CHAPTER II.

SETTLEMENT PATTERN.

The are primarily cultivators residing in small dispersed hamlets of twenty to thirty homesteads each, of which normally houses an elementary family and constitutes a unit of economic relations. These homesteads are found scattered either singly or in clusters of two or more and usually have clearings within the territorial limits of a village. Broadly speaking, a Bhil village of today may be described as more or less permanent settlements, in which the land under cultivation, is clearly differentiated from the perenne fallow land and forest territory. Each village is under the administrative control of a Talavi guided by the Patel or the village accountant, who is an official in the Revenue Department of the Government of the State.

However, Bhils seem to have settled down in permanent settlements, only within the last thirty years in this area. Earlier they used to practice a system of shifting cultivation known locally as Dhebria or Dahiya. This consisted in choosing a piece of jungle land relatively level and free from scrub, and clearing it of all vegetation. The cuttings would then be spread out all over the clearing, burnt till into ashes and then hoed. Result was a thick covering of wood-ash considered by agriculturists to be a good manure, rich in potash and nitrate salts. Some of my older informants who themselves had practiced shifting cultivation in their youth

say that even ploughing was not strictly necessary. All that they had to do was to scatter-sow the seeds in the ash and wait for the rains. Generally however, they used to plough the ash into the ground and sow their seeds with the first rains. I am informed that in a piece of land which now hardly yields one mani (12 Bengali maunds or about 500 lbs.) ~~they could get as much as four to five maris~~ they could get as much as four to five maris under khattia. They could get about five to six crops from a single clearing. When as the fertility of the soil fell off, they would shift on to a new clearing, within the territorial limits of the village. Since this area was nearly ninety percent forest land, damage to the forest was considered practically negligible by the Rulers and the Kuki were allowed to clear as much land as they wanted for cultivation. The Ruler was entitled to a quarter share in the first year's produce plus a thudi or bundle of tobacco leaves and a goog of salt (5 seers = 5 lbs). Kuki however were not allowed to have all their clearings in one place, but had to distribute them all over the jungle.

The unit of production in those days was usually an agnatic kingroup, who would jointly clear the land and share in the crop. They do not seem to have experienced any difficulties in crop-sharing. Since they could clear as large an area as they wanted. I am told that usually there would be quite enough for all their needs, so much so that they did not even have to keep watch over

the standing crops except against the numerous herbivorous animals of jungle. Main crops were Indian maize, millets, rice and lentils etc.

They were also permitted to gather firewood in the nearby woods and sell it by head loads in the nearby towns, and to collect the various jungle produce such as honey, gum, and fibre (Bauhenenia tomifolia) seeds from which charoli is extracted, whether for personal consumption or for sale. But, they could sell it only to authorised agents of the government and at a fixed rate. Usually the proceeds from such sales were utilised for buying cloth, salt, metal implements and a few other necessities, not locally produced. There was little circulation of money as most of their dealings were with governmental agencies or with a nearby trader where they could exchange their corn for an equivalent value, in goods required by them. In years of scarcity, they were accommodated to extensive credit both by the governmental agencies and the traders at an interest of 50% or more compoundable usually twice in a year.

In most Rewakanthe States, there were few direct taxes. But a levy of free labour or (Veth) was generally prevalent in the estates of Amarwal, Mathiwada and Dariya. Bhils were subject to a levy of 6-10 days of free labour per year per adult. The tadavi of each village was required to supply the labourers as and when required. The vethia (free labourers) had to work anywhere and in whatever kind

of work they were required to. Generally, they were still ... to keep the few roads and rest houses in the state in good repair, and to work in the private fields of the ruler, etc. Each official on tour was entitled to *yeth*. The several landlords in the area also had their own private and illegal system of *Yeth*. However, my Ehil informants tell me that they were quite happy under this system. They had not to bother with land and could live as they pleased, so long as the *yeth* requirements were not regularly.

It is not clear as to when the government in this area realised the economic wastage involved in this 'slash and burn' system of cultivation, or what were the several measures adopted to persuade the Ehils to give up this system and to settle down to intensive cultivation on their land holdings or, a term of less permanent basis. No stated legislative procedures seem to have been adopted in these estates, so far as could be gathered from the few inadequate records available and from my Ehil informants. This seems to have been achieved through an increasingly strict administration of the forests and by a gradual imposition of restrictions on shifting from old clearings to new clearings. Authority to permit fresh clearings was taken away from the *holayi* and vested in local officials, with instructions to give such permission only when it could be proved that a person or a family was direly in need of more land and that he would be able to cultivate the additional land. This depended on whether he had bullocks enough to

Beating the dry Mahua flowers - a phase in its processing

Blowing the corn

plough the land as he had to rely on hoeing (kolali). It was estimated that a pair of bullocks of average strength could till from 10-15 vighas[1] whereas a man with a kolali could at best cultivate between 3- 5 vighas depending upon the lay of the land. Even when these conditions were fulfilled, permission was given to clear only particular tracts such that the forests were not damaged.

About this time (1950- 1070) a system of direct taxation seems to have been introduced. The Gazetteer mentions that the form of assessment varied from the simplest bill hook (katardi) area to the more elaborate land cess then prevalent in other parts of India. Each cultivator had to pay two pays to afford bullocks, and depended upon the kolali, i.e. had to pay the vahi cess varying from annas 8 to Rs.2/-, depending upon the condition and the size of the plot cultivated. Those who could afford bullocks, were assessed from Rs.2/- to 5/- according to the land cultivated per plough of land. Here again, the rate seems to have differed from state to state, and also from group to group. In the Satpuras for instance, a Bhil paid a tax of eight annas per vighe, while a Koli would have had to pay Re.1/- for the same plot, and a person belonging to a more advanced community such as Vania, would have had to pay as much as Rs.5/-, the idea being that a more advanced community was likely to derive greater benefits from the land.[2] The tax could be paid in money or in grain valued at a rate considerably lower, than those currently prevailing in the market.

Another interesting feature of this system of taxation assessments was that assessment was more often based on conventional rather than actual measurements of the respective plots, particularly in the tribal areas of these states. Only a portion of the revenue lands had been surveyed. The capacity of a 'plough' as fixed in these areas was extended as a standard of rough measure for assessing the land holdings of Mills and other cultivators in the area.[3]

The position regarding land tenure in the area just before its merger with Bombay is that, as briefly as follows :- In most parts of Rewa, Baghelkand and Mahakoshal states, there was no clear demarcation of the revenue and forest lands and the administration of both was vested in the same official. Within the jurisdiction of his village, the headman was responsible for any violation of rules regarding illegal clearing of forest land. However, permission to bring more land under cultivation was readily given provided the peasants of the village community could establish a case for it. No strangers were permitted to settle within a village territory, except with the permission of the *talavi*. There were apparently very few landless Mills in this area. Average size of holdings varied from five to twenty vighas and seems to have compared favourably with the size of the family.

Tenure was normally of a *pattadari* or the severalty type. There were a few *jagirdars*, but since most of their estates lay outside the Mill country, they are not of much

relevance to our discussion here. A system of revenue-farming (ennoddāmi) seems to have been prevalent in the old datannal estate and was abolished when the Koriya administration took it over about twenty years ago.

As described earlier, there were different types of taxes varying from the simple bill hook cess to regular land taxation. The system of vetti was also prevalent and the levy varied from six days in a year in Koriya to an unspecified but considerably larger period, in the Kathiwar estate. In Katannal, taxes could be paid in grain, tobacco and/or in cotton flowers and bowries. A few people who were living on Jagir land, had to pay several other indirect taxes. For instance, a Jagirdar in Kathiwara was entitled to receive from his tenants, a sixth share in their crop, a certain number of bundles of tobacco leaves and a cart load of firewood, and also certain other payments to be made on ceremonial occasions.

Within the village itself, two classes of people could be distinguished, the Kudibata or members of the founding agnatic lineage group and Kachina members of certain other lineages that grafted on to the Kudibata lineage at a later time. Authority was vested in the Kudibata lineage, and the Kachina were usually excluded in theory almost from a large area of land and economic rights. For instance, Kachina had very few rights over the fruit trees and timber situated sometimes on lands cultivated by them.

Since its integration into the Indian Union, the position regarding land tenure and assessment in the area has not considerably changed. Much of the cultivated area has been tentatively surveyed and measurements recorded. In the Kotamal area, the average size of land holdings of the Dhils was found to vary between six to sixteen or twenty vighas per homestead. However the majority hold 8-12 vighas in two or three plots situated in different parts of the village. In the Kotamal itself, the holdings were considerably larger. In Alindra, out of about thirty land holders, there were at least four having twenty five vighas or more, while most others hold between ten to fifteen vighas. In Piparpota, the holdings were smaller and Khuman was the only person with about sixteen vighas of land, and both his sons had about 20 vighas between them. In Bhuvara the usual size was between eight to twelve vighas and three had more than sixteen vighas of land.[4] Of these three villages, Alindra has better grades of kali and rakal soil, while Piparpota has mostly an inferior type of black soil.

Under the old regime, each talavi was given about sixteen vighas of vahivat or dues-free land, towards expenses that he would have to incur frequently whenever any officials visited the village.[5] However, the present governments of Bombay and Madhya Bharat, do not recognise a need to have any such arrangement, as all their officials are paid special allowances while on tour. This land is now assessed in the same way as the other holdings.

Certain privileges which Revenue-farmers (mirasidars) and Jagirdars used to enjoy under the old regime, have now been abolished under the Bombay Tenancy regulations of 1938 (as amended by the Act of 1946), whereby the rights of such persons for free labour or for a share in the crops of their tenants is no longer recognised. Further, the cultivator has been declared the rightful owner of the land and all the trees that stand upon it, though rights over certain valuable trees such as the sandal and khair (Cachechu) etc., are reserved by the Forest Department. Finally, the demarcation between forest and revenue land is now complete, with different functionaries looking after their administration.

All cesses including the District Local Board cess of one and a half annas per vigha, are collected directly from the peasants by the talathi or the revenue accountant, when he goes on his tours in Winter. Sufficient advance information of his visit would be given to the villagers, such that they would get ready to pay their taxes. Bhils are particularly careful regarding prompt payment of taxes, as they think it inauspicious to have any arrears owing on land. It displeases the Goddess of Earth and results in loss of fertility.

II.

Bhils have a very poor material culture. They have only a few simple implements of indigenous manufacture, such as the single-share plough of the common Indian variety:- light and turning the clod at a depth of barely

six inches or even less where the ground is rocky. In addition, they have two variation of clod-breakers and also a double shared yoke. For the rest, their equipment consists of the hoe, axe, adze, bill hook and a few other such primary tools. The iron blades for these implements is brought from outside. Hills have acquired considerable skill with these few tools and manage to make most of their other requirements locally.

The principal draught animal is the bullock, but the Kathvis of Kathiawar and Ahmedpur employ buffaloes for this purpose. The Kathiawar cattle are usually well-fed and are quite strong. There is no dearth of fodder, as Kathiawar is famous for the quality of its grazing all over the region.

Hills attach very little importance to manuring. It is not so much that they are not aware of the utility of manure in replenishing fertility of the soil. In fact, when cattle go out for grazing in the morning they are usually brought to spot during the latter part of the day in one of the plots, so that their dung might get collected in a particular spot. In addition the dung and other refuse from the byre is collected each morning and dumped a little away, for future use. A number of goats are usually maintained specifically because their droppings form a rich manure particularly for tobacco and the lentils. However, they do not seem to understand the value of composting manure, though government agronomists are going about in recent times giving demonstrations and explaining

to them the value of compost. What usually happens is, that refuse of the byre lies in a dump exposed to Sun, Air and losing thereby much of their value. In late summer, women take it out and dump them in little heaps all over the field (Vada), plots nearest to the homestead. (vada) Each peasant has usually one or two such vadas depending upon the out/put of manure and the proximity of the plots to his byre. Just before the rains, the manure heaps dry as dust by now, would be raked evenly all over the plot, and then ploughed into the earth ready for sowing.

While usually take two crops, one in monsoon and a second in winter, depending upon adequate and early rains. Monsoon crops (Kharif) are mainly maize, wheat, rice, barley and millets. Two varieties of rice are grown, one which requires plenty of standing water and transplanting (Kyari/Rangan), and an other of a drier variety. Wheat too is of two varieties - a monsoon crop and a second grown in winter. Sowing is done early in July if the rains start right on schedule, and are harvested in October, - just before the Deepavali Feast. Maize is the staple. Rice and Wheat occupy secondary places with ground nut, millets, and barley, following in that order.

Principal winter (rabi) crops are the pulses, such as chana (Cicer arietinum), tuver (cajanus indicus) edal (Dolichos lunce) math (P.aconitifolius), and mac (P.radiatus). Barley and wheat are grown in winter also. Sowing is generally in November and the harvesting in February or March 6.

After the first crop is harvested, one or two plots are usually planted with the Indian hemp (ganja) which is used extensively in rope manufacture. Another large plot specially manured and watered (vada) is set apart for their annual requirements in tobacco. Tobacco grown in these parts is of a variety known as **bailehli** and grows to a height of four feet with large juicy leaves slightly yellowish in colour when dry. Plant is sown late in July and is cut in December except for a few plants left to seed. Vegetables are also grown in vadas and consist mainly of lentils, gourds, pumpkins, tomato, onion, **baigen**, ladies' fingers, and a variety of green plants, the leaves of which are used in curry. Most of them are seasonal and are available fresh only during winter and spring. They are gathered during these months, shelved or cut to pieces as the case may be, sun-dried and stored away for use during summer and monsoon. While generally grow their own seasoning such as garlic, **kothmir**, and chillis.

III.

The agriculture cycle starts towards the end of May. All the plots are ploughed once, to clear them of any stalks or roots from the old harvest, in readiness for rains that usually start by about the second week of July. Seed is brought out, cleaned and kept ready. Plough and other implements are looked over and repairs effected where necessary. New ropes for a variety of purposes have to be prepared and iron blades of the plough and other implements

tempered afresh. The bullocks are looked over and new ones are borrowed or bought if need be. In addition, there are a variety of chores around the homestead. Walls and the roof are carefully examined and repairs are effected to ensure maximum dryness inside the house, during the rainy season. A good stock of dry fuel and grass is laid in, etc. Usually all Hills return to their native villages from whatever work they might be engaged in during summer, by the beginning of June by the latest. In fact, the festival of Hadarja on the Katarmal? which takes place on the 31st day of the Hindu month of Chaitra (about the end of May) signals the commencement of the agricultural season and serves as a warning for wanderers to return home.

Everything is kept ready for ploughing, which starts early on the morning following the first good showers of the season. Long before the break of dawn, a sacrifice is offered to the plough, a coconut is broken in the name of Hanuman - the Monkey-God, and Ganesh the bullocks are worshipped with lights (arti) and fed with sweet rice. Then fortified with a heavy breakfast they start ploughing and go on ploughing in the afternoon with a brief break at mid-day. When a homestead has more than one pair of bullocks per plough, they are relieved during the mid-day rest. Ploughing is kept up with intent to finish as soon as possible after the rains when the ground is still wet. Side by side with ploughing, the seeds are also sown into the furrows with the aid of a funnel shaped

dropper attached to the upright of the plough.

The bullocks have to be looked after carefully during this period (caps with) and weary from a day's hard work in the rain, they are restless and tend to go off their feed. Usually, some member of the family with whom they are familiar, sits up in the byre to rub them down to rest, and to hand-feed them with tender grass specially gathered to tempt them. They are also given strengthening meals of shredded grain and cotton seeds.

Then follows a very busy period for the entire family. After the first rains, grass practically shoots up out of the earth and grows quickly to a height of three to four feet. Unless constant weeding is kept up by all the members of the family till the crop grows to a height of about a foot or so, its growth would be suppressed by its elder neighbours. At this stage in the development of millet and chenat, the plough is run lightly once, round the plant to give it a greater facility for the growth. From then on, it is more a problem of watching it grow, guarding it against the herbivorous inhabitants of the jungle and hoping that rains would not fail them now. Some light showers are needed about this time and after a short dry spell, another shower or two when the crop is about to flower. Failure or delay of rains at any stage would dry up the crop and stunt its growth. Heavy showers, — particularly at the latter stage, would destroy the crop by cotting in pot.

During this period, Bhils are relatively free from agricultural activities and can attend to any other tasks which they had to neglect when sowing and weeding was going on. The monsoon crop generally ripens by about the end of September, or if there had been a delay or any irregularity in sowings, early in October. Once the crop is just sufficiently ripe, it has to be harvested with despatch, lest the grains might become too ripe and be scattered on the ground. This is again a period of hectic activity, when every member of the family is drawn to work from morning to evening, with brief spells for rest. Usually the entire neighbourhood collaborates in harvesting. Fields are taken up in the order the crop in them ripens, and are quickly disposed off. It may be mentioned in this context that such collaboration of the neighbourhood group is evident even during the sowing season. People help one another sowing, particularly when a person does not have the cattle to plough his land. Normally the understanding is that when some people go to assist a person whether in sowing or in harvesting, their midday meal is provided by their host. Bhils collaborate with each other in several other activities too- in building or thatching the houseteed. On all such occasions, food or drink has to be supplied by the host to all the collaborators,- whether they are given a meal or just some liquor depends upon the nature of the work they are collaborating upon. In practice, it does not prove much of a strain on any one person, as what he might lose as a host, is recouped when he himself is working on somebody else's fields.

Once harvesting is over, they set about preparing the fields in which a winter crop is to be taken. They are ploughed and manured and the crop is sown. Light showers or frost if they occur before the crop has started flowering are beneficial to all, except the mango crop. But a heavy frost or rain at a later stage is disastrous in its effects.

They would generally be very busy with such operations as the separation of grain from the stalk, cleaning and storing away their grain etc., till early in March.But usually by the Holi feast (about the last week of March), they would be free of all agricultural activities. The next two months are spent in leisure-time activities such as singing and dancing, visiting friends and relatives in other villages, celebrating marriages and so on.By April, a large number of Bhils leave soon after the Monsoon harvest is in,for the several crops that would be working that year. A few may go over to the distant Gujarat as labourers to harvest the cotton, tobacco and groundnut fields of the rich patidars. But wherever they might be or whatever be the work they are engaged in,most Bhils leave their work and start homewards by the middle of May- soon after the Akhatrij festival. By April, the several jungle produce such as mahua, <u>kendi</u> leaves, honey,charoli etc., start getting ripe and Bhils are engaged in gathering them till very late in May when they start preparing for the next year's cultivation. The cycle starts all over again.

IV.

Irregular rainfall is one of the major hazards in their agricultural economy. There are no rain gauge stations in this area. But the figures recorded for the neighbouring areas of Dohad and at Kadya indicate that while the averages of rainfall over a period of years indicate sufficiency, there is an extreme variation in range. The quinquennial average for Kadya for 1941-45 was 40.09". However it was as low as 27.05" in 1941 while in 1944, it was 42.89". At Dohad, the averages for the quinquennial period 1944-48 was 34.67". The highest was 58.37" in 1946, and the lowest in 1947, with 17.00". The figures speak for themselves as to the extreme range of variation. Further, a delay in the onset of monsoon by as much as two or three weeks and a lack of timely, moderate showers later on, considerably lessen their chances of getting a good harvest. Ironically enough, scarcity conditions consequent to the total or partial failure of crops are frequently caused by insufficient rainfall as much as they by mal-distributed and heavy rainfall. Recently the whole of Dhil country upto Dohad was paralysed by a total failure of crops during the two years 1951-52, due to insufficient rainfall. In 1953, the season started well with a few well-timed and substantial showers. Crops had come up very well and a bumper harvest was expected all over the region. However, there were incessant and heavy showers for about two weeks towards the end of September. In Dohad and Limkheda talukas standing crop was washed away and cattle died by hundreds

from exposure and lack of good fodder. So again, Dhud and parts of Mukhedu have faced with the worst scarcity conditions since the notorious Chhappania famines of 1900.

Even in a good year when the situation is fairly satisfactory, the yield is not sufficient for more than of this area to last them all the year round, principally due to a mounting scarcity of land in this region. Size of land holdings in relation to the persons subsisting upon them is fairly satisfactory in the Ratnagiri. In other parts of Mukhedu taluka, there has been an increasing demand for more land for the last twenty or thirty years. The Government is becoming increasingly firm against more forest territory being wasted and there is not enough revenue fallow land in the villages to meet this demand. The scarcity of land has partly resulted in large scale migration towards Jhabua where the position seems to be much more satisfactory. Their agricultural produce lasts them for about eight to ten months in a year of good harvest. Usually, however, the deficit is more, by as much as four to five months in the year. Hence, they are forced to fall back upon secondary resources of food and income, to cover up this deficit in their agricultural economy. This secondary line of subsistence is provided by the jungle with its several produce and plentiful labour opportunities. From the earliest times, forestors are conceded some rights to collect the several valuable produce of the jungle, such

as fire-wood, honey, gum, the mahua flowers and berris, and charoli etc., whether for personal use or for sale without any interference. They could collect these several products, keep as much as they needed for themselves and sell the surplus outside. But from the last sixty or seventy years, the State Governments seem to have become conscious of the loss of revenue accruing from such a policy. At first, a tax was levied on the several produce sold outside at so much per headload. For instance, whosoever gathered firewood and took it out to sell, had to give a seer of salt to the State as its share of the proceeds. Whenever timber was removed from the jungle for sale, 5 seers of salt and a jhudi of tobacco was to be given. Gradually, as the Governments realised the potential of these forest produce, they put more and more restrictions on their collection and disposal. By about 1948, the position may be roughly summed up as follows :-

Foresters were entitled to utilise as much deadwood as they needed for fuel, free of charge, so long as they did not try to sell it outside. They were further permitted to as much timber and bamboo as they needed for their ploughs and other implements and for building or for keeping their huts in good repairs, on payment of a nominal hal, chavadi (lit. plough and roof) rates which were about eight annas a year. In addition they had to pay a nominal amount of Annas eight per year as grazing fees. Hunting was not permitted. It was a prerogative of the Ruler, and of those who acquired.

Harvesting a field of Tuver pulses.

Thatching a cattle-byre under construction.

the license to hunt after paying fees to the State. While were however permitted to kill such beasts as rabbits and monkeys which ravaged their fields. They were also required occasionally to act as beaters when the Ruler or other hunters came over for shikar. Such hunting camps were a frequent occurrence - particularly in the Natumal, famous all over the nation for its tigers, bears and other game and were of considerable benefit to the local inhabitants. Each adult male found profitable employment as beaters, for several days at good wages and further have a good market for their dairy products and vegetables and so on. Even the Ruler of Kuriya, who was entitled to free service (Veth)used to give each one of the beaters between two to three rupees a day plus food and drink at his own expense. People who were muled by wild beasts or otherwise hurt during beating operations were also suitably compensated. Thus, hunting camps were actually a source of good income to the local inhabitants.

Forest still had rights to collect and sell the various jungle produce. Sub, a system of monopolies over the different " reserved " produce had been evolved in the meanwhile, whereby the forest authorities would periodically auction the sole exploitation rights over a specified area of jungle (cougo) in regard to a particular produce, to the highest bidder. While the local while were at liberty to collect such produce and retain it for their own consumption, they could not take it out of the cougo ' area or sell it to any person other than the contractor or his

authorised agent. Monopolies were auctioned in respect of produce such as myhua flowers and barks, gum, lac, and tirmu and sayantoni leaves/used extensively in the local bardi (cigarette) industry. Monopolies were also auctioned off in respect of timber and grass for periods of three to seven years. In these coupes, Mahs could get labour for about six months in a year, from November till early in June, in cutting, logging hauling and carting operations, besides the manufacture of charcoal. For all produce and for all kinds of labour connected with the operation of these coupes, rates were fixed by the forest authorities under the terms of the contract itself. Even to this day, the overall position remains the same, except for a few changes introduced by the operation of government sponsored Forest Labour co-operatives in the territory under Bombay administration. Further, since 1953, when the last of the seven year leases granted by the old Kathiawar region run out, Coupes of only a year's duration are being marked out, and the conservation measures are being enforced with greater severity. Much of the area under discussion falls under the administrative authority of the Divisional Forest Officer stationed at Mahva and is exploited in accordance with the ' Working Plan ' laid down by the Conservator of Forests, Northern Circle, at Rajkot. A small portion to the south and east of Mahuva comes under the jurisdiction of the Jhalon division of Madhya Bharat State. Since the regulations of these two Departments are mutually at variance on some details, particularly

as regards the rights of foresters to timber for hal (plough) chhaddi (roof) replacements and grazing etc., certain confusions and encroaches may be observed in the economy of the Khils on either side of the border.

7.

The small, white and heavily scented flowers and barks of the Kahua trees occupy a very significant place in Khil economy. Kahua is a large tree with heavy veined broad leaves, found abundantly in all the forests of Central Indian highlands. Its hard timber is much prized for building purposes all over the region. Kahua trees begin to flower early in April and soon the air in these forests is heavy with an almost nauseatingly sweet scent. They ripen towards the end of April and are gathered in large quantities by all the Khils and other tribal people in the region. Each person gathers as much as he can carry every day, takes it home to spread out in the open air to dry in the sun. In the process of drying, they lose much of their noxious smell, yet the soothing odour is pervasive enough. In taste and in smell, these dried brownish flowers are reminiscent of sugar molasses and dry raisins in appearance. When they are thoroughly dry, they are beaten well with a broad and flat club to separate the flowers from their pistils, and thus cleaned by a process of wafting in the wind. (See plate XX p. —). The cleaned flowers are stored in large baskets and kept in the open on pandaves or open platforms in front of the

hut?

? (nedi.) Ichuu is never stored in the nedi itself lest the air inside might be spoilt.

Each family lays in as large a stock as it can, depending upon the number of persons engaged in gathering and their perseverancy. In the summer of 1953, I found that most families in the villages of Benguani Kai laid in stocks of Ichuu which when dry, weighed at least twelve to fifteen maunds (1 maund = 24 lbs). Some of them with more members and enterprise even laid in far larger stocks. Thilo and Kenji of Mwegobo for instance, had gathered about sixty maunds (1,200 lbs) between them.

Ichuu flower is valued for two reasons. It is edible and nourishing when fried with ghee (ghuu) and taken in small quantities as a tiko, especially right through monsoon and winter months, ochuu is used as one of the main ingredients of their diet. In years of scarcity which are all too frequent in this region, this flower forms one of their main stays, because of its sustaining qualities. Secondly, it has a high export value, as a particularly powerful liquor known locally as Ngasu is prepared from it. I am informed by one of the bigger Englishmen of Alexandria - a person familiar with spotted liquors generally, that Ngasu has considerably more kick in it when fresh, than the standard grades of British and American whisky. It is colourless and clear, like heavy water, but has a very heady aroma. Punchumbal Hutties was one of the biggest exporters of Ichuu flowers, mostly to Dubai and Zanzibar where they were bought by Arab liquor manufacturers. From the records available,

It would appear that Panchmahals District alone exported about 29,000 and 25,000 tons of mahua in the years 1946 and 1949 respectively, and the bulk of it came from the Bariya and Limkheda talukas.[7] Towards the end of the last century, the Panchmahals Gazetteer reports, that the export of Mahua bad risen from 947 tons in 1873 to 9249 tons in 1930.[8] Till very recently, mahua liquor was being extensively used by Bhils all over the country and even by the Rulers and their Jagirdars, liquor shops had been opened in every large village - operated by Excise contractors. One was situated right in front of the Vohra trading post at Ranjeta. Further, illicit brewing of liquor was a very common home industry, since the old Bariya and Baroncal administrations were apparently not very strict in enforcing their excise laws. The position remains practically the same in Madhya Bharat even today. No Bhil or Kolgha ever buys his liquor; he brews his own liquor by means of a simple country still, and takes it raw. The Excise and Police authorities seem to be generally aware of the existence of such a home industry, but unable to keep an effective check in this very hilly and forested region where small stills can be easily hidden, but are practically impossible to locate. Further, when a stray excise or police official comes across an illicit still, the chances are more that

Training young bulls to the plough.

Home Crafts: Building a push cart.

-he might be tempted to partake of the raw and heady liquor, rather than proceeds the brewer. It may be noted in this context, that quite a large percentage of the local officials of Police and Excise departments are locally recruited from among the Bhils and Dubras.

A somewhat different position prevails in the territory under Bombay administration. The Prohibition laws banning the distillation and consumption of any intoxicating or alcoholic liquor except for medicinal purposes, were extended to these territories also, on their merger with that State. Consumption of hard liquor suddenly became a criminal offence and liquor shops were all closed down in an area, where liquor had become almost an article of diet and its use a vital part of the ceremonial on all social and ritual occasions of any importance. Use of doru (Mahua liquor) was banned even on occasions of ritual sacrifice.

In order to effectively check illicit distillation, certain restrictions were imposed on the collection and movement of the Mahua flower itself. From April to the end of June, was the 'open' season when anybody could collect, or stock as much of mahua flower as he wanted. At the end of this open season, however, no family could keep more than two maunds of mahua. Most of the stock was required to be surrendered at fixed rates to the Government or their — authorised agents. These regulations were enforced by a party of specially selected excise and police officials, empowered to raid any household for a surprise check. The

prevailing rates of mahua at the authorised trading posts at Ranjoda and Dhanpur were eight to ten annas per viz (lit. 5 seers = 5 lbs.). The stock so collected was stored in government godowns under Excise supervision, and then would again be available for sale in the trading posts during monsoon and winter months at Rs. 1-4-0 to Rs.1-8-0 per viz. Naturally, the Bhils regarded it as unjust on the part of the government to force them to sell the mahua cheap and then sell it back to them at a much higher rate at a time when they are in dire need of it. Often Bhils do not surrender all their 'surplus' mahua, but secrete them in a safe place. I know for a fact that quite a few families in the Mutawal villages used to have more than three to four times the quota that is permitted. Secondly, though Bhils of this region have given up drinking toddy as a general habit, they do occasionally drink liquor smuggled from across the border. Further, on all important occasions, considerable quantities of toddy are brewed in the village itself, often right under the nose of the embarrassed or amused police parties. No ceremonial occasion ever passed by in these villages during the period of my stay there, without considerable quantities of liquor being consumed. It may be noted that while the flowers of the mahua trees in the jungle are common property and may be gathered by any person, those from trees situated on cultivated fields, are regarded as private property and may be gathered only by the owner of the field or the person to whom the trees has been leased.

Sometimes, it so happens that the members of the bhaibeta or the founding dominant founding lineage of a village, reserve economically valuable trees such as mahua for their own use, irrespective of the person in whose field it stands. So, the latter would suffer from all the disadvantages of having a large tree in his fields, while another has the benefits. In recent times, such privileges of the bhaibeta have been successfully challenged under the provisions of the recent tenancy regulations of the Bombay State, referred to earlier, which confers full tenancy rights over the land and the economic trees situated thereon, to the actual tillers of the land and does away with all types of revenue farming. Even two years ago, there were a few quarrels on this issue and the bhaibeta were forced to withdraw their claims and seek a compromise.

Mahua berries (doli) get ready generally towards the end of May. They are gathered as they fall off their stalk. Re Outer skin is removed and the two white and oily pods are spread out in the Sun for drying. From these berries (doli) is extracted an edible oil, which is also extensively used in the manufacture of soap. It is quite valuable and is exchanged in the local market against an equal weight of maize. There is no restriction as to the collection or sale of doli. Anybody may collect these berries irrespective of whether the tree is in the jungle or privately owned. However, this berry is eaten by a variety of animals including the monkeys and so the yield is not so plentiful as the flowers. Still, each family manage to

to dispose of three to four maunds of these dolis, over and above what they keep for personal use.

Just as the doli season draws to an end the timru leaves (carissa carandas) get ready for gathering. Only the new leaves of the year are plucked. These leaves are gathered in large headloads and then neatly arranged into packets of 50 leaves - in itself a laborious task. Then they are handed over to the 'coupe' agent at the several collection centres and are paid for at the rate of one pice for 2 or 3 such bundles. The earnings of a man per day in this trade, averages about 6 -7 annas a day. The season itself continues for about a month and a half. The leaf bundles so collected are spread out in the sun to dry. When thoroughly dried, water is sprinkled on them on an evening to make them less brittle and then packed into large sacks in the very early hours of the following morning and taken away to Piplod or to Chhota Udepur for being auctioned. Since water is usually scarce about this time of the year, a nearby spring is deepened at the contractor's own cost. Local inhabitants are employed to fetch water from the spring and to sprinkle it on the leaf bundles, at one anna a large pot. In a normal year when the daily intake might be about twenty to thirty Rupees worth of beedi leaves, watering the entire stock for the season requires at least eight to ten persons working for five or six hours. Leaves have to be just moistered to take off their brittleness but not too much, lest a rot sets in. Further at each collection centre, a local Bhil is appointed as a watchman

at about ten to twelve annas a day, to see that nobody steals the valuable bundles. Thus, in terms of labour and wages, tiara season has something quite substantial to contribute to Kaili economy.

About the same time, but somewhat earlier than the tiaru, the charoli (buchania latifolia) gets ready for gathering. It is a small pinkish berry, with a thick seed. When the shell of the seed is broken a white oily kernal is found. This is charoli, known as a spice and used particularly in the preparation of sweetmeats, all over Upper India and Rahmachitra. It is very valuable, and at the local exchange rates sells at two to three rupees a seer.

These berries are found on the table lands on the Rutangal and Kotgarh hills which are invaded during season by large number of Kolis from plains. They stay in the jungle only and within a week, gather large quantities of berries which will eventually yield thirty to forty rupees per individual. All the while, the local Kolis take little interest in the proceedings. They prefer to collect and bind the tiaru leaves which yields them barely eight to ten annas a day. It is not so much that they do not know the lore entailed. They do, but prefer the tiaru business as the easier. They could just sit at their ease and bind the leaves into bundles, whereas they would have to wander up and down the hills in search of the kakra (charoli, buchania latifolia) tree, and then climb it, to gather the berries. Even afterwards, the seeds have to be shelled in order to get at the kernal - a tedious task and often painful for two fingers

which might get crushed by in the process of shelling. Further, the chanali has to be dried before it is accepted by the traders which means a considerable time lag between the collection and the final disposal much more than that involved in the tiny leaf business. Though the income from the former might be six to seven times more than that from the latter, the latter is preferred, because the income from it is more readily realised. Once the tiny season is over, however, the Sulis do go upto the table lands searching for any chanali beads which might have been overlooked by the earlier people. And they do usually get only the late crop of beans which are smaller in size and far fewer in quantity. Thus they do have an income from chanali too i.e. the more enterprising of them, and ever they manage to get only about ten to fifteen rupees worth of chanali at best, per annum.

The other produce that are gathered in such large quantities as to provide them with a substantive income are lac, gum and honey. Lac is cultivated principally on the trees, ber (zizyphus jujuba), khakra (butea frondosa) and palas (Butea monosperma) and is sold to the Vohra and Vania traders in a raw state, belonging to the bark and twigs. Usually, its exchange value is double that of maize. However, the Sulis of Sathgaon consider lac cultivation as painful, because it involves the wanton killing of numerous live organisms.

The other gum yielding trees are the Babul (acacia arabica), Ber (z. catechu), and Dhavda (A.latifolia)

gum is collected and sold to the contractors who call for it at the rate of five to six rupees a maund. However, the yield is generally inconsiderable and not many Bhils engage in this business.

Honey is available in these forests in plenty. The better type of honey known as the pathwali is generally made at the time of the monsoon harvest and is very sweet and white with a consistency of frozen ghee. The other variety which is slightly brownish in colour is more plentifully available but is not so sweet. Both the varieties fetch a good price depending upon the quality and the current demand for it. Bhils of Ratanmal however do not usually collect honey, partly because of the risk involved. Usually the honey collection is associated with the Kolis, another tribe which lives to the south of Ratanmal.

VI.

However a major portion of the non-agricultural income of a Bhil family accrues from the labour available in the timber and charcoal coupes in the jungle. Each such coupe provides regular employment for about six months in the year, to about a hundred or two hundred persons. Work in these coupes starts soon after the Diwali feast, when the monsoon crop would have been harvested and sowing for the winter crop would be over. Bhils would generally be free at this time of the year. Except the very old and infirm and such persons who are forced to remain at home for one reason or the other, each other Bhil go to work in these coupes for at least a part of the season.

Different operations are involved in the working of a coupe.

(1) Report:- Selected trees have to be cut in accordance with the conservation regulations of the Forest Department.

(2) Cutting:- After these trees have to be logged by a process of lopping of all the branches, removing bark, and placing it roughly on all the four sides to make it into a beam.

(3) Hauling:- These logs could then have to be hauled from the places of their origin to collection centres where they can be conveniently loaded into a conveyor.

(4) Pit:- All the smaller branches and cuttings not required for logging or for manufacturing of charcoal have to be gathered and piled into heaps, ten feet square and one and a half feet high, spaced six heaps (rab) per acre of the forest area exploited during the season. They are allowed to dry till late summer, when they are fired and seedlings of jungle trees are planted in their ashes, to speed up the reforestation process.

(5) Charcoal manufacturing (Burn) is a very hard and prolonged process, requiring skill and constant vigilance on the part of the person manufacturing it, for a fortnight or more. Logs have to be baked slowly, without their coming into direct contact with the atmosphere at any stage in this process. They are carefully piled and covered up completely with a layer of green leaves (Bubo Frondosa) leaves over which freshly dug earth is plastered to a thickness of six to seven inches all around, sealing them completely. Only small holes are left here and there for ventilation. Then logs are fired from below and sealed off. Then follows a period of intimate patience of watching the Burn slowly smoulder. Occasionally a log is displaced due to intense heat within and the swelling of earth from eight cracks. The smouldering logs burst into flames and unless immediately sealed up again, the entire thing would be burnt to ashes. Since the operator loses heavily when a Burn burns down, xxxx allotments are given only to experienced and skilled workmen, who usually work in pairs. Occasionally, a man and his wife team up in Burn work. Women take part in felling also.

When a Burn is ready, it is allowed to go out and cool for a few days and then the charcoal is taken out. A

At the timber collection centre in the jungles of Bhuvero.

Famine stricken Bhils at work in a scarcity project.

medium sized bhata takes 10- 15 days to'cook' and yields between 15- 20 large bags of charcoal - each bag containing about five to six maunds. A large sized one gets ready in about twenty days and yields upto 35-40 bags. Since a large bhata is much more difficult to control should a fire break out, only the very capable workman, undertake to do them.

Finally, there is the question of transporting the logs from the coupe to the nearest marketing centre,- either Devgadh Baria or Chhota Udepur about 20 to 25 miles from the Ratanmal, to the north-west and south respectively. The usual means of transport are rough bullock carts (see plate VI) pulled by two or three teams of bullocks and attended by at least two drivers. Each cart has a maximum loading capacity of 15- 20 bags of charcoal or 30- 40 maunds of logs. It takes a loaded cart about six to eight days to go and three to four days for the empty cart to return. Normally a team cannot take more than 2 loads in a month.

Usually, they work in pairs and divide up the proceeds equally. Rab however is often undertaken by teams of four or five persons. Hauling timber logs over difficult hilly terrain requires at least three or four teams of oxen and as many drivers to boost them up with shouts and tail-twisting etc., It is a back-breaking task, especially when they have to negotiate numerous rocks, tree stumps and often ford streams on their course.

Wages for these different types of work are paid on a piece-rate basis and vary considerably according to the size of the logs concerned and the lie of land over which work is to be done. In the several coupes that were being operated in the neighbourhood of Rabarwal in 1953, the prevailing rates were as follows :-12

(1) Kapav (cutting)	Re.1 to Re. 5/- per trunk.
(2) Chadtoni(logging)	Re.4 to Rs. 6/- per leg.
(3) Hauling.	Re.6 to Re.10/- per Khandi of 22 logs.
(4) Rab	Re. 1-4-0 per rab of 40'x10'x12'
(5) Manufacture of Charcoal :-	Re. 2-8-0 to Re.3-8-0 per bag depending on its capacity
(6) Carting (delivery at Chota Udepur or Devgadh Bariya).	
(a) Charcoal :-	Re.2/- a bag (normal load 15- 20 bags).
(b) Logs :-	Re.2/- to Re.2-8-0 per round (Normal load 30-40 Rounds.)

A morally industrious Bhil, if he is consistent, might be able to cut about 10 trees of average size, collaborate in preparing ten or twelve logs and in eight or ten rabs and also secure three or four khatas of a total capacity of say, fifty bags. That would give him an income in the region of 250- 300 Rupees for the season, - quite a useful addition to his total income for the year, especially in a year of scarcity. In fact, this was roughly the earning of Hurji Bavia of Kotumbi for the season of

1958-59. Kanji Vahhia of Pipargote and his brother Dhilla - earnt about four hundred rupees between them in the same season. Nathia of Zubera, though considerably older, averages about two hundred and fifty Rupees every season.

However, most Dhils are not so industrious. Every now and then they break off their work ostensibly to replenish their food stocks, but really to enlove ~~the~~ the bodium of hard work. In fact some of the young men of Pipargota were so notorious in this respect, that the Irala coupe agent had to come often in person to chase them back to their half-finished work. Naturally their earnings would fall off.

Further, they so delay putting in an appearance to take their work-allotments, that usually the more industrious Kolis (who come from beyond Mungpur and Dariya, would have ample time to collect the easier and the more profitable allotments. When the Dhils do put in an appearance, often it is the local Dhils who are the last to come, they find only the harder and less profitable work remaining. In fact, quite a few Dhils of Alindra had to return without securing any work in a coupe being operated six or seven miles away, near Bhuvara, because they were too late. The bulk of khata work usually go to the Kolis every season. This happens year after year without without the Dhils learning by experience. Still most of them manage to earn between a hundred to hundred and fifty rupees every season.

Another aspect of their relations with the coupe operations may be noted in this context. It is often found that people of a particular village or neighbourhood always

go working for a particular operator, going often long distance in preference to a coupe in the very next village. In 1952, most Mills of Kanjeta and Pipergota were working in Chimath for Akbar Seth, while a coupe was being worked on the slopes of Kanjeta only. It was not so much the monetary incentive, because the rates were practically the same. The explanation offered was that they all knew Akbar Seth, while the operator at Kanjeta was new to the area. I came to understand later, that a system of advances prevalent in this trade, is partly responsible for the development of such personal relations between the operators and labourers. At the end of each season, the operator or his agent would give a small sum say ten or fifteen rupees over and above what is due to each labourer as an advance for work to be done next season, thereby placing the receiver under a moral obligation to work for him only, irrespective of where he might be operating next season.

He further attempts to establish cordial relations with the Mills working in his coupe, by visiting their villages occasionally, giving them loans whenever they need it for paying taxes, buying seeds, etc., without charging interest. In fact, he even gives them maize, flour and salt at subsidised rates while working. All that he asks of them in return is, that they should always work for him and fulfil the quotas allotted to them. In course of time, Mills come to regard their ' Seth ' as a friend who stands by them in their need. They know that his motives are not purely altruistic and that they are being probably exploited elsewhere. Still they tend to look upon him as their well-wisher and

attend a good deal of influence from their " Seth ". As one Bhil put it " We might sometimes beat us, when we don't do our work,but he is always reliable in an emergency ".

VII.

Every winter, a few Bhils go west to the rich plains of Gujarat, particularly the Kaira District, to work as labourers on cotton, tobacco and ground-nut fields of the Patidars. They are employed for a period of about three months to harvest the crop, when they are given food and wages averaging about two rupees a day. They return home at the end of this season towards the beginning of April. However, Bhils do not seem to like this type of work. They complain generally that the Patidars make them work too hard. The few who go every year,do so more out of curiosity and bravado and rarely go back. At least within the limited field of my observation, I have seen horses very few Bhils, who go west as agricultural labourers on successive years as a matter of course, as they would for instance, to the coupes.

I might be permitted to attempt a generalisation here. One feature that struck me as so very characteristic of Bhils almost everywhere, is that they do not like to over exert themselves even in times of necessity, unless it is very essential. For instance, water in the springs and in streams of the region goes on receding as the summer advances and considerable difficulty is experienced particularly by women, in procuring drinking water.This can be relieved to a considerable extent, just by deepening

water holes. But I have seen men sitting in front of their homes and lamenting the lot of their women who are forced to go to distant water holes in search of potable water. They know that a couple of hours of work by two or three persons is all that is required to deepen the nearby springs and ensure a steady supply of good water within easy access. But they do not do it. When I urged the people of Alimire and Piyargete in two successive summers to do this, the answer was the same, in substance " Who will take so much of trouble " and secondly, " If we do it, who will give us wages for that work "?

The phrase 'gvaii kerh hon kaihe' (who takes so much trouble ') seems to express their general attitude towards all work which they consider not very essential for living, especially so if the work is continuous and tends to be tedious. In earlier contexts, I have indicated such an attitude towards composting of manure, gathering of valuable gharoli berries, and with regard to their work in the Timber coupe, where it is coupled with a tendency to go on procrastinating action till the last moment, or till they are forced to act by external pressure. The same attitude might be illustrated further. There was an almost total failure of crops over a very large part of Panchmahals during the years 1951-1953, and acute scarcity conditions prevailed. By the autumn of 1953, there was a good deal of outcry that Bhils are precariously subsisting upon certain kinds of poisonous roots and bulbs dug up from the slopes of hills. The Bombay government was attacked

in the legislative assembly by a few members of the ruling party and many of the opposition, for their callous indifference to suffering humanity etc., etc., Scarcity relief works were undertaken practically all over the country, mostly, desilting of tank beds, putting up earthen bunds across streams, road building and metal breaking. It was expected that large numbers of Hills would turn up for labour and adequate preparations were made to provide them with grain and pulses at heavily subsidised rates on credit, and water and medical facilities free of charge. However, much to the surprise of the social service agencies looking after the works, there was a very poor response and even among the few who responded in the Dhanpur and Kotambi area, a large proportion were Kolis and Patlias from the west, who were relatively much better off. Soon the government was forced to suspend most of these works for lack of personnel and the social workers were sent into the villages to enquire why labour was not forthcoming even under such scarcity conditions. At first the Hills complained that the wages were too low. Wages in most scarcity works ranged from eight to ten annas for a woman to ten to fourteen annas a man per day. It was pointed out by the social workers that these scarcity works are opened not so much because they were very necessary, but primarily to give relief to the people and so ~~xxxx~~ their rates may not be compared with the rate schedules of District Local Boards or Public Works Department, whose operations are on a much smaller scale and are of a higher quality requiring more

skilled labour. Further, since grain was being provided at heavily subsidised rates, the real wages were considerably more than was apparent. Then came out a general complaint " who can do such work? We are agriculturists. Our fore-fathers were never employed in such tasks as digging up tank beds, metal breaking or building roads. How can we do such work when it is not in our tradition? It is better to live in the jungle, and live on roots and bulbs (kand-mul) and if God is good to us, we get some crop this Monsoon". It took a good deal of propaganda and persuasion from the social workers to convince Bhils that scarcity works are for their own good in the long run and that they should learn to be more industrious, for a better living in future. It must be conceded however, that once the Bhils were convinced that these works are for their own good, they responded readily. In Patadungari near Dohad, where work is going on a large reservoir and canals, about 5,000 Bhil men and women were working every day. In the Suki and Tittodi river works near Jhalod, where earthen bunds were being constructed across the rivers, between four to five hundred Bhils were working at each site, right through the scorching summer of 1953. Even in the Dhanpur area, response was fairly good, but mostly from the Kolis and Patlias. A few Bhils from Kotumbi and Khaltu went to work there. But response from the region to the south and east of Khaltu where conditions were really acute, remained very poor. Probably, explanation lies in their marked

occasion to work with the Bhils of Dhungar to whom they refer contemptuously as Koli-Bhils. It might also be that they depended more on the labour available in the forests of Madhya Bharat across the Satamal to the south.

One of the main contributory factors, for such complacency and cheerfulness is their tendency towards excessive drinking. I mentioned earlier how gohua liquor has an important place in all their social and ritual ceremonials, and in their notions of hospitality. I am told that liquor was never brewed in small quantities - a Bhil does not seem to relish drinking just a handful or by himself. He must have enough to make him very happily drunk and with all his bhaibeth or at least with his immediate neighbours. Liquor was always brewed in large earthen pots, capable of holding five to six gallons, and was reckoned in terms of Kandis. When an alliance had been just settled upon, a couple of kandis of liquor was to be provided by the boy's kin-group. When a sacrifice is offered, or when an offence is being atoned for- all these are occasions for getting drunk. Though drinking starts with plenty of bon homie: once drunk, often quarrels ensued. So much drinking spree could always be held in a lonely spot, so that women and children might not witness their disorderly behaviour when drunk. One direct result of such parties is that for a couple of days none of the participants could be in a position to do any work at all. And during winter, when the sap in the tad

(B.cylvestris) pala begins to sing, toddy drinking itself, becomes a major pre-occupation for a couple of months (Jan-March) to the oblivion of all other pressing work. These conditions are a little alleviated inside the Bombay hostitory, where toddy tapping and brewing of liquor is strictly forbidden. But, across the border, in Kathya-Bharat, the all too frequent drinking bouts on the part of Bhils and Bhilalas are the despair of the coupe operators who have plenty of work to be done by a deadline, and who are faced with the problem of getting work out of their drunken labourers, most of whom have received considerable sums of money in advance. One wonders little than that the agents and sometimes driven to manhandle such drunken and shiftless Bhils in order to chase them back to their unfinished jhatas.

A Bhil tends to be thriftless in other ways too. He is hospitable to friends and strangers alike, almost to an excess. Even in times of acute scarcity, a visitor to a Bhil village would surely go hungry, he would be forced to take at least half a meal(unleavened maize bread), even if it meant that his host would have to go hungry - a fact well exploited by the numerous petty officials of the area and their retinue. Further, he is fond of having a good time with his family and neighbours and takes delight in being known as a good host who does not care for money. On the several social or ritual occasions in a year, he sacrifices lavishly to the deities and spirits and invites his kin and affines

to share in the sacrificial meat and drink. In fact,money and resources are often expended lavishly, just to gain prestige in the community. A single illustration would suffice to demonstrate this point better. In this area, where scarcity conditions are frequent, one might expect that an attempt would be made at least during years of good harvest to put by some grain and money against any future contingency. However, it is found that such years are marked by a succession of festivals and sacrifices in honour of Indraj, the God of Rain and of harvest.These festivals and sacrifices known as Indu, selomani,and Jathra are very expensive as they last for over a week, when practically an open house is kept for all friends and relatives of the sponsor and even for strangers. In a single selamani celebrated a couple of years ago by Kalya Dhanna of Alandra, twelve goats, four half-grown male buffaloes and a dozen chicken were sacrificed and also eight to ten maunds of broken maize were used in feeding his guests and seven maunds of mahua liquor. In their joy in having a bumper harvest after many years of distress, the people of Dhanpur celebrated a festival (jatra) lasting over a month, which cost each family in that large village about four maunds of maize, one maund of mahua flower for brewing liquor and a half share in a goat. Kalya had sent invitations to the people of about six or seven villages in the neighbourhood, while invitations to attend the jatra at Dhanpur were sent as far as Baniya

and determent, to Kolis and Mala alike. Twelve pelcots were present on the final four or five days when sacrifices were offered and dancing went on practically right through the night. In that particular month, no less than fourteen daly, two dathano and two palangal were celebrated in the small area under my observation. Needless to say, most of them were working in the scarcity period next season when heavy rains washed away the standing crops. However, they were all very happy for having performed the daly , palangal, or datna as the case might be, " for their names would now live for ever ", in the minds of men. What better use could one find for wealth than spending it on such meritorious deeds, in hospitality towards their relatives, neighbours and friends. Such wanton expenditure on ritual and social occasions from purely prestige considerations is characteristic of most peasant and tribal people of the World. To an extent this is true of the urban people as well. Potlach of the plains Indian of British Columbia illustrates the extreme length to which this attitude could be carried. Apparent disregard and even destruction of wealth in all such cases is thought to be very praiseworthy.[11]

VIII.

Every Kuil family has its own cattle, goats and poultry and tries to have as large a live-stock as it could afford. When a couple set up their new home, many of their kins and affines give them gifts of cattle, a pair of bullocks, a milch cow with calf or at least a bull

14.

Gathering raina berries in the jungle.

Drinking Tadi(palm-wine) a favourite summer past-time.

calf. The bride receives a necklace, from her maternal uncle, her mother and her brothers, such that the milk of her natal home might never cease to flow in her home. And the bridegroom too gets a small nucleus of a herd from his father - at least a pair of bullocks for his plough, a few milch cows and a few goats. In course of time, this small cost is augmented by natural increases, new additions being purchased from time to time and occasionally one or two heads received by either of them as their share (share in the bride wealth) received for a near kinswoman. Wherever no considerable difficulty is experienced in procuring fodder, Malle try to maintain a large live stock. A normal Mali family in this area would be having between twenty to thirty heads of cattle, half a dozen buffaloes, and between ten to twenty goats. Among the more pre-persons, size of livestock would considerably be larger. Kumara of Pycngota had about forty heads of cattle in 1954, about fifteen calves, a dozen buffaloes and about eight score goats. A considerable portion of them died of epidemic and lack of fodder, during the incessant dozen year of three weeks towards the close of the monsoon of 1953. Even then he has a relatively large live stock. Bayalu of Alindra had in 1954, about 40 heads of cattle, half a dozen full grown female calves (ebodki) six large buffaloes and about thirty goats. Particularly on the Nallamal, there is no scarcity of fodder. There is extensive pasture land of the highly nutritious bhug

grass. In fact, the Government had even some ideas of marking out and enclosing these grass coupes. But after one season, the attempt was given up as unprofitable. However the local Malis have found in this grass an additional source of income. Early in winter, they cut and stack large quantities of grass far in excess of their requirements. Towards the end of April, a considerable scarcity of fodder is generally experienced in the plains below and the Koli and Pathia peasants set out with their carts in search of the precious fodder. A large number of them come every year in Kotamsal also, to buy whatever grass the Malis might be able to spare them. I am informed that Malis portend considerable reluctance to part with their stock of fodder, but sell it eventually at a fairly good price. During the two seasons, I spent with them, the price varied from twenty to twenty five bundles of grass per Rupee. Bundles would generally be small containing less than ten pounds of grass. Each family in the Kotamsal villages earn between fifteen to twenty Rupees each season, only by selling grass to the Koli and Pathia peasants from below.

Malis place considerable significance and emphasis on having as large a live stock as possible. Some of the advantages of having a large stock are obvious. They represent a form of wealth that is not easily frittered away. But tends to increase as years pass. Bulls are required as draught animals for the plough and in parts of Kathiawad and Ahmedpur, even male buffaloes are used for this purpose.

however, the fault of this area is not general custom to this area, allow them to breed freely, resulting in a very inferior stock being developed, inspite of the excellent fodder available in plenty, consequently they are not strong enough to pull heavier ploughs and Bhils are practically forced to stick to the old fashioned and inefficient single shared light plough.

Usually, the cattle of Ratanmal and Jetumbi yield a thick creamy milk which far compensates for the small quantity by their high nutritional content. In fact, the ghee prepared from the milk of these cattle has a very good market outside and fetches as much as three rupees a pakka seer at the local shop in Sanjeta. Since it is the women of the house who tend the cattle and the cattle byre, income from the sale of dairy products is supposed to belong to her exclusively. Usually this money is utilised to buy herself clothes and other finery.

Incidentally, the possession of a large herd of cattle and goats means considerable quantities of manure. Usually the refuse of the cattle byre is stocked at a little distance away from the homestead for being used to manure the vaha or the smaller irrigated patch in which tobacco and vegetables are grown. Further when cattle go out for grazing everyday, they are taken for their daily meal to selected fields where their droppings might get collected in particular spots for use at a later time.

Further, each family requires to have a large live stock for some of their social and ritual requirements. Whenever a son of the family has to be married bridewealth has to be found for him. Though the amount of bridewealth is calculated, in terms of money, a large part of it is given in equivalent value of cattle. On a single occasion, as many as six to eight heads of cattle might have to be given away. Of course when a daughter of a near kinswoman is being married, the family receives portions of bridewealth cattle received for her. Even, then a gift of one or two milch cows and calves could have to be given to her, when she goes out to her new home.

Goats and bull buffalo calves are in constant demand for their numerous ritual sacrifices. One might expect to find in any Mali family at least four or five occasions in a year on which one or more goats and fowl are sacrificed. Most of the spirits and deities supplicated by Malis for their various ills and grievances are such that demand at least a brace of fowl and/or a goat in sacrifice. Even ancestral tutelary spirits demand such sacrifices. Further, bull buffalo calves are sacrificed in all major ritual occasions such as the Nadarja festival on the Saturnal. Since situation requiring a sacrifice might arise suddenly, a family has always to be prepared by having sufficient stock of the such bull calves, goats and fowls.

As a result, there is generally a brisk trade in cattle. People go out to distant places to sell or

buy cattle according to their requirements. Often lonely homesteads are raided by robbers for their livestock which would then be sold in distant places. In the pre-integration days, cattle raids across the borders of Kaniya and Sokod one side, and Kaniya and Kathiwada on the other, were very frequent, to the extent that these states had to come to an agreement whereby the police authorities from any state investigating a cattle raid, could freely cross the borders on the trail of the robbers, apprehend them with the assistance of the local authorities and only then go through the formalities of seeking extradition etc. Inspite of such arrangements, the fear of losing their live stock was so predominant that they are not left unattended even during day time. At night, they are pounded in the ground floor of the hall immediately below the living apartment - usually men sleep out in the porch of the cattle byre-shed only , or in the verandah of the separate byre.

It was mentioned earlier that considerable difficulty is experienced in the low lands during late summer in procuring enough fodder for their cattle. Further, the forest authorities found that for lack of their normal fodder, goats were making considerable inroads on the forest cover, especially in areas recently cleared and under reforestation schemes. So a proposal was made by the Government through certain social service agencies that during these months of fodder-scarcity, they should keep only a small part of their cattle and goats with them

and send the rest for grazing in selected pasture lands in the Nasik and Khandesh districts. Facilities would be provided by the government for care-takers to accompany herds, on payment of a small fee. However, Bhils and other tribal people misinterpreted the motives of the government in light of their long and unfortunate historical experiences of deprivation and exploitation, as a subtle move to dispossess them of their cattle and goats. A good deal of outcry was raised and in the end the proposal fizzled out. However, I believe that Bombay Government proposes to levy a heavy grazing tax on goats held in excess of the particular quota allowed to a family as assessed by governmental authorities.

Each agricultural season, when everybody except the very young or old are busy, one or more goharis or cowherds are appointed by the people of a village collectively, for about eight months from June to end of January. During this period, a gohari may be having forty to fifty heads of cattle in his charge. He is entitled to receive one Roti (unleavened cake of maize flour) per day for each of his clientele and to a payment of a Rupee per head or a vis (3 lbs.) of Maize per head of cattle at the end of the season. Young calves are usually grazed apart under a separate gohari and two calves are reckoned as equivalent to one head of cattle for purposes of payment. Usually the gohari of a village is an appointment that goes by custom to the same person usually chosen from a neighbouring village with which - - - -

the community is traditionally associated.

Efforts are also being made to improve the quality of live stock in this region by the Bharat Sevak Samaj (an all-India body of social workers that has recently been entrusted with considerable responsibility in the Community Development Projects and under the Five Year Plans) and the Government Veterinary Department, by stationing stockmen in each taluka with medicines and other equipment. Further, attempts to improve the live stock were made through the agency of the Bharat Sevak Samaj by introducing animals of better quality of cattle and poultry. But the response during these three years (1952- 55) has been very poor. Bhils and even Kolis for that matter, seem to prefer their older methods of combating sickness among their livestock and of haphazard breeding. One stockman complained bitterly that inspite of the fact that any out break of epidemics was to be reported immediately for him to take suitable measures, nobody" dead it. During a six month period, only three cases were brought to him for treatment and even those were in such an advanced state of disease that he could do little with them. When he went on a round with a talathi to vaccinate the cattle whenever an epidemic was suspected, he was rudely turned away by the suspicious Bhils who felt " they could understand how to take care of their cattle far better than these bhangyas (Town dwellers) who hardly know which is a cow and which is a bull". He said that they seem

to prefer witchcraft and sacrifice to modern medicine. To a large extent this holds true of the entire region,where the yield, fertility and health of cattle are all ultimately, intimately associated with ancestral displeasure and the cure consists in sacrificing to the spirits and not so much in treating the sick cattle themselves.

I am informed that of the numerous white leghorn cocks that were imported into the area and a brace each one lent to those who promised to let them roost with their hens.Only a few were effective, the rest succumbed to injuries received in fights with the cocks of the roost, some to the ill-balanced diet; ~~[illegible]~~ quite a few just disappeared. However, gradually,the Bhils seem to be accepting these new innovations,especially in Dohad and Jhalod talukas, However, it is too early to yet expect results.

14.

Details of the food and other requirements of a Bhil are met locally through agriculture and forest produce. But certain essential commodities such as iron implements, salt, cloth, spices etc., have to be procured from outside only, through the agency of the several vania and Vohra traders who have set up their small trading posts (taken) or dukan) in the most interior areas of the Bhil country, or at the markets (haat) that gather in some of the larger villages on different days in the week. The latter are attended by traders and Bhils from very far off places, for goods ranging from a knife, vegetables or eggs to gold

and silver ornaments and livestock are bought and sold at a very cheap rate in such places. These hats are a common feature of Madhya Bharat. Whenever a Bhil wants to buy anything, or to dispose of his forest produce such as dolli, charoli or honey, surplus crop of grain or pulses etc., he goes to particular markets noted for transactions in such articles. For instance, the people of Ratanmal would go eighteen miles and across two ranges of hills to Varjao for their cooking pots (ãmlali), for mine or to get a fresh temper for their axes, plough share etc., to Khabra for millets, arrowhead, axes, plough shares, and longcloth, and to Kathiawada for women's apparel, liquor and livestock. Going to the hat itself is an exciting prospect for young people especially. A large variety of entertainers would be there, sweetmeat and trinket sellers and the unfamiliar photographers. Boys and girls come together at these places from far off places and get to know each other and form affinities, without drawing much attention upon themselves. Many elopements and abductions come out of such meetings and even normal alliances are broached, when elders from distant places come across each other and gossip. Thus the hat has many functions of significance other than the purely economic.

Such markets are a common feature of tribal life in Madhyabharat and Khandesh, but in Panchamahals, they are very few. Bhils have to depend to a larger extent, upon the trading posts of the Vania and the Vohra. Here goods are bought, sold or exchanged, usually at rates which afford the trader a net profit of fifty to hundred per cent.

for instance in 1954, when yams was selling at three to four rupees a maund, the Bhils would be getting only a rupee and a quarter or thereabouts. Since there was only one shop for miles around and there was no general awareness of the correct price of their products, the trader could state his own rates. Even so, Bhils in general seem to prefer a value to a varia as less exacting.

These transactions of Bhils whether at a hat or at the trading post of the Varia or Patra, are characteristic in that very little money would actually pass from hand to hand. Goods would be evaluated in terms of money and exchanged for some other requirements of an equivalent value, of course at a rate fixed by the trader with a clear margin of about 50-100% profit. It is rarely that a Bhil pays cash for goods that he buys, or that he sells for money except when such is required for a specific purpose such as for furnishing bridewealth for a son, for taxes etc.

In course of time, special relations of loyalty tend to develop between a trader and his client. Particularly a Patra trader always wants to maintain cordial relations of friendly understanding with his clients. Usually people of a village transact their business as far as possible with one trader only - occasional trips to the hats do not matter, - and are on pretty familiar terms with him. Whenever they go to him, he might give them some groundnuts and jaggery and allow them to rest in the courtyard of his shop - a privilege never permitted to strange Bhils,

for reasons of security. He wants them to buy all their least requirements from him and gives them on each such occasion some extra coconuts, jaggery and groundnuts free of charge as a mark of good will. So much importance does he attach to these special purchases, that he might actually berate an old client who bought his least-requirements elsewhere. Once I heard the old Vahra of Konjeta reproach a man " Why do you come to me for other things all the year round, when you buy for Holi elsewhere. I dont want your business. You can take it away ". Hence also recipocate by rendering occasional free service for their trader. A Vahra trader is generally liked because he does not practice usury. Usually he accomodates his clients with seed, money and grains, but at rate of interest considerably lower than his Vania counter-part. Further, he insists on the accounts for the year being closed at the time of each harvest.

Indebtedness among the Bhils was rampant at one time and is so to a considerable extent even now, since their income is sufficient just for about ten months even in a good year, there is generally a period of three to four months before the harvest i.e. late summer and monsoon months, when they are forced to depend on the traders and the money lenders for subsistence and needs. The usual rate of interest (dolla) varied from 50 to 70% compoundable twice or thrice a year, and with the next harvest as security. As soon as the crop was ready, the moneylender (Sahukar) or his agent

could come to get the crop evaluated by the talati at a rate considerably lower than the rates prevailing in the market and take away the bulk of the crop in part payment of the loan. Once once a Bhil gets into the talons of a Sahukar (money-lender) usually a Vania, there was little hope of his getting out of it. Debt would go on mounting till a time might come when he would be dispossessed of his lands and sometimes as a measure of mercy, be allowed to cultivate it as a tenant on crop-share basis. Mr. Symington the Special Officer appointed by the Bombay Government to enquire into the economic conditions of the backward tribes and castes of the State mentions how, in certain parts of Panchmahals District, Rewapur Petha and elsewhere, the Sahukar had practically a stranglehold on Bhil economy. In certain talukas, for instance, in Jhalod, nearly one third of the tribal land was directly or indirectly under his control. Even today in this taluka, we find a large number of Bhils cultivating land as tenants of the Vania Sahukars of Limdi and Jhalod towns. Mr. Symington mentions a widespread corruption of petty revenue and police officials, most of whom were heavily subsidised by Sahukars. A number of instances are mentioned by him thereby a Sahukar paying the taxes of a peasant ostensibly as a loan, but getting the tax receipts made in his name. This continues for a number of years and then fabricating a spurious deed of transfer backdated to several years ago, the Sahukar takes over his land with the aid of the talati and the local police.

Since it was quite easy for a Sahukar to get any document attested by the unsuspecting and illiterate Bhil, there was no possibility of a challenge being sustained in a court of law, even where the magistrates suspected the true facts of the all-too-familiar situation. Often the Sahukar could prevent the peasant from even attending the hearing of the case and decision would be ex parte.

The success with which the money lenders operated might be illustrated with reference to the towns such as Partya, Jamveda, Sathkunda, Jhabua etc., all which had a large and flourishing population of Vanias and others whose sole occupation was money- lending at those usury rates of interest. In most of these places, the money lenders have been able to acquire considerable tracts of land formerly owned by the tribal people.

In his report to the Government of Bombay of 1944, [12] Mr. Symington made some concrete recommendations. The more important of them were

(1) that the Government forbid the transfer of tribal land to non-tribal hands as illegal.

(2) check to be placed on the activities of money-lenders by fixing the maximum rate of interest etc. and declaring the forfeiture of crops as illegal.

(3) Minimising the dependency of the tribal people on the traders by introducing co-operative institutions such as Agricultural Credit Societies, Grain Purchase and sales depot, Forest labour Co-operative - - Societies etc., where the tribals participation in the capital is progressively extended to be complete in about ten years, and subsidised by the Govern ment in the meantime.

(4) Spread of education and literacy among the tribals as their illiteracy and ignorance of law make them open for easy exploitation.

These recommendations have been adopted by the Government today. Usary has been declared illegal and money lending has been restricted in the tribal area under the Money Lenders Act of 1948, of Bombay. When this area was merged with the Bombay State and the rules became applicable to Bariya, quite a few residents of Bariya town were seriously affected as suddenly they were derived of the main source of their livelihood as money-lending under the new regulations were not productive enough.

Since 1947, transfer of tribal lands to others is not permitted. Attempts to circumvent such regulations were made often by a Sahukar by using a Koli or Patlia agent as a partner in the transaction. However, the game has become not quite worth the trouble.

So far as co-operatives are concerned, the Bombay Government has been instituting numerous such bodies under the initial management of certain social service agencies with considerable local reputation such as Bhil Seva Mandal, Bharat Sevak Samaj etc. In Panchmahals, numerous purchases and sales depots have been established in every sehja headquarters (Sehja is a group of twelve to fifteen villages in charge of a talati) through which members may sell their crops and get advances at an easy rate of interest &c. Forest labourer's Co-operative Societies have also been formed under the management of social service

agencies where each labourer is a share-holder, elects representatives to the Board of Directors and eventually shares in the responsibilities and profits of the society.

Forest authorities have evolved a policy whereby Forest Labour Co-operative Societies get coupes at more offset prices in preference over the private operators, i.e, a society would be given a coupe at about Rs.9,000/- only, even though it would have fetched upto Rs.10,000/- in open auction. Working of such a coupe would be closely supervised by the Forest Department and a certain portion of profit would go towards the reserve funds, rest being distributed among the members.

In Panchmahals District, there was only one society in 1940, with a total membership of 550. This rose to seven by next year and in 1953, there were 25 societies with a membership of nearly 14,000. In Limkheda taluka only, the Dhanpur Forest Labourers' Co-operative Society was operating three coupes of a total extent of 1000 acres and another, thinning / coupe of about 484 acres. There were a few initial set-backs, due (to) mainly to a lack of experience of the management. In 1952, the Dhanpur society suffered heavy losses in a large bamboo and grass coupe of the Kathanal, due to fire and unforeseen difficulty in getting their goods down.

These societies took about three or four years to build up a sufficient reserve fund and to place themselves on sound footing. Labourers who had been led to expect

immediate profits by propagandists of the society were merely disappointed. For sometime there was a danger of their going back to the voting operators, who were still popular with their system of advances and subsidies. However, these societies have started distributing dividends since 1933 and as indicated by the above figures the societies are gradually gaining ground among the Hills, especially those below the Ratanmal.

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NOTES AND REFERENCES.

1. Vighoti is a system of land measure prevailing in most parts of Central and Northern India. Its equivalence varies in different parts of India from 1.3/5 Vighas to 1.3/4 Vighas to an acre.

2. The Bombay Gazetteer VI - Page 70

3. Earliest survey of this region was undertaken by Pollexfen, the British Assistant Political Agent, between the years 1861- 63. Most Revukantha States had based their assessment upon this survey. Set in Katarwal the basis of taxation seemed to have been different such as the general economic level of the tribal group concerned for instance Op.Cit p. 71.

4. These statements are based on the Land Records of the Taluka of Kanjota.

5. The extent of the Valtar holdings varied from Headman to headman, on apparently personal considerations. The Vadevi of Dhandal, for instance, had about a hundred Vighas on a valtar tenure. (The Bombay Gazetter III p.75)

6. Kharif (Monsoon) is counted from June to end of September and Rabi (Winter) from the October to the end of March or beginning of March. Cf. H. B. Desai, Rural Economy of Gujarat, p. 48.

7. Statements based on Kariya Grant Records.

8. The Bombay Gazetter III. p. 247.

9. All the rates quoted are those that are prevailing in the trading centres of Kanjota and Dhanpur during the years 1953-54.

10. Rates supplied by the coupe contractors and differ considerably from those prescribed by the Forest authorities in their Working Plan, for the period, to allow for certain local conditions of work. These rates vary even among the several contractors themselves. The Vorah traders operating in the Dhimatu Valley for instance found paying slightly higher wages for bhata work than the Forest Labourers' Co-operative Societies, which were non-profit organisations and also a little top-heavy in their organisations.

11. Vanes H. The Gift :- for a detailed discussion of such Prestige Expenditure.

12. Statistical Abstract of Bombay State, 1951 p.386-7 Cf. also Report on the Working of Forest Labourers' Co-operative Societies in Bombay State.(1950) p.50-54.

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