I was living in hostels for backward class students at these towns. I was the only Thakur student in the hostels. I was in the ninth standard when I left the school. One day I failed to do my home work for Sanskrit.

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17 Family budget and details of property of this gentleman appear on p. 42.
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The teacher made me stand on the bench as punishment and I left the school after that incident. On the advice of Laxmanji Mahajan [a social worker] I went to Kosbad near Dahanu [Thana District] and did there a two years’ course in agricultural training. I received a monthly stipend of Rs. 25 during my period of training. We students had to spend about twenty rupees a month on food in those days. I was the tenth among the successful candidates. I got a little more than 50 per cent marks. I finished the course there in May and was married on the third of June.

I got married to Ratnaprabha Bhore (21) from Savarpada, a village adjacent to Kortad. My father selected the bride. We were married at Kortad by Vedic rites, five years ago. I believe mine was the first marriage in our community to be performed by Vedic rites. The officiating priest was a Brahmin from Jawhar. I have two children: son Hemant (2½) and daughter Lalita (2 months). My wife was born at Savarpada. Hemant was born at Alibag [Kolaba District]. I was then serving there and I sent my wife to the government maternity home for delivery. Lalita was born at my father’s house at Kortad.

My wife is illiterate and comes from a backward village in the interior. Naturally it was difficult for her to adapt herself to the unfamiliar atmosphere in her new urban home. She wept for a week, and was very uncomfortable in the beginning. However, she ultimately got tuned to the new life. And I am glad for it. A female hermaphrodite\(^\text{18}\) from Jawhar taught her to wear the sari in the modern urban fashion. My wife uses vermilion, snow and face powder. She did not know any cosmetics before her marriage. She now prepares many delicacies which she never knew before.

Four days after marriage, that is on the seventh of June, I was appointed as an agricultural inspector in the Beggars’ Home at Chembur, in Greater Bombay. I was paid a monthly salary of Rs. 140 and had government quarters at the Home. I served there for six months and then left because the lady superintendent wanted me to do manual work with the beggars in the Home. After leaving Chembur I was idle for a month and a half and then

\(^{18}\) One of those referred to on p. 132
went to Tharsa, forty km. from Nagpur, for a gramasevak's course. It was a two years' course, but the climate did not suit me and I came home after two weeks. Soon after, in March 1959, I was selected and appointed by the State Government as an agricultural assistant and posted at Alibag in Kolaba District. A year and a half ago I was transferred to Kalyan. If I do not resign earlier, I propose to retire to Kortad. I have so far helped only one Warli youth to get employed as an agricultural assistant.

'I like and wish to be a forest contractor. If some day I resign from this service, I will take to this business. I will live in some central town and look after my business. This is necessary for the education of children. If I keep an establishment in a town my children and those of my two brothers will live there and the problem of their education will be solved.

'I wish to train my son Hemant for the lawyer's or the physician's profession. Vasant, my nephew says he wants to be a lawyer. I shall consider my life well-lived if I succeed in offering the children of the family all opportunities and facilities for education.

'In our house at Kortad there is a picture of goddess Yamāī and a bunch of peacock feathers representing god Hiravā. Here, at Kalyan, I have no idols. I have no faith in bōd, men reputed to be gifted with mystic powers. I believe in the existence of spirits and also in a medium possessed of a deity and going in a trance. Once while walking home from Jawhar with my father in rainy season I saw a dog as large as a heifer. It vanished before our eyes! I have seen a door open and shut automatically and mysteriously. Such mystifying incidents make me believe in the existence of spirits and ghosts. Once my son Hemant suffered from measles. Someone told me in a dream to go to a shrine near our house, offer flowers and coconut to it and pray for Hemant. Next morning I did so. But there was no relief for Hemant.

'In 1957 when we built our new house at Kortad, we invited a Brahmin priest from Jawhar to perform the worship of god

19 Literally 'servant of the village'; an official working under the block development officer and looking after the developmental activities of a village.
Satyanārāyaṇ. This worship is not performed in our community. Ours was an innovation.

'We eat meat, though not daily. No one from our family particularly cares for it. We take tea. At home in Kortad, Sonu does not take tea. Father takes coffee. Women in the family take tea. We eat wheat for the breakfast and rice for lunch and dinner. Children eat biscuits or some snacks with their afternoon tea.

'I have no liking for gymnastics, nor much for music. It is only recently that my people have taken to devotional music (bhajan). I used to dance when I was a boy, but now I do not. Once I took part in a drama when I was in a school at Bordi. My performance was appreciated. Since then I have never acted in a drama. I often go to pictures, with my wife and children. Sonu has a rage for it. He never misses a chance when he comes here or goes to some other town. I used to play volley-ball at Kosbad. I no longer play any game.

'I am a regular reader of the Marathi daily Lokasattā, although I buy it only occasionally. I also read Sanmitra, the Thana weekly. I bring it from the office library. I do not visit nor am I a member of any other library or reading room.

'Shrinivas Vishvanath Godbole of Karjat and Vishe of Shahapur are my best friends. We were living and studying together in the agricultural school at Kosbad. Both of them are agricultural assistants in government service. Godbole is in Gujarat, and Vishe at Saswad in Poona District. With these friends I travelled south to Mysore, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Kolhapur, Poona, and east to Nagpur and Vapi. Deshmukh, a supervisor in the co-operative department is also my friend. We developed friendship at Alibag.

'As father is well-to-do, I do not have to send any money from my salary to him. On the other hand I bring here from my home at Kortad rice and some other food-grain which my father raises on his farm. I have not yet purchased any land from my savings nor taken a life insurance policy. Sonu and Mohan have insured their lives. I have a savings account with a post office here. My brother has one with the post office at Jawhar. I have not yet invested any money in shares.
'I go home three or four times a year, usually with my family. As we have servants at home, I am not called upon to do any agricultural work when I go home. Coming from a family of farmers, I know all agricultural operations. I am also well versed in the modern farming methods because of my training and profession. I have been living in one town or the other from the time I joined primary school. Consequently, I am not used to the life at Kortad where I feel uncomfortable when the stay is long.

'Family planning is necessary for us backwards. We are illiterate and agriculture is our only major economic activity. Even today we are feeling the pressure of our increasing population on the limited land available to us. To fight poverty, we must educate the younger generation. It will open to them new sources of employment. Secondly, we must resort to family planning which will lessen the pressure on land.

'I have not given much thought to the problems of my community. But I think that the panchayat of the community should be preserved as it promotes social cohesion. It offers a platform for discussing our problems and sets down a code of behaviour for our people. I support inter-caste marriages. I have not heard of any in my community, though.'
EPISODE

The foregoing description is full of items reflecting the influence of Brahmanic culture on Thakur life. The process of assimilation has been going on for so long that today it is hard to distinguish a Thakur from his agriculturist neighbour. This process has been accelerated since the Thakur took to agriculture. When the Ma began to employ a Brahmin priest for some of their rites, their assimilation proceeded at a greater pace. Today it is they who are the least easy to distinguish from the farmers of the plains. However, the Ma Thakur has retained some traits reminiscent of his former hunter’s life. Thakur men and women like to wander in the forest. They look upon it as a paradise. Until recently both the Ka and Ma went to the forest for sexual intercourse. I know a Ma youth who left his job in an urban factory because there was no forest to roam about. This was in 1945. Today Thakur attitude is much changed.

Originally the Thakur appears to have been a hunter. The ceremonial cooking and roasting of flesh in the forest after hunting, indicates this. The flesh is cooked in a prescribed manner in the forest.

It must have been a long way from hunting to agriculture. Yet the Thakur appears to have taken to agriculture long ago. Had the change come later, the spread of agriculture would not have been so complete, nor would the Thakur have been able to assimilate the new life to the extent to which he has done.

The Thakur tribe, which originally might have been one, is now divided into two divisions, the Ma and the Ka, standing at different levels of culture. This affords interesting material for a student of cultural changes. Common culture-trait traits lead one to think that the two divisions belong to a common stock.
Thus, both sects forbid the making of a winnowing basket in wickerwork. The village headman, whether Ma or Ka, is always chosen from among themselves. Eating from a common plate is common to both. The betrothal ceremony, the turmeric-anointing, the oil ceremony and some other items of the marriage ceremony are common to both sections. Some of these items are also common to other communities of the nearby hills and plains. Except for the rites which have found their way into the Ma marriage ceremony with the Brahmin priest, the marriage rites of the two sections are almost identical. Birth and childhood rites and funeral rites also afford a number of close similarities.

Although the Ma woman wears a bodice, she does not cover it with a part of her sari as is done by the non-Thakur woman of the region. The Ka woman leaves her breasts bare. This leads one to think that the bodice of the Ma woman is a later adaptation. When the *Bombay Gazetteer* was written its informant noted that some Ma women were seen without upper garments.\(^1\) The Ka have a superstition that no deity will visit and possess a man who allows his hair to be cut short. This belief is shared by the Ma residents in some parts of Kolaba, although the more advanced Ma do not believe this superstition.

A good illustration of the differentiation is afforded by Kamdi. The term originally signified a *dák* player, *dák* being a small drum. At the obsequeial rites of the Ka, a Kamdi must sing to the accompaniment of this drum. This is one of the two essential items, the other being the offering of blood. Among the Ma, who employ a Brahmin priest for their obsequeial rites, the term Kamdi remains only as a family name. Yet in the latter-day non-Brahmin movement\(^2\) people looked to the members of this family for priestly services. The Ma wanted their Kamdis to conduct their marriage rites because the latter were believed to be the former priests of the caste. However, it deserves to be noted that among the Ka the Kamdi has no place in the conduct of marriage rites. He may not even be invited.

The main argument against the postulation of their common origin is provided by the different family names and deities of the

\(^1\) *Bombay Gazetteer* (1885), Vol. XVIII, p. 425.

\(^2\) A movement against the domination of the Brahmins.
two sects. It may be that the family names are a later acquisition cultivated after separation. Different deities may be traced to different local influences.

The Ka believe the Ma seceded as a result of the employment by the latter of the Brahmin priest; and the facts presented lead one to think that his view is probably correct.

The Thakurs are not the autochthons of the area they now occupy. That the Konkan Thakurs migrated from Nasik District is certain. Each family knows its vatan or original home in that district. The deities they invoke in the marriage rites belong to that district. The turban which the Konkan Thakur wears on all ceremonial occasions is not found among the neighbouring people, but is common in Nasik and other upcountry areas. Whether the tract around Trimbak is the original habitat of the Thakur or whether he was an immigrant even there cannot be said with any certainty.

Evidence of culture-contact appears in every walk of Thakur life. The dialect of the Thakur, his method of cultivation, his deities, his holidays and festivals, childhood ceremonies, obsequies, arts and amusements show the effect of outside contact.

Foreign ideas were adopted and fashioned by the Thakur to fit in with his way of life. Thus, without bothering about the significance of the word shilangan, which means ‘crossing the village boundary’ and implies the beginning of military activity, he brought some varieties of corn from beyond the village boundary and called the corn shilangan. When abstract ideas were beyond his comprehension, he gave them a concrete form. The Ka gave a concrete form to the Apsara, a nymph of Hindu mythology, gave her a dwelling in the hills nearby, and some of the Ka even claimed to have seen the nymph in her dwelling.

People adjust themselves to the impact of neighbouring cultures without feeling much strain if there is no outside interference and the new culture has some common traits with the old. The process can be accelerated smoothly and successfully only after a careful study of the natural course of cultural development. If the positive effort to accelerate the process is in line with the natural course, then only can it yield good results. People may peacefully and happily accept whatever is compatible with their own culture. If, however, outside agencies persist in trying to
give a totally different colour to the culture of a people, that may result in conflict leading to disruption and moral depression.

The problem of hill-tribes in general, as G. S. Ghurye has rightly pointed out, is fundamentally the same as the problem of the backward agriculturists among the Hindus of the plains. This applies especially to the Thakur because, though a member of a hill-tribe, the Thakur has firmly established himself in the Hindu hierarchy, having in the process completely assimilated the plough-culture. Thakur terms for his rites, ceremonies, functions and functionaries liberally presented in the foregoing pages reflect his Hindu identity. Many of these terms are of Sanskrit origin, and most of them are in the use of the tribal and non-tribal neighbouring communities and have no indigenous synonyms.

The problem of these people, then, is an aggravated and acute form of the common agrarian problem. On analysis the subject resolves itself into two factors: immediate relief for the present sufferings of the people, and a constructive plan for their development. Though there may be two opinions regarding the measures for alleviation and methods of reconstruction, there can be hardly any dispute as to the reality and magnitude of their grievances.

The grievances of the Thakur are, as those of the common Indian cultivator, mostly economic. Those which are not apparently economic either originate from, or result in, economic hardships. Poverty is rampant. All are in debt. The Orissa Inquiry Committee says with regard to the Orissa aborigines: 'What little they grow and earn goes into the pockets of the middlemen and money-lenders.' This observation is equally true of the Thakur. The crops that he grows are not sufficient for the year after repaying loans in kind. Food, therefore, must be bought. For a wedding, feasts must be given and the bride-price paid. A feast also has to be given at an obsequial function. In case of sickness, the wrathful deities must be appeased. A fine must be paid to a panchayat if one is required to face trial. For all these purposes, a Thakur needs money. Unless he has savings,

he must borrow. He is thriftless, ignorant and prone to self-indulgence. As a consequence he gets into debt.

The Thakur is illiterate. There are few schools in the area which he can attend, and these have been only recently started. The one school at Vaghachi Vadi of which I had personal experience was never fully attended and was hardly regular in its functions. Where there are schools, however, poverty prevents their use, and the Thakur continues to be generally illiterate.

Ignorance and indigence are accompanied by their consequences: malnutrition and disease. Malaria and various skin diseases loomed large over Thakur areas. Preventive measures by government have brought malaria under control. So, too, well-built wells have almost eliminated guinea-worm from Thakur villages.

Our ideas about the problem of the development of the tribal are coloured by our ideologies and our values. A missionary, for instance, may use faith as the measuring rod of progress. Politicians would value social work according to the recruits they could secure for their party. We must, therefore, first try to analyse and examine the current theories about the future of the so-called aborigines. There are today three schools of thought in the field: The assimilationists who advocate assimilation with neighbours; the isolationists who advocate complete or partial segregation; and the revivalists who, in addition to segregation, would like to see pristine tribal culture revived.

The position of the assimilationists from Roy onwards, who seem to carry the day, is best presented by A. V. Thakkar. He says: 'The aborigines should form part of the civilized communities of our country, not for the purpose of swelling the figures of the followers of this religion or that, but to share with the advanced communities the privileges and duties on equal terms in the general social and political life of the country'. The assimilationists thus desire to raise the tribal to the level of the advanced communities and there, as an equal member of the general community, well equipped to think for himself and with all the facilities available to others at his disposal, leave him to chalk out his future

for himself, helped and encouraged by sympathetic non-tribals. In fact his tribal status would then fade away and, no longer craving for an indulgent and patronizing attitude, he would be expected to speak in terms of rights and duties.

The position seems very sound in that it liquidates the problem of the future of the tribals as a special one, identifying it with the general problem of the future of India by merging the tribe into the general concourse of communities.

Isolationists such as Dr. Hutton also want the aborigines to serve as their ‘quota of original and individual genius to the national life of India’, and to change their culture to the national and even to the international type. Yet, though they appreciate a change, isolationists advocate segregation so that the change may not be brought about by outsiders, because in that case it comes about too quickly for it to be smoothly adopted. Thus it will be realized that the isolationists do aim at raising the mental and moral stature of the tribal, though they feel that isolation and not assimilation would better serve the purpose. It is merely a difference of method.

The isolationists contemplate two measures: to keep the tribals segregated from outside contact, and to allow them to grow under governmental supervision. They fear that contact with the Hindus of the plains will break up tribal solidarity and introduce social evils such as untouchability and child-marriage. They also fear that despair, apathy and loss of vitality would result from the impinging of an alien civilization on the simple and backward peoples.

The policy of isolation has hardly ever been practised in the case of the Thakur. We have, therefore, a good opportunity here to examine the effects of contact.

Undoubtedly, the Thakur would not have been what he is today had contact with outsiders been denied him. The economic and cultural differences between the Ma and the Ka clearly demonstrate what culture-contact can achieve in spite of all its concomitant evils. The Thakur had lost his lands but it was incompetent administration rather than outside contact that was responsible.

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6 S. S. O'Malley, Modern India and the West (Oxford University Press, 1941), p. 444.
Contact is one of the best educative processes, provided it is properly supervised. It is the lack of proper supervision that has brought many a woe to the Thakur. Besides, the Thakur would not have felt distressed at the loss of his land, had not contact with the people from the plains introduced him to agriculture.

The Thakur is fortunately free from some problems which are obtained in other tribal areas of India. He speaks Marathi, the language of the land, does not engage in the destructive type of shifting cultivation and is not oppressed by bond labour. Consequently, he is free from these problems.

The tribal solidarity of the Thakur is not broken up by contact with neighbouring communities. As the tribe merged with the concourse of Hindu communities around, it glided into the position of a caste with a suitable place in the Hindu hierarchy. As a caste it continues to exist as a separate entity, and the caste solidarity which is observable among other Hindu castes is equally observable here. Its solidarity would have been affected had it ceased to function as a separate entity. But as Hindu society, while accepting it within its fold, offered it a separate existence, caste solidarity continues to be a living force even today as is indicated by the influence and power wielded by the Thakur panchayat.

The Thakur is not an untouchable. Mahars and others treated as untouchables by the 'higher' castes are treated in the same way by him. To seek the origin of this practice would lead us into the distant past, of which nothing definite is known. If the Thakurs are, as the Gazetteer says, the descendants of Rajputs, their attitude towards the untouchables may go back to their origin. There is no evidence to show that the Thakur was at any time free from this practice, or that it was imposed on him or borrowed by him from alien sources. Under the circumstances his attitude to untouchability cannot be attributed with any fairness to outside influences.

Neither the semi-nude Ka women nor their scantily clad Ma sisters observe purdah. They are not secluded from men. I have discussed at length the position of women while dealing with Thakur family life. It will be evident from the account that the Thakur woman enjoys greater freedom than her sister from any
of the advanced communities. That is but natural. Women from the cultivator classes of Hindu society enjoy a freedom which is usually denied to women of the advanced classes. The Thakur, adopting as he does the culture of the community most akin to his in the Hindu hierarchy, has retained for his womenfolk the freedom that they originally enjoyed.

Child-marriage, though not taboo, is not common among the Thakurs. Marriage is never consummated before puberty, though girls are often married a year or so earlier. In a community in which there is every opportunity for girls to succumb to temptation, it is only natural for the father to think of marrying off his daughter before the first signs of womanhood appear. Pre-puberty marriage, the Thakur thinks, averts fornication and illegitimate pregnancy. The Thakur thought and tendency in this respect are in line with those of his non-tribal neighbours and there is no peculiarity which may be assigned to his tribal status.

Tribal dances and songs are perhaps the most absorbing recreation of the Thakur today. A mixed dance, though popular among the Ka, is neither practised nor approved by the Ma. Even the Ka are reluctant to give a demonstration of mixed dancing. As Prof. Ghurye says, the idea behind the prohibition of mixed dancing appears to be to chasten the sex-morals. Therefore, it should not be treated as deterioration consequent of Hinduization. This statement has to be understood in the peculiar context of the objective backwardness and the subjective attitude of the Thakurs, who consider mixed dancing as offering an opportunity for licence.

I tried to ascertain if contact with the plains people which is growing daily has adversely affected the Thakurs to any appreciable extent. There is a general belief among the Thakurs that they have lost in physical prowess during the last fifty years or so, and that they are rapidly deteriorating as far as physique and longevity are concerned. Aside from these two factors the Thakur could speak of no other deterioration, nor could I observe any. The Thakur thinks this deterioration is due to the loss of land, which he thinks has deprived him of sufficient nourishment. Although loss of land can reasonably be stated

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Ghurye, The Aborigines—‘So-called’—and Their Future, p. 68.
as the cause of physical deterioration, especially in tracts where economic activities are limited, there is little material evidence to support this belief, which is generally shared by the people of India. Outside contact should not therefore be held responsible for the supposed deterioration. I may draw attention here to the indigenous system of physical exercises called *kōḍkē*, still vigorously pursued. The successful practice of these athletics does not support the plea of physical deterioration.

Thus we see that the main objections against contact or Hinduization do not hold good as far as the Thakur is concerned. Hinduization, on the contrary, has done the Thakur an amount of good. The Hindus have always been tolerant of the traditions of those who are new members of their society. The Thakur is indebted to the Hindus for his knowledge of agriculture and cattle-breeding, and for the concomitant settled way of life which has resulted in a decided rise in his economic and social status.

Pictures of Thakur men and women residents of Badlapur bear testimony to my statement when compared with those of Thakurs living in isolated villages in the uplands. That Hinduization has raised his mental and moral stature is clearly evinced by the lives of Rambhau Ughada, Rambhau Govind and of other educated leaders of the community. The Thakur has begun to think in terms of rights and duties in every walk of life. Thakur political workers have courted jail, have worked on local bodies and, hand in hand with members of other communities, are today taking an active part in every public activity. Dr. Hutton's contention, therefore, that it is only under segregation that tribals can advance enough to produce their own leaders is not warranted by the case of the Thakur.

Isolationists fear that civilized contact will adversely affect the vitality of the people and will lead to their progressive decimation. Apathy, they maintain, is the direct result of low vitality. They therefore preach segregation so that the people may be saved from eventual extinction.

The revivalists desire to strip the semi-civilized tribals of whatever good and evil they have acquired through outside contact and reinstate them in their original life and culture where they may enjoy their 'full share of good cheer'. While isolationists want to save the unsophisticated tribals from the evils of contact,
the revivalists want to go still further and reinstate their original culture.

This is not all. Isolationists and revivalists want segregation not because they think, like Dr. Hutton, that it affords the best setting for the tribals to develop so they may subscribe to national progress and even to the progress of mankind, but because they feel that segregation is the best way of conserving and developing tribal culture and religion. They insist that the quality of tribal life must not be impaired, that tribal culture must not be destroyed, and that tribal freedom must be restored and maintained. They do not countenance the tribals lining up with their brethren from the plains, an ideal which the assimilationists and even some isolationists have at heart. They desire instead to keep the tribals in 'innocence and happiness for a while till civilization is more worthy to instruct them and until a scientific age has learnt how to bring development and change without causing despair.\(^8\)

Revivalists do not want to disturb what they think is the paradise of the tribals, even if it is a fool's paradise. How far this ideal would be appreciated by the so-called aborigines is open to question. My Thakur friends often assure me that they would rather be wiped out than live in their present miserable and humiliating condition. Their only hope is to some day join the rank of the advanced Hindu communities. This is a question of values which cannot be determined by scientific method. It must be admitted that the Thakur who is absorbed into the Hindu fold cannot voice the opinion of the unsophisticated tribal who may conceivably resent having his way of life disturbed. But the good old days are loved by everybody, and I do not think a tribal should be taken seriously when he fondly recalls the past.

Isolationists draw parallels from the condition of some of the Pacific islanders who met with extinction as a result of contact with European races. The comparison, however, is wide of the mark since the contact in India, unlike the one with which it is compared, is slow, gradual and assimilable. Various African tribes in less than a hundred years of contact with the utterly different culture of Western Europe have voluntarily changed their ways of life. In India, there is already much in common

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\(^8\) Verrier Elwin, *Loss of Nerve*, p. 50.
among the impinging cultures, and the change effected is so gradual that it occurs without being felt by the weaker people. Thus the Thakur, though conscious that he has changed and is changing, is never disturbed or distressed at the thought.

The isolationists, as also the revivalists, forget that a patronizing attitude fails to inculcate confidence and self-reliance. It also breeds sycophancy and an inferiority complex. Conflict, resistance and the fighting spirit are as necessary for progress as contact and communication—provided they are not so overwhelming as to destroy the tribal altogether. My personal impression is that conflict and resistance have done the Thakur an amount of good. Realization of his own strength has dawned on him and he has become self-reliant only after struggle.

The Thakurs of Vaghachi Vadi, who once used to quail before a junior forest guard, talk today to a forest officer or to a police officer with equanimity and a sense of equality. This sense of equality, once aroused, makes the people resent any patronizing intervention. It is a worthy ideal for which to strive. Legislation, however benevolent, will fail to fulfil its purpose so long as a desire to resist injustice has not filled the minds of those for whom the legislation is devised.

Today the problem of the Thakurs is different from what it was in pre-independence days. Isolation in this age of space conquest is well-nigh impracticable. Integration is accepted as the objective of our approach to the tribal problem. A sympathetic government is showering welfare legislation on the tribals. Land legislation has practically done away with the landlord. Modern amenities are slowly finding their way in tribal areas.

If our efforts for tribal development are to bear fruit commensurate with the money and energy spent, they have to be addressed to the community rather than the individual. In the past, individuals have prospered without outside help. Today, on the other hand, government help has failed to change the living of most of the tribal beneficiaries who have received government subsidies. What we must do is to open up new avenues of employment and offer new opportunities to tribals to better their lot. The will to raise the living standard is a factor which seems to be ignored in our approach to the tribal problem. So also is ignored
the tribal's psychological reaction to our approach. Instead of pouring water into individual wells, it is far better to dig a pond or construct a dam and leave the wells to profit by percolation. Similarly, instead of directly spoon-feeding an individual we must concentrate and spend only on schemes for the general welfare of the people and the area so that the resulting advantages may percolate to those who wish to be benefited.

Contact with outsiders is increasing, and must increase as integration is our objective. Evils which follow in the wake of contact have to be faced as an inevitable passing phase. Contact, as it grows, will itself combat these ills and ultimately eliminate them, at least as special tribal traits.
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