CHAPTER - V

Phils of Ratanmal have a polysegmentary social system characterised by patrilineal descent and exogamy. Clanship is vitiated by excessive segmentation and dispersal. Local lineages of seven to eight generations, integrated by bonds of extensive social and ritual collaboration and by bonds of pollution, form the more significant structures in their social system.

The operative group in their social and kinship relations is a segment of a lineage three to four generations deep and headed by a living ancestor. In other words, it consists of a man, his children, and descendants in the male line and includes the wives of the several adult male members. The peculiar feature of this structure is that its depth and extension are limited by the life-span of the senior ancestor. During his life time, the several elementary families in the group are drawn together into a closely interacting unity under his authority and leadership. The main basis of this unity lies in that they all belong to and are units within the family of the ancestor, and so long as he lives, must be subservient to his leadership and authority. The family that comes into being when a man marries, continues to function as a unity during his life time. The core of domestic and economic relations might shift, as the several children grow up and form their own conjugal homes. But for all social and ritual purposes, the parental family

continues to operate as a significant corporate entity in the community. With his death, the factors contributing to the unity of the several segments are not sufficiently strong and the several sons break away with their respective descendants and their wives to form as many operative groups. Bearing in mind the principal feature of this group as an aggregate of elementary families operating as a corporate unity under the authority of a common ancestor, this may be referred to as a joint family.

But the Bhil joint family, it may be noted, differs significantly from what is usually referred to as a joint family by Indian ethnologists and jurists, a large kindred group that is usually coresidential and commensal and owning property in common. Each member of such a group has a copercenary interest in the property but not a right to partition as such. One of the senior members is the head of the family and also the manager of the property. But even he cannot alienate or otherwise dispose of the copercenary property or even a portion thereof, except with the express approval of all the members of the joint family and even then in strict accordance with the particular code governing of the joint family inheritance and succession in that region. The dayebhaga law used to prevail in Bengal while in the rest of India, the mitakshara was prevalent. In Malabar, the matrilineal castes are governed by a system called the marumakkattayam while the patrilineal castes are subject to the mitakshara law.

The Bhil joint family, on the other hand, is not usually a commensal or coresidential unit. The basic coresidential group is the elementary family comprising of a couple and their unmarried children. They form the components of a single homestead and also form a unit of commensal relations. The members of such a domestic group, cultivate the same plots of land, bring their individual earnings into a common pool and generally behave as members of a single economic unit. When the children grow up and marry, they usually break away from the parental home. A daughter goes to live with her husband, while a son is given some land and a few heads of cattle for his maintenance. He builds himself a separate medi (hut) near his parental homestead and lives there with his wife, subsisting upon what he can produce on his land and upon his other earnings. It is expected that the young couple operate as a separate economic unit thenceforth and not depend upon the parental family any more.

A homestead provides a good basis for the development of intimate domestic relations between the several members. Since they form a single economic unit, there are usually no rivalries between them. They live and eat together and as such share a variety of experience in their normal daily life. Every day, situations arise in plenty, when each member has to depend upon the others and has also to collaborate closely with the others, so that the several common objectives may be achieved. Coming into frequent contacts with each other in their guarded and unguarded moments, they come to

understand each other, appreciate and sympathise with the stronger and weaker points of each other. Further the very fact of their coming into close and sustained contact with each other, of participating and collaborating in situations and endeavours of common interest, is likely to inculcate a feeling of solidarity and a sense of 'belonging', among the several members.

The father is the central and dominating person within the family. His decisions on all matters relating to the inter-relations of the several members and regarding the management or the disposal of the property are final and binding. He is under no jural obligations to consult his wife or children, or to be bound in any way by their opinions. In practice however, a Bhil is rarely a despot and tries to maintain harmonious relations with the other members of the family. A woman for instance has very few jural rights in the property of her husband and is often scoffed at as incompetent and foolish. Yet she plays a very significant role in the economy of her household. She manages the medi and the cattle byre, looks after the livestock and sees to the marketing of the several dairy products without any interference from her husband. She collaborates with him in most of his economic activities, except in ploughing and sowing which are regarded as essentially male operations. She weeds, manures and harvests the crop with him. She goes to the far distant markets, laden with grain and other produce to be sold or exchanged for household requirements, such as salt,

cloth &c. She often goes out with him to the logging camps where she cooks for him and sometimes works as a partner in the arduous tasks of charcoal manufacture. Thus the relations between a man and his wife often tend to be characterised by comraderie and respect for each other. Quite often, a man learns to depend upon and be guided by the judgement of a competent woman inm his normal day-to-day activities.

There is a considerably high rate of infantile mortality in this region. From a study of the genealogical tables in my possession, it would appear that nearly a third of the children born in a family die within the first two or three years. This insecurity is probably behind the almost excessive indulgence of a Bhil parent towards his children who are allowed to have their way in practically all respects. In fact we find that one of the major preoccupations in the ritual life of a Bhil is his concern for the safety of the children and the continuity of the lineage.[1] Till they are about six or seven years of age, they are not bothered with anything. Even afterwards, only the very light tasks such as minding the younger children, taking the calves out for grazing and keeping a watch over the <u>modi</u> when their parents are away at work are entrusted to them. Children are expected to obey their parents and behave respectfully towards them, especially towards their father. They may not talk obscenity or behave rudely in his presence. Yet the relations between the father and children are generally cordial and informal. Usually everybody gathers round the fire in the porch of the <u>modi</u> or in the verandah of the byre, exchange news comments

and reminiscenses, joke and dispute with each other. While there is a strong core of authority vested with the father, he rarely finds an occasion to exercise it forcefully . Khil fathers are very gentle towards their children. During my eleven months sojourn among them, there were few instances of deliberate harshness towards children, one's own or of others. Affection and mutual goodwill generally characterises the parent-child relationships and forms one of the principal basis of the unity of the joint family.

The members of a domestic group are so intimately bound to each other, that these bonds persist even after their moving into seperate conjugal units. Unity of the sipling group for instance, is strongly developed in Khil kinship as evidenced by the rights and responsibilities vested in a brother and sister not only towards each other, but in each other's children as well. Further the sibling relationship itself is characteristically one of affection and understanding. While an elder sibling is equated with the parents and so should be respected and obeyed, still the authority is not sufficiently well-defined to make for super-ordination or subordination in their relations.

II

From the above discussion, the basis of the unity of the joint family should now be clear. This structure may be seen as an instance of the parent-child relationship persisting and extending with all its ramifications beyond the

homestead. When the several sons marry and set up different domestic units, there is a break in the commensal relations. But in other respects, the solidarity of the family is little impaired. For one thing, control and authority over the land-holdings continue to be vested in the father. The allocations of land and cattle made at the time of a son's marriage is generally a tentative arrangement for the latter's subsistance. A father may give him some more land as his family grows in a size or even take away a portion of what is given to him with a view to make a more balanced distribution amongst all his sons or to make provision for a distressed daughter or a sister who has returned to her natal family for subsistance. At any time during his life time, he has the right to dispose of his property as he wills, so long as he is not grossly unjust or partial to any of his children. Where there is a discord between his several sons or a conflict between himself and one of his sons, he can ask one of the parties to the conflict or his offending son to leave the village and settle in another village where some provision is made for him. A deliberate challenge to his authority might often result in the offenders being temporarily dispossessed of their lands. The late Vadavi Samla of Pipergota and his son Surpal could never get on with each other. The latter was indolent, lazy and given to excessive drinking. At a fairly early stage, it was clear that Surpal would never be a credit either to his village or to his family. So Samla asked him to get out of the village

and live as best he could, by his own labour. So long as Samala was alive, Surpal was living with his maternal uncle at Samlakund. Samla did not send for him even when he was dying but requested Khuman - his father's brother's son to take over the headmanship. Surpal was later invited to be the headman by Khuman and other members of the Vakhla lineage, who wanted to give him another chance. But that is besides the point. In another case, which recently happened in Alindra, Gendudi - the only daughter of late Mohansingh, returned to her natal village Alindra, with her husband and two children. There had been famine for a number of years successively in Samlakund where they lived, and so she came to seek the assistance of her natal kin. In the meantime, Mohansingh's lands had been divided amongst Rangla and Punki - two children of a deceased brother. They were asked to make over a third portion of their respective landholdings for Gengudi. They were unwilling to comply. But Royala as the head of their family, was firm on this point and ultimately they had to give up a portion of their land.

There is yet another factor which contributes to the unity of the joint family. Bhils marry very young. Generally their age at marriage will be about fourteen to sixteen for boys and eleven to thirteen for the girls. Bhil children are brought up very affectionately and with a low sense of responsibility. As a result, they are not usually adequate to shoulder the new responsibility now thrust upon them. As a matter of fact, the boy will have learnt little but the rudiments of cultivation. He has to learn a good deal more,

by hard experience before he can be independent of parental help and assistance. Even so with the girl. While she is relatively better equipped than her husband and is able to cook, take care of the cattle, etc. she still does not have the courage enough to manage a medi by herself. Thus in practice the young couple are very much dependent upon the parental family for aid and guidance.

Their homestead is usually built in the close vicinity of the parental one, and the young people are looked after by the father and other relatives, who advise and assist them whenever required. As the boy gains more experience and confidence, his dependence decreases. But cooperation with the other members of the joint family continues unimpaired under the leadership of the father. So long as he is alive, the several sons go to him, sit in his byre and discuss the events of the day or the prospects of harvest for the current season and for the next, and seek his advice on their problems. They help each other in their normal agricultural activities such as ploughing, sowing and harvesting. Where the quality of their land-holdings very considerably, they might even jointly cultivate them and share the harvest equally among themselves, so that no individual need suffer a loss. Grain is given freely to a needy member of the joint family. It is usually returned, but neither party considers it as a loan as such.

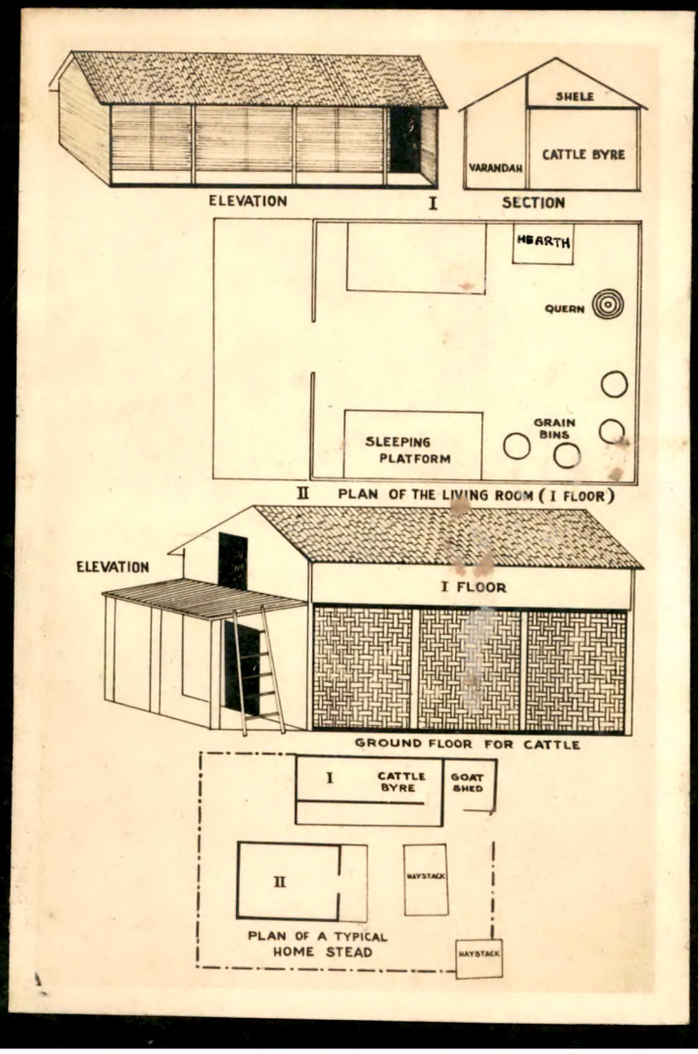
There is close collaboration between the members of a joint family on ceremonial and ritual occasions, such

as a marriage or a big ritual undertaking like Indraj.[2] Irrespective of whose daughter or son is being married, or who is sponsoring the ritual, the father takes the lead in organising the available resources, duties are apportioned among the several members and contributions are given by all to augment the resources of the sponsor and to make the undertaking a success. Even where there is a conflict between particular members, the feuds are suspended for the duration of the emergency and everybody works in harmony for the prestige of the family.

In all its external relations, the family acts as a unity and is represented by the father whether in the settlement of disputes, negotiations for alliances or any other ceremonial occasion involving the entire family. When a girl of the joint family is married, the bridewealth is given through him and it is also received through him when a son is being married on ritual occasions, in the village when a the sacrificial meat is distributed among all the members of the village, the basis of distribution is not the chul (hearth) symbolising the domestic group, but the ghar symbolising the joint family. The portions are given to the head of each such group for distribution among the several members.

III

A few words may be said about the Bhil homestead itself here. The nucleus of the homestead is the medi, a crude structure of timber frame with walls of bamboo plastered over with a mixture of cowdung and clay - a mixture


ELEVATION
I
SHELE
VARANDAH
CATTLE BYRE
SECTION
HEARTH
QUERN
SLEEPING PLATFORM
GRAIN BINS
II PLAN OF THE LIVING ROOM (I FLOOR)
ELEVATION
I FLOOR
GROUND FLOOR FOR CATTLE
I
CATTLE BYRE
GOAT SHED
II
HAYSTACK
PLAN OF A TYPICAL HOME STEAD
HAYSTACK

favoured all over Peasant India for plastering the wall and flooring, for its alleged cooling and insecticide properties. The medi has two floors - it is really a hut, about 10-15 ft.long and 16-20 ft.wide, built on a platform of timber piles. Upper portion forms the living room and the space below is enclosed on all sides with a door set in front and the cattle are housed here at night. Thus a medi is a combination cattleshed-hut structure. In this region, where cattle are frequently stolen a family gains in security by keeping the cattle below the living rooms - any disturbance among them is easily felt by the people above. Often, during winter, one or two persons sleep in this shed, warm with the breath of many animals.

The upper floor or the medi proper consists of just a single apartment. Meals are cooked on a hearth at one end. One usually finds in this apartment a rotary stone quern, some two or three large baskets and mud-plastered baskets for storing grain and a tin trunk or two containing most of their valuables - old land-deeds, cash, ornaments, clothes and their guns, arrows, bows, &c. Nearer the entrance, in the fore part of the room are two or three sleeping platforms. Entrance to this room is being made through a wide open platform at front, gained by means of a ladder. The living room is the special preserve of the woman. She works here, receives her husband also usually sleeps here, with her very young children. None except her children and her husband may go up the ladder without her permission, which is not usually accorded to male visitors except when the husband is at home, for obvious reasons.

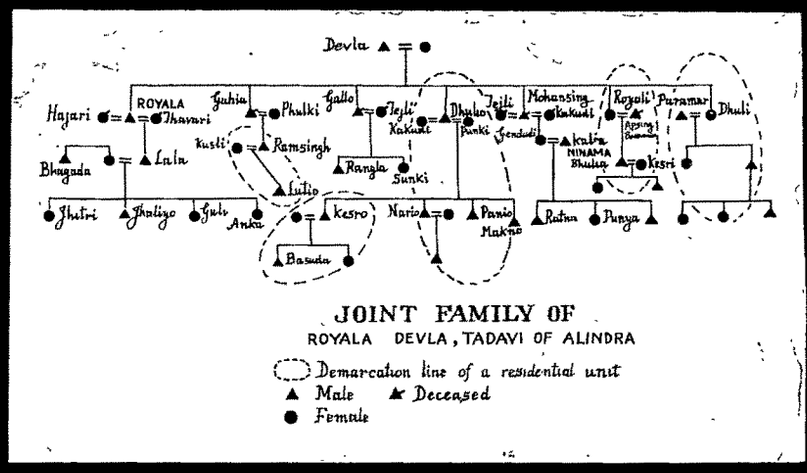
A medi in some ways symbolises a single elementary family. Only one married woman can inhabit it and any other woman means a restriction on the privacy of her sexual and domestic affairs. In fact, each wife in a polygynous family is entitled to her medi, even if the cowives are sisters. In such an event, a single homestead might contain two or more medis. However, the presence of two medis does not usually imply a bifercation of the cattle, granaries, or other economic and domestic interests of the family of the father.

As the family grows, and the herds increase, other structures may develop. The more usually found is the byre (ghar), a long single-storied and gabled hut. It has usually two portions, a large room, covering more than two thirds the width of the hut and running its entire length, with a long covered verandah running its entire length in the front (Fig.I2 in Pl.IX). It is built usually parallel to the lengthwise axe axis of the medi, and slightly to the front, so that the open verandah lies along the side of the medi, and whosoever will be sitting in the verandah will have an unrestricted commend of the medi and its porch. The general plan of the byre and its normal position in the homestead has been indicated fully in Pl.IX given opp.p.204). The byre is essentially a structure for housing cattle, through the verandah is used as a sitting room, where the family spend most of their leisure hours, and where the visitors may be entertained without embarassing the inmates of the medi to any extent.

Often the platform in front of the medi is extended to

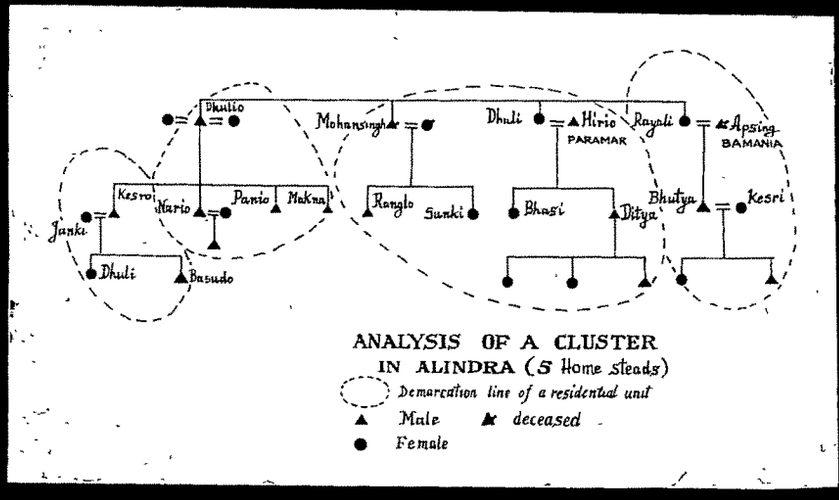
give additional storing space. All the space is enclosed by the medi and the ghar is fenced off with a margin of about 2-3 feet on all sides. Another fence is often made to connect the anterior wall of the medi to the outer fence in front, to form an extended vada for the cattle, as may be seen clearly in pl. IX representing a schematic sketch of the homestead of Royala of Alindra. Royala has about seventy cattle, twenty to twenty five goats and a large number of fowls. In the enclosure of the medi, about thirty cattle heads are housed, while in the byre itself there are some thirty five to forty. Calves are seperated from the adults and penned in the space beneath the medi, lest they should be trampled upon or get hurt in the frequent fights of the adult animals. Royala is one of the more well-to-do Bhil peasants in Ratanmal villages, and so his homestead is a little bigger than the others. But the general lay out is typical of the well-settled homesteads in this region.

The size and the components of the several residential units among the Vakhlas of Pipergota and the Bhurias of Alindra have been in some genealogical charts given alongside these account (Plates VIII & X). An examination of these charts, reveals that even in polygynous units with two or more wives, the number of children does not exceed six for instance, in the case of Khumen of Pipergota the component seems to be about four or five and not infrequently it is as low as two or three per homestead. I have sufficient evidence to believe that nearly 30 percent of the children that are born die within the first two years of their life.



JOINT FAMILY OF
ROYALA DEVLA, TADAVI OF ALINDRA

Demarcation line of a residential unit
▲ Male ★ Deceased
● Female



ANALYSIS OF A CLUSTER
IN ALINDRA (5 Home steads)

Demarcation line of a residential unit
▲ Male ★ deceased
● Female

Small wonder than that the Bhils are so preoccupied even in their ritual life with having more children and safeguarding those that are born.

Normally, the members of a homestead form a single elementary or polygynous family. Sometimes there might be living with them a son or daughter of a wife from a previous union. He grows up with them and goes back to his agnatic family when he becomes an adult, though it sometimes does not happen. Frequently, a sister's son or a wife's brother might come to stay with the family as a more or less permanent member. And frequently in a large homestead with a few children, there might be one or two halis (agricultural labourers) staying with the family for the duration of the agricultural season. In any case, the human component of a typical homestead consists of some two or three adults with probably three or four children. So even the size of a domestic unit is conducive to its development into a very well-knit group.

IV

We shall now consider briefly the kinship of the Bhils and the light it sheds on their family life. The terminology is classificatory. Certain terms indicating 'brother elder and younger''younger or elder sister', son and daughter are used in a classificatory sense, as also the terms for father's elder and younger brothers, father's sister, mother's brother and sister. With the father (bah)

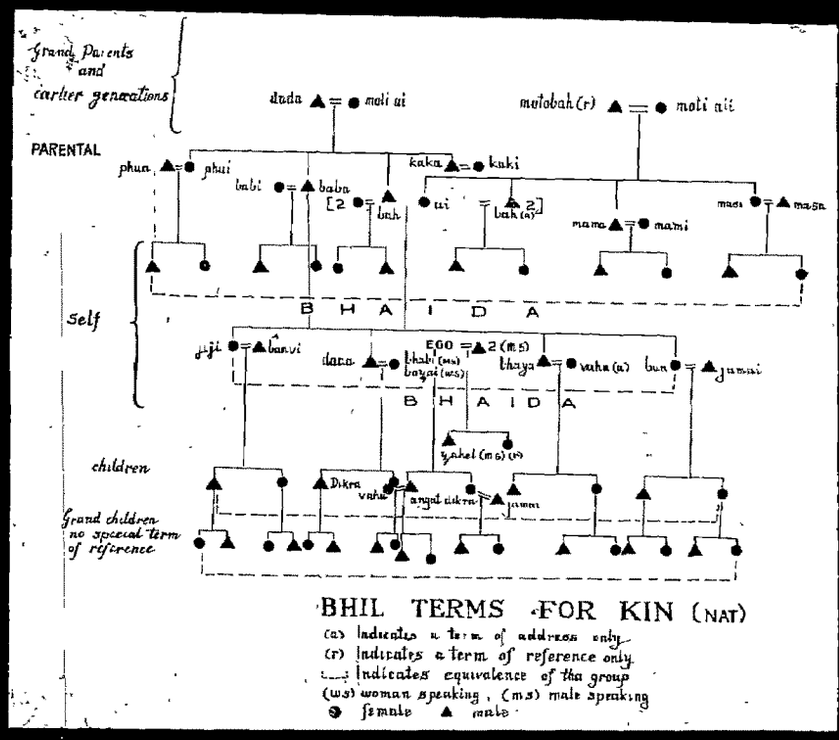
are equated, his brothers, and male collaterals in the agnatic line of descent. Among them, the distinction of the elder and younger in relation to the father is kept up. All their sisters are indicated by a single term phui. The principle of the unity of generations is markedly present in the system, as indicated by the above. Further all their children are equated with one's own sibling group, and are referred to by terms indicating sister, younger or elder (bun and jijni) and brother younger or elder (bhai and dada). All their children are again equated with one's own children, in that all of them form a sibling group (bhaida). But sister's children are distinguished collectively from brother's children, real or classificatory (bhanej and batija). Each generation forms a unity - a sibling group (bhaida). Similarly with the maternal kin. The terms for mother's brother and mother's sister is classificatory again and includes all the mother's sibling, real and classificatory. But the equation in the succeeding generations extends only to the children and the son's children of the mother's full siblings. The children of one's mother's full siblings are equated with one's own sibling group and are considered as bhaida.

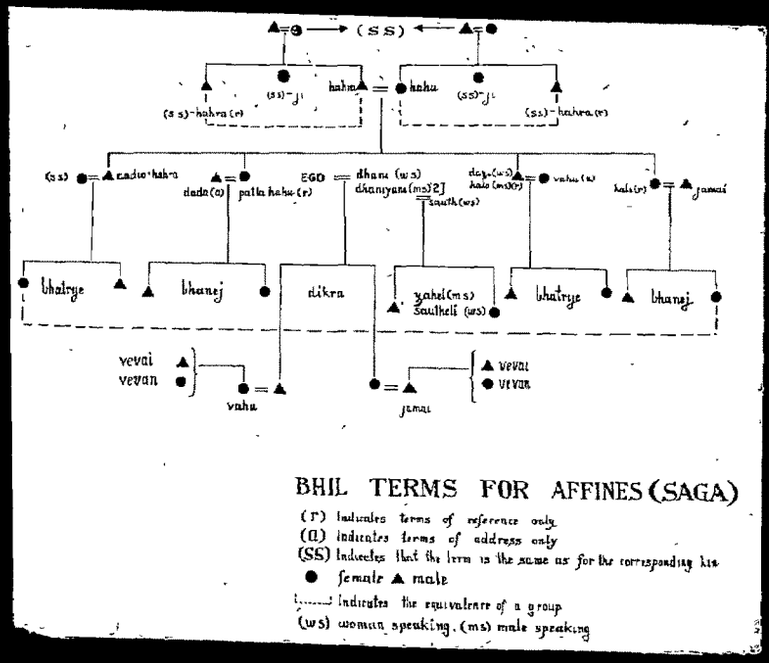
Further, while a distinction is kept up between the paternal and maternal kin in the parental generation, this distinction is not continued in the grand-parental and other higher generations. Male relatives on both the paternal and maternal side of the third, fourth ascending generations and beyond, are referred to by a term indicating a grand-father (moto-bah) while their wives and sisters are

indicated by a single term signifying a grand mother. And this is reciprocated in that the term natu, signifying a grand child is applied to the daughter's children as well as to the children of the sons, their great grand children through either daughter or son, etc. Within a generation, the elder and the younger are kept distinct and also of the sex of the person concerned. However, the same terms are used whether it is a man or a women speaking.

The main emphasis is however on the agnatic lineage, as is indicated in the use of certain terms indicating marriage links. The term vahu signifying a daughter-in-law is used to indicate the wives of the junior members in one's own generation, and the wives of all the males in the succeeding generations of kin. Similarly, the term jawai is used to indicate the husbands of all the kinswomen junior to the person speaking. Further, these terms are used to indicate the people who have come by marriage into the agnatic lineage of one's spouse. Incidentally, this arrangement of the terms also indicates indirectly the positional equation of the junior siblings,-real or classificatory with the filial generations. Similarly and reciprocally we find the senior siblings of either sex positionally equated with one's parental group. This arrangement is however most clearly demonstrated in the terms used for the senior siblings of one's spouse - sahra and sahu, which are the same used for father-in-law and mother-in-law respectively but qualified by prefixes dadio and natia respectively.

The term dada signifying an elder brother is used


Grand Parents and earlier generations
PARENTAL
Self
children
Grand children no special term of reference
dada
moti ai
motabah (r)
moti aii
phua
phai
babi
baba
kaka
kaki
mama
mami
masi
masa
B H A I D A
EGO
2 (m s)
jiji
banvi
dada
bhabi (ws)
bayat (ws)
bhaya
vahu (a)
bun
jamai
B H A I D A
Dikra
vahu
angat dikra
jamai
BHIL TERMS FOR KIN (NAT)
(a) Indicates a term of address only
(r) Indicates a term of reference only
Indicates equivalence of the group
(ws) woman speaking, (ms) male speaking
female ▲ male


(SS)
(ss)-ji
(ss)-bahra (r)
bahu
(SS)-ji
(SS)-bahra (r)
(ss)
dada (a)
patta bahu (r)
EGO
dhani (ws)
dhaniyani (ms) 2]
sauth (ws)
vahu (a)
jamai
bhatrye
bhanej
dikra
sauheli (ws)
vevai
vevan
vahu
jamai
VEVAI
VEVAR
BHIL TERMS FOR AFFINES (SAGA)
(r) Indicates terms of reference only
(a) Indicates terms of address only
(SS) Indicates that the term is the same as for the corresponding kin
female ▲ male
Indicates the equivalence of a group
(ws) woman speaking, (ms) male speaking

frequently to indicate the grandfather. But the terms for their wives are quite distinct. I have not been able to find a satisfying explanation for this type of an arrangement. But this would seem to indicate in some degree a unity of the alternate generations. While there is a sharp definition of authority in the proximal generations and the relationship is asymmetrical, the relationship between the grand-parent and the grand-child is marked less by authority and more by friendship. The behaviour between them tend to be less formal and more intimate. They represent the two ends of the family unity of a family, the one which is dying and the other which is growing up.

It may be noted here that the 'cousinage' is treated as a unity. All the kindred of one's own generation are regarded as a unity, bhaida. There is no distinction into cross and parallel cousins, thus negating the possibility of a cross cousin form of marriage inspite of the many reports of its occurance till recently.

All the kin whether from the paternal or maternal line form one's nat. The maternal kin are distinguished as forming a mohal (lit. the house of the mother). Here again, the relationship is kept up in the male line only through the mother's brother's children and descendants in the male line. Descendants of one's mother's sisters or one's uterine kin and the descendants of the mother's brother's daughter are not reckoned in the mohal. Further, a man is related to his wife's agnatic lineage. Here again, the relationship extends through the wife's mother to her brother and sister but not to

the rest of her natal lineage. All the others are referred to simply as a hagn, lit. a relative by marriage.

There are certain other general features of this system. Among one's kindred group, those members junior to the ego in the same or in the succeeding generation may be addressed only by name. But those senior to the ego may be addressed only by the particulars relationship term. Occasionally this is waived in the case of an elder brother where the age difference is not considerable. Affines or those related to the lineage by marriage, who are usually addressed by a term indicating 'a relative by marriage', as vevai (man) or vevan (woman), when the persons are of an equal status, and as a hagn (man) when he is a senior in age and status. A person who has married into the lineage may not usually be addressed by name, but either by relationship term or by his clan name as Parmar, Damor, etc.

In a number of ways, the terminology of the Bhil bears a correspondence to the Masai system as analysed and stated by Professor Radcliffe-Brown - particularly in its emphasis upon the unity of the agnatic lineage whether in the arrangement with one's own agnatic group, in one's relations with the maternal lineage or with the agnatic lineage of one's wife.[3] The entire group of relatives are divided into certain basic categories-(1) his agnatic group of relatives belonging to his own lineage, (2) his other cognates - descendants of those women of his lineage who are his father's sisters or his own, in the male line, (3) his hagn - kinsmen of his wife or those men

who have married into his lineage, and finally those who are not directly related to him, but are either the cognates or affines of those who are directly related to him, and who just go under the vague term <u>haga-sambandhi</u>. There are no regular patterns of behaviour associated with the last class of relatives, except as dictated by particular circumstances.

V

We may now briefly consider some of the salient aspects of Bhil marriage before going over to a discussion of their kinship. As stated elsewhere, Bhil clans are exogamous, i.e. no person may marry another who is of the same clan and shares the same clan-name, however genealogically remote such a person might be. Further, there are certain other lineages which also lie within the scope of this exogamous principle. For instance, a person may not marry another from the natal lineage of any of his ancestresses (in the direct agnatic line) upto seventh generation, wherever such a relationship is capable of being established genealogically, i.e. the natal lineages of one's mother, father's mother, father's father's mother, etc.etc. Such lineages are referred to as <u>mohal</u> (the mother's house) of a person and hence entering inside the prohibited categories of marriage.

Further, wherever there is a tradition of an ancestor having been adopted or fostered by a member of another clan, their respective lineages are regarded as

fraternal lineages. Namla Vekhla, an orphan was adopted and brought up by Juhu, the then Bhuria chief of Alindra. The descendants of Juhu form the dominant lineage in Alindra today, while most of the descendants of Namla are concentrated in Pipergota. To this day, the two lineages look upon each other as ber brothers and as such, exogamous. They collaborate very closely on numerous social and ritual occasions and operate in other respects too as members of a local community, inspite of their being far removed from each other spatially, the village Bhuvara, with lying between them. Significantly enough, far closer relations exist between Alindra and Pipergota then between either of them and Bhuvara. Further, where two individuals are born from the same mother but out of different marriages, their respective lineages are regarded as fraternal lineages, because of the original foster relations that bound thir respective ancestors. As such they are mutually exogamous.

Exogamy is strictly enforced. There is little danger of the clan exogamy being violated out of ignorance, for one of the first things a person learns of any other person he comes into effe contact are his clan affiliations. But the uterine ties and foster relationships are often spatially dispersed and are not eclarly discernible at the outset, specially to the younger people. So it often happens that a young couple will have even eloped and only when their respective parents seek each other out to resolve the matter,

do they become aware of their ties. Such an affair came to pass in a nearby village, when I was in Alindra. A girl and a boy met each other while gathering the savra berries in the jungles of Ratanmal. Later in a few days, they had become fast friends and reluctant to go back to their respective homes, eloped to the boy's maternal uncle in Jholio. It was later found that she belonged to one of the mohals of the boy. There was a considerable excitement over the elopement and everybody tried to persuade them to separate as their's was an incentucus relationship which bode good for none. But the young couple were firm in their resolve to die together rather than live apart. I believe they would have been put to death without the least compunctuation but for the restraining influence of Royals and also because of the presence just then in the neighbourhood of a Police Inspector. In the end they were driven away from the village. I heard later that they are working in thePani mines at Shivrajpur, where their antecedants are not known.

Normally the alliances are negotiated by the kindred groups of either party. When a parent hears of a suitable girl for his son, he sends some of his affines to negotiate the alliance. They go there, broach the matter with a mediator on their side, and fix up the preliminaries of the match. Whenever a proposal for an alliance is received, the father of the bride refers it to the head of the family, who in turn takes the decision after duly consulting the

members of his agnatic lineage and other members of the local community. As they are all likely to be brought into affinal relations with the family with which the alliance is proposed, they have a right to satisfy themselves that the family has good traditions of hospitability, honesty and thriftiness. Once they approve of the proposal, a date is fixed when the boy's father and his party may come to formalise the negotiations and be a party to the bethrothal. On the appointed day, the boy's kinsmen go over to the girl's residence with food and liquor for their hosts and presents of cloth for the girl. Mediators again get together and finalise the amount of bridewealth to be paid, the ornaments to be given to the bride and other details. Then the girl is called in to be seen formally and approved, and is presented gifts of clothing, etc. by her new parent-in-law. With this ceremony, the proposed alliance becomes an established fact.

Marriage itself may take place after the girl has reached the age of menstruation. She continues to stay with her natal family. But already some of the jural rights over her ~~natal family~~. But have passed on to the kingroup of her bethrothed. If any harm should befall her or she should elope with another person, her father and the mediators are answerable to her would-be affines. During the interim period, presents of cloth etc. are sent to the girl and she is visited occasionally by the younger women of her affianced home.

Once presents are given and affinal relations are

established, the bride's kin are treated to the food and liquor brought over by the bridegroom's kin, who then return to their village. A few days later, the boy is sent to the home of his bride to get acquainted with his affines. On this occasion, he carries with him some money (anu) as a gift to his bride's mother. On this occasion, she herself serves him a meal of sweet porridge, rice and vegetables. The anu is left beneath the plate for her to find it when clearing it. Once this gift is accepted, the bethrothal ceremony is complete. The anu gift may be interpreted as a tacit recognition of the mother's right over the girl and as an attempt to compensate her for the severance of ties at the marriage. Incidentally this is the last time she appears before the boy with her face uncovered or addresses him by his personal name. From that day onwards, they are required to behave with circumspection and formality towards each other, as befitting their new relationship.

Once the anu is accepted, the alliance may not be broken off under any circumstances, as to do so, would be an insult to the bridegroom's kingroup. However, this occasionally occurs, usually on the plea that the boy is a weakling, sick or in other ways unlikely to be a suitable match for the girl. The real reason might often be a discontent over the amount of bridewealth agreed upon or another proposal likely to be more beneficial. Much excitement is caused by such occurances, resulting usually in a loss of goodwill between the two kingroups concerned, and there is always a

possibility that the girl might be abducted even at the risk of bloodshed. Further such occurances are considered a matter for shame for the girl's kingroup or for the entire local community. Indirect pressure to desist from such action usually comes forth from the affines of the bride's kingroup. At any rate, very few suitors are prepared to accept a bride with such a background, for fear of reprisals from the rejected suitor or his kingroup.

Marriage itself takes place usually early in summer, after the harvest is in and the people are relatively at ease. All the while the boy's parents would be making up the amount of the dej (bridewealth) to be paid, when they go for marriage. The savings of a number of years, together with the proceeds of the sale of the harvested crop that year, go into it and as is the usual practice in any major ritual or social undertaking involving a good deal of expense, the several relatives and affines and the local community all contribute their mite to make up the amount. Usually, a deficit would be there, and where the amount of dej agreed upon is usually high, it might be as much as 30-40 percent. However, such deficits do not worry the Bhils. It is very rarely that the dej is ever paid in full or all in cash. Usually, only a part of it is given at the time of marriage, the rest being given subsequently, often in instalments over a number of years and/or commuted partly in terms of cattle. This practice is so common, that even the bride's kin do not expect to be given the dej all at one time or all in cash.

It is almost a convention that the bridal party arrives for the marriage with a heavily short dej and strive to the very last moment to reduce the amount of bridewealth and to give as much of it as possible in cattle. Generally a considerably reduced dej is given in the end.

Usually, the bridal party time their arrival at the bride's residence to just an hour or two before sunset. They are met near the boundary of the village by the bhangiadiva (mediators) on the bride's side and taken to a spot somewhat removed from but facing the bride's residence, where they all stop for the time being. The younger people occupy themselves in singing and dancing, while the senior male members of the bridal party are escorted to the bride's residence where all the bride's relatives and the local community are assembled to receive the dej. If the entire amount agreed upon is paid, then the marriage ceremonials start straight away. They start preparing food for the visitors on one side, while the headman and the other elders of the local community set out to receive the bridal party and formally conduct them to the marriage booth.

If on the other hand, a full amount of the bridewealth is not forthcoming, the bridegroom's people are treated with deliberate rudeness and contempt as people who cannot keep their word. "How could they come for the marriage without the full amount? Did they suppose that girls are so abundant that they would be given away as gifts?" And so on. Everybody would be speaking at once and usually the attempts of the mediators to make them listen to what the

visitors want to say, are unheeded. Since such a response is more or less a convention, the bridal party take it all mildly. They go back to their camp, to wait for their hosts to calm, when the actual negotiations and haggling start.

After the first two or three hours, everybody gets tired of affirming repeatedly, that the girl will not be handed over unless the full amount is paid on the spot and start listening to the mediators who are all the while trying to convince them of the stigma, that results from the marriage falling through at this stage, over a question of money and pleading that they should take the amount being offered at the moment and then come to an agreement about the balance. At first, the bride's father would be obstinate - "How do they know that these people will pay the balance later on? Once they get the girl, one may be sure that they would not be in a hurry to pay the balance", etc.etc. Really speaking they have little option but to accept the advice of the mediators. For one thing, the latter is usually an affine possibly a daughter's husband, and is entitled to some consideration. When he offers to be guarantee for the balance of the bridewealth and they refuse to pay heed to him, he may take it an insult. There is every possibility of a serious rift developing in their personal relations, if they do not accept it. Recently Pemlo Vakhla of Alindra was negotiating an alliance for his wife's sister (hali). Anu had been paid and the marriage was to take place later. But in the meantime the match was broken off by her father who

wanted to contract an alliance with another person who was prepared to pay a higher bride price. Pemlo protested, "For the sake of a few more rupees, you are now spoiling my prestige. How will I be able to face these people again after this?" But his father-in-law seems to have been rude to him. As a result, Pemla has broken all social relations with his father-in-law. Whenever his wife visits her natal village, she goes alone. Even her children are not allowed to go with her. He once told me, "For my wife's father, a few rupees mean more than my good name. When then, let him go his way, and I go mine."

Secondly, it leaves a permanent blot on the village if a people who came for an alliance were sent back hungry empty handed and bitter, because they could not pay the full dej all at once. It speaks badly of the local community that they let such a thing come to pass. Very few people would be prepared to seek or accept alliances with a village so lacking in courtesy, adjustment and hospitality, and who put money above everything else. These two considerations - that the Bhangjadia should not suffer a 'loss of face' and that the village should not be discredited, are powerful incentives for the angry father and other relatives of the bride to accept a compromise. They are often very truculent and sometimes the tadavi of the bride's village might himself have to intervene on behalf of the visitors and stand guarantee for the balance of the brideweelth. In one case, the bridal party had to remain all night in the open, hungry

and cold. When dawn broke, they decided that it was not worth waiting any longer and were about to go away, when the mediator on their side was again called in and discussion started as to how and when the balance of bridewealth would be paid. Generally some cattle would have to be handed over immediately in part-payment of the balance and the rest paid in instalments over two or three years. There would be some altercation as to what proportion of the bridewealth is payable in cattle and also about the evaluation of the cattle themselves. But these are minor points and are usually settled quickly by the two mediators themselves.

At this stage, the elders of the bridegroom's kin are called in. Whatever they have to offer, is accepted and a day is named for the handing over of the first instalment of the balance of bridewealth. Then the pipes and drums are given the signal to play, women of either party begin to sing marriage songs and start getting ready for the formal reception of the visitors by the hosts. The tadavi (headman) himself heads the receiving party and ceremonially conducts the bridegroom to the marriage booth. The rest of the marriage ceremonial is very simple and everything is finished in about half an hour or so. The new affines are then treated to a feast by the bride's kin and are sent away on their return journey with every mark of courtesy and friendliness. The bride's kin led by the tadavi himself escort them to the boundary of the village, where they all stop and dance for some time. Then the two parties take formal leave of each other. The bride is not sent with them immediately, but goes

there the next morning escorted by one or two kinsmen, who leave her in her new home, sleep the night there and come away the next morning. The residence is virilocal, but it takes some time for the bride to get adjusted to her new home and surroundings, and she tends to feel somewhat lonely. So, during the early days of her married life, she frequently visits her natal home. Her brothers real or classificatory, come over to take her over and her husband goes over to escort her back again. As time passes and she is more settled, her visits tend to be less frequent and of shorter duration, till a final level of adjustment is reached. Thus there is no abrupt break in the solidarity of the natal family. Transition from the natal to the conjugal home is a gradual process.

However, there is no complete severance of ties with her natal family. She continues to have considerable rights in her natal family and can always return to it, should the circumstances so warrant.

Frequently the younger people themselves take the initiative in choosing their mates and often face the parents with a fait-accompli. They have plenty of opportunities to meet each other and to spend time in each other's company in the normal course of their daily life. Young boys and girls are generally entrusted with the responsibility of grazing the cattle and looking after them. By mid day, all the boys and girls of the village converge with their cattle, towards a particular glade near the stream, where the cattle rest in

the shade during the hot mid-day and the young people spend time talking, discussing the local events or playing games. Ties of friendship develop out of these midday gatherings, as also rivalries and antipathies among the several individual cowherds. As they get older, some of the young men and women might even fall in love with each other. In such cases, if they are not very sure of parental approval of their choice, they elope leaving the parents to deal with the situation as best as they can. Of course, since the people of a village are generally aware of their mutual kinship status, no incestuous relations are likely to develop.

More frequently, young people from different villages come to know each other during fairs and festivals and on occasions of marriage &c. Generally much hilarity and mixing characterise such occasions and the young people of both the sexes have plenty of opportunities to meet, talk, or even develop affinities without drawing much attention on themselves. Whether because they fear that their parents might not approve or possibly because they are impatient of the long procedure involved in formal negotiations and the boy's father usually requires some time to get together the dej, they elope. Their flight is usually covered up by their friends ~~who~~ to give them a good start, lest they should be overtaken on the way and forcibly separated by their irate parents.

Abduction of handsome girls is quite a frequent occurance. When a man wants a girl, but is not sure of his suit, being favoured either by their parents or by the girl,

he might decide to kidnap her and thus force the issue.With a small but trusty band of friends, he keeps note of her movements and waylays her at a lonely spot. Frequently girls go to faraway weekly markets for supplies, attended by just a few young men. Usually everybody would be tired and carrying heavy loads on their return journey. Since men are generally impatient of the slow gait of the girls who needs must stop every now and then to catch their breath, they would generally be some way off, and would not be able to go to their rescue immediately, specially in these steep hilly areas where ambush and escape is relatively easy and rescue very difficult. It is the suitor who dashes forward, and catches the girl by her hand and assisted by a couple of friends, hurries her along pushing, beating and half carrying the struggling girl, and make for the nearest jungle. Their friends meanwhile grapple with the others,fighting a rearguard action, gradually retreating or drawing the persuit in an entirely different direction. Jithri, a granddaughter of Boyala, was abducted about two years ago. I was in that village at that time and was able to secure a detailed account of the incident. About six girls accompanied by Bhulya and Pemlo had been to the weekly market at Bhabra. They were returning, with heavy loads on their heads. Both Bhulya and Pemlo carried bows, but unslung on their backs. Just as they came to a long and very steep back that constitutes the first and the most tiresome stage of the ascent to the plateau of Ratanmal from the west, they met another party of young men from Jhelio,

some of whom they knew slightly. All were armed, nothing unusual at that time of the day and in that heavily wooded hilly tract, and explained that they were on their way to Mahudi to visit some affines. They all rested at the foot of the long rise (known locally as the dobeng or the buffalo back) and shared some pipes of tobacco. Then the Alindra party got up and started on the ascent first. Bhulya and Pemlo were leading, and the girls were straggling behind. Bhulya had just come in view of the flat, when he heard shouts from below. He was at first inclined to ignore them as mere pranks of the girls. Then he remembered the strangers and dropping the bundles, rushed down the steep side with Pemlo. He was just in time to see the girls laughing and screaming hysterically, valiently throwing stones at the rearguard of the abductors, who soon disappeared down a fault. Bhulya latter on said, "we were all tired and could not be fast enough. We were only two against half a dozen of them so that even if we had overtaken them, it would have been of little avail . Further how could we leave these girls alone in that dangerous spot, when it was getting to be evening?" When Pemla came up from behind them and caught Jithri, the other girls were so scared that they too might be caught and they ran in all directions. The abductors had an easy time.

Under such circumstances, the girl is not taken to any relative. Abduction is a criminal offense and no sensible Bhil would like to get involved. So they take her to a hide-

out in the jungle, previously stored with food, etc. where the couple may remain hidden for weeks, if necessary, until the matter has been settled satisfactorily at the parental level and there is little danger of their being separated. During this period of enforced seclusion, the boy generally woos the angry and humiliated girl, by declarations of regard, cajoling and pampering judiciously. Of course, she is warned of dire consequences should she even try to escape or in any way try to attract the attention of any possible passerby. And Usually a good understanding is reached and the girl is usually acquiescent, by the time they could emerge. Where the girl proves obdurate and develops an antipathy for her abductor, she is sent back and her family is compensated for the 'loss of face' by the payment of indemnities. Once the girl is restored and the 'damages of honour' are paid, the incident is closed so far as the two kingroups are concerned. As Bhulya told me appropos of Jithri, "Usually girls dont mind so much if the man is goodlooking, for what they generally aspire to, is a good home and a full stomach. But if for some reason she starts disliking him, she would never stay, and runs away sooner or later. So best let her go. After all, how long can a man keep a strict watch over a girl or to what extent can he force her to remain with him, if she wants to go?"

In all these cases of elopement or of abduction, there is generally an initial bitterness. The girl's parents are the aggrieved party. They are forced to negotiate for an

alliance with a family, they might not have approved of normally. However, Bhils generally believe in settling an affair quickly and leave no room for complications. Unless the family or kingroup concerned is notorious in the neighbourhood for some undesirable traits, such as robber, miserliness, or shiftlessness, they prefer to formalise the arrangement than to exercise their authority to break up their relations. Bhils of the low lands near Ratanmal i.e. Panam, Bhindol, Sanlakund, etc., speak contemptuously of those of the hills as poor, shiftlessness and starving. "Our daughters cannot live there, as they have to work very hard for their lazy men folk. Even water has to be fetched from miles away." But obviously, the girls of such villages seem to find the Ratanmal youth fascinating, more than a third of all the housewives in the three villages on Ratanmal come from these fertile villages. Significently enough, practically all of them except two or three, were cases of elopement. There in some cases, the girls were on a visit to a kinswoman married in one of the Ratanmal villages and had been seized by an enterprising younger member of the house, often at the instance of their kinswomen. It may be recalled how for similar reasons, the young men of a village on the border of Bariya and Dohad could obtain their brides only by inducing them to elope or by abduction.

Bhils generally prefer to regularise such incidents for two reasons. It is believed that girls should always unite and foster good relations between kingroups and should never be the grounds of dissatisfaction or bitterness

(beti unar kadi bhoondai nai karvi). "After all a daughter has to set up her own home someday. So long as she expects to be happy with her choice, why interfere unduly? So long as she wants a particular person and is forced to marry another, she would not be very stable in her relations with her husband. There is always a possibility that she might desert her husband for her earlier choice and embarass all the kingroups concerned."

So the bone of contention would be normally the bride-wealth, with both the parties trying to use the incident to their best advantage. Particularly the bride's kin are in good position if the girl is a minor, when they could go to the police for help in getting the girl back.

On the other hand, the kingroup of the boy have the advantage of not themselves being a party to the elopement. In fact, they dont even know where the couple are hiding. In such cases the couple usually seek refuge with one of the maternal uncles of the boy - it is almost a convention. However, if the girl's kindred want her to be restored, let them search them out and by all means take her over. But if on the other hand, they are willing to accept facts and regularise the position, let them sit down like friends and talk it over. Usually it is made clear that a heavy bride-wealth can not be paid, as they don't know af the bride is worth it. Secondly, a larger share of it would be in the form of cattle, which would be given over to them during the next two or three years, etc.etc.But where the case is one of abduction, the bride's kin have a definitely upper hand

as the offence is punishable in law and the police would take the action immediately the complaint is lodged. When Punjala Bariya's daughter was abducted about three years ago the boy's family had to pay sixty rupees immediately; two milch cows and six young bulls valued at nearly six hundred rupees and eighty rupees was to be paid last year. That makes it nearly a thousand rupees - quite a high sum for the Bhils of Ratanmal. When Bhulya got his wife in the same way from Samlakund, he had to pay six hundred in cash and two bulls valued at about hundred and twenty i.e. about seven hundred and twenty rupees in one instalment. Royala too, I believe, extracted quite a heavy amount from the abductor of his grand daughter Jithri. He would not reveal as to how much he got, but philosophised as to the futility of trying to get anything from others. "If you are lucky, they give it to you. After all the main thing is that Jithri is happy."

The settlement in cases of elopement is not so heavy; they vary from about 400 to 600 rupees and this is paid over in two or three years, or as and when the young man's family can pay. In fact, the failure to pay up the total amount of bride price agreed upon, is frequently the ground for much bickering. In some cases, the bride's kinsmen have to to go in a body and threaten to take away the girl unless a part of the balance is paid up. However, where a major portion of it has been paid, a small balance may often be waived as a gesture of good will towards the young couple.

VII

Once an agreement is reached over the bridewealth,etc., cordial relations are restored between the two kingroups and local communities by a myth of a formally negotiated alliance. An elopement or abduction constitutes a serious challange as it were, to the solidarity of the natal kingroup of the girl and their rights and responsibilities in her. A serious injury has been done to their prestige. The solidarity of the kingroup has been treached as a result of the abrupt severance of family ties with the girl. So it is essential that an attempt must be made to restore the solidarity of the girl's natal group and to eliminate whatever remnants of bitter feelings there might be still. To this end , the girl is sent back to her family where she is received back with affection and courtesy. After a few days her suitor goes over with the anu. It may be safely presumed that the bride's kingroup do not feel very kindly towards the erstwhile abductor or seducer of their daughter, and he is usually very nervous on these occasions. But he is received with every courtesy and hospitality due to a daughter's husband, and no adult makes any reference to the recent incidents. Only a few of the younger girls in the village might taunt him, by singing satirical songs composed for the occasion. The suitor remains with his bride's kin for a couple of days and having established cordial relations with all his affines, goes back to his village. His bride is sent a few days later, escorted by a few close agnatic kin, who stay overnight with their their new affines and establish relationships of solidarity

with them. Consequences of thus suppressing the fact of elopement or abduction which result in bitter feelings and breach the solidarity of the girl's natal kingroup, by such a myth of formally negotiated alliance are obvious. A basis for close collaboration and cooperation between the two kingroups is thus established, and the boy is enabled to exercise his prerogatives and obligations towards the kin-group of his bride - we shall discuss the position of a son-in-law vis-a-vis his affines in a later context, and the solidarity of the girl with her natalkingroup is restored. Having left her natal home in a perfectly normal way, she is enabled to maintain social relations with her kin, to retain her rights in her natal family and also to return to it whenever she wants, if the circumstances so demand it.

Occasionally, the girl's kingroup might make a show of having agreed to a settlement only in order to get the girl under their control again. Recently Surtan, a Damor of Bhuvara had kidnapped Guli, daughter of Lala Parmar of Kotumbi. The Parmars did not like the idea of an alliance with the highland Bhils, regarded generally as shiftless and half-starving. But when they demanded restitution of the girl, the Damors flatly denied any knowledge of the incident or the present whereabouts of the couple and said that the Parmars were welcome to take their girl back if they could find her. Parmars threatened legal action, but knew that the Police will not be of much practical assistance in such a situation. So after a good deal of discussion, which was

unusually acrimonious, they agreed to take the bridewealth valued at Rs.500/- in cattle, with the proviso that forty rupees more was to be paid in cash the following winter. The girl was sent with them to Ketumbi along with the bridewealth cattle. But when Surtan went over with the any anu five days later, the anu was refused. He was told that they never had any intention of accepting the alliance and the cattle they had brought would be taken as indemnity paid for damages to their honour resulting from the abduction. Surtan was driven away.

This incident caused much agitation. Most people admitted that the Parmars were impelled to this subterfuge to get hold of the girl. But what they could not overlook was the shame of breaking a promise. Secondly, the cattle were given to them as part payment of the bridewealth and could not be converted as indemnity for the honour of the girl. It was illegal to break the alliance once the bridewealth is settled upon. If they did not want the alliance, they should have left the cattle in Bhuvara only. Most of the affines of the Parmars sent word to them, expressing disapproval and pressing them to seek a compromise. The Damors also made it clear that they are determined to take the girl some day or the other by force, if necessary. In the meantime, whosoever contemplated an alliance with that girl, did so at the risk of reprisal from the Damors. In the end, the Parmars had to send the girl back, because, as one of them put it, she had grown fond of her abductor and might run away to his place someday.

However the girl's parents might reject outright the offer of an alliance, and demand the custody of their daughter It happens often when the suitor's family and kingroup have an unsavoury reputation. I mentioned in an earlier context how the people of the villages on the borders of the estates of Baria, Fathiwara and Alirajpur were finding it very difficult to secure brides precisely for this reason. They had to force alliances on their unwilling but weaker neighbours under threat of reprisals. The more courageous could always resort to the District authorities for redress.

Once the kingroup of a girl decide to claim her back, the possibility of her having had sexual relations with her suitor during the time they were living together, is not considered a very serious obstacle. It is true that the fact of her having lived with him without proper sanction of her family and kingroup, constitutes a serious violation of their rights over her, and as such the family has to be indemnified. The boy's family have to pay as indemnity a sum roughly equal to a sixth of what they think would have ben the amount of bridewealth payable for her, to compensate for the 'loss of honour' (<u>iijat nu davo</u>). This indemnifies not so much the loss of virginity of the girl. Bhils in common with most of the other Central Indian tribal communities, do not value premarital chastity highly as, for instance, the rural communities of the eastern and southern India.[4] <u>Iijat nu davo</u> (lit. the claim of honour) as indicated by the term itself is most certainly the compensation claimed by and paid to the girl's natal family and secondly the prestige of the entire

kingroup and the local community has suffered a set back and must be compensated for in this case. It is a jural claim and under the former regime, the tadavis of both the villages were required to see that the claim was settled without undue delay. Failure to pay up the indemnity was punishable by a heavy fine payable by the agnatic relatives of the boy, who himself was liable to be imprisoned.

Where the girl had lived in sexual intimacy with her suitor for sometime before she was claimed back by her natal family, pregnancy occurs sometimes and the community is faced with a child born to a technically unmarried girl. Premarital pregnancy is very unusual. Whenever a boy and a girl are attracted towards each other, they either seek parental approval for their union or precipitate the issue by eloping. For all practical considerations, the very fact of their living together constitutes marriage and is regularised by the payment of the bridewealth. So not much of excitement is caused by such occurance of pregnancy, if it occured from an elopement. Some of her relatives might tease her with it, but no stigma attaches either to her or to the child that she might bear, since the *ilint nu dovo* has been paid and the lineage honour vindicated. The girl is allowed to bear her child exactly, as if she were a married woman and her value is in no way impaired because of this incident. Whoever seeks her for his wife, later takes it for granted that her child will now belong to him, and brings it up as if it were really begotten by him. Even in property relations, no discriminations are made between such an adopted child

and the other children. It bears his lineage name with all its implications, social and ritual. Social paternity is more important than mere genitorship.

Such a state of affairs is not surprising if we recall that the Khils suffer from a paucity of children due to various factors, and no opportunity to acquire more children is let go willingly. Sometimes, the father of the girl may himself decide to adopt the child into his lineage, and make him his heir, especially if he has no sons. The genitor under such circumstances is of no consequence to the child at all - to the extent that even exogamous restrictions are not maintained between the two lineages i.e. the adopted lineage of the child, and the lineage of its genitor.

VIII

Normally Khil marriages are virilocal. The bride goes over to live with her husband's kingroup as a consequence of marriage. Thereafter her normal day-to-day relations tend to be confined very largely to her affines. Though she does maintain cordial relations with her natal kingroup with occesional visits etc., there is a considerable breach of in the solidarity of her natal home, which has to surrender a considerable portion of their rights <u>in personam</u> and <u>in rem</u> to her husband and his kingroup. Bridewealth and its distribution etc. play a very prominent part in the marriage complex.

But uxorilocal marriages, where the bridegroom goes to live with his affines, are not uncommon. Often when a man has no male issue, he makes it a condition that whoever weds

to marry his daughter, shall have to live with him as a son, working on his fields, looking after his cattle, etc. In return, the youngman is entitled to be maintained by his bride's father and when the latter dies, to be his heir. Technically however, it is the daughter who will be heir to her father's lands, cattle and other property and it is passed on to their descendants. Such an alliance is referred to as gharvat (lit. alliance for the house) and the youngman is a ghar-jawai (lit. a son-in-law in the house). Such an arrangement is made also when a girl is crippled, deformed or sickly and is not likely to be wanted in the normal way. A portion of her father's land is set apart for her and is offered as an additional inducement for marrying her. Jhumla a former kadavi of Alindra, recently arranged such an alliance for his lame and widowed daughter Jokhli. Her husband had been killed a couple of years ago when a palm tree broke unexpectedly and fell on him. Jokhli was also crippled by the same mishap. Knowing that a lame women was not likely to be sought in marriage by anybody, Jhumla let it be known that whoever was prepared to take her would be his ghar-jawai, entitled to half his land and cattle. The offer was eventually accepted by Vansingia of Kelu, who shared just about four bighas of land with three other brothers in Kelu, a village near Dhanpur. He was persuaded by his brothers and other members of his lineage group to set up his home with Jokhli, "who was not very young nor was she likely to be of much assistance. But the land that went with her was good."

Such an alliance can be arranged only with the express approval of the two lineage groups concerned and of the entire local community of the bride's village, for two reasons. Firstly, a portion of the land of the lineage group is alienated. Even though the people who ultimately succeed to the land are the children of a daughter it does constitute an infraction of the territorial rights of the lineage group. Secondly by such an arrangement, an alien is introduced into the neighbourhood who may or may not prove to be a good neighbour. There is always a possibility that such a person might be a bad collaborator, quarrelsome and negligent of the prestige and solidarity of the community. So they have a right to be consulted and to be fully satisfied that such an arrangement is not likely to be adverse to the community interests. Similarly, the kingroup of the bridegroom also have a right to satisfy themselves that his interests do not suffer as a result of themselves such an arrangement and are required to guarantee his good behaviour and fulfilment of the terms of the gharvat contract. The consent and approval of the bridegroom's lineage group is essential precisely because their rights over his children are transferred to the bride's natal kin, as a result of such an arrangement. The gharvat is thus essentially a jural situation, where the two kingroups come together formally and a transference of jural rights takes place in their presence and under their guarantee. It is significant that for the gharvat transaction to be valid, the presence of atleast the tadavi of the bride's village is strictly essential.

Bride wealth is not given in a gharvat alliance. Since the bride continues to be with her natal kingroup, there is no less either of solidarity of family relations, or of her services. Further even her productivity is not lost to the natal group since her children will belong to their maternal lineage group. On the other hand, the agnatic lineage of the bridegroom loses a member and also rights over his descendants. A gharvat in this sense is really inimical to the solidarity of the agnatic lineage.

However, it is the natal group of the bride alone that is benefitted as a result of gharvat. It is not of much concern to the tadavi or to the other members of the local community, all of whom have a partial claim in the bride wealth that would have been received for the bride under normal circumstances. Their claims are respected even in a gharvat situation and are met by the father of the bride himself.

A comparable situation arises when a youngman is unable to raise wealth sufficient to get a bride. In such an event, he seeks an alliance where he will be permitted to pay off the bridewealth or a portion of it in service. He undertakes to work as a hali for his bride's father for a period varying from four to seven years. During this period, he receives only maintenance for himself and his family, but no wages. However, he retains full control over his wife and their children and is free to return with them to his kingroup, after the convenanted period is over. Such a person is also referred to as a ghar-jamai in ordinary conversation, but the distinction is always kept up.

Polygamy occurs frequently. Instances of a man marrying more than once are quite common. In the three villages of Ratanmal alone, there were eleven polygynous families with both the wives living, while most of the older people had married more than once for progeny, on the death of the earlier one. Polygyny requires that a man should be richer than Bhils usually are. For one thing, he has to find bridewealth for each of his wives and also build them separate medis. Secondly the dominant motive in having more than one wife seems to be, that there might be more able bodied workers in in the field and in the homestead. Royala of Alindra told me once, that he was having in those days nearly eighty heads of cattle, and his fields too were extensive - about 30 vighas. His wife could not manage alone in the homestead, and was finding it difficult to cook, and to keep the medi and the cattle byres clean. Further, there was a difficulty in milking the cows at their proper time, grazing them and so on. So at the behest of his wife, he went and brought a girl of the Mahidas.

Another dominant motive seems to be a desire for a large number of children. There is a considerable incidence of sterility and of infantile mortality. Often inspite of having more than two wives, the size of the family might be remarkably small. Royala himself had two wives who bore a total of nine children, of whom, all but two died in their infancy. Hiro Revla, a young man of Pipergota, was worried that he had no children though he had been married for a number of years.

Inspite of strong opposition from his wife, he was seeking an alliance with a widow of Panem. She was slightly older than him and was not pretty either. But her fertility was proved by the fact that she already had a couple of children by a previous marriage. To all the protests of his wife, that she was younger and prettier than that woman, he had but one answer. "We have supplicated all gods. Yet you have not given birth to a son. And she is fruitful as may be seen by any one. I dont want to send you and I know she is ugly and old ~~any~~. But my lineage (nal) must be continued. So whatever you may say, I am going to bring her." And he did. Khuman his father's brother married four times, and at ~~the~~ one time had three living together for several years before two of them died in child birth and the third ran away with another man. Khuman has five sons surviving and yet he was telling me that he wanted to bring a young woman". She could be useful in the fields and who knows I might get a few more sons". I need hardly add that Khuman is very well off, with extensive landholdings amounting to nearly sixty or seventy vighas.

When a man is desirous of getting himself another wife, he usually chooses her from the family or at least from among the near relatives of his first wife. The idea being that two sisters or atleast two agemates from the same place are likely to develop much more harmonious relations than utter strangers. In spite of their being provided with separate medis, they belong to a single homestead and as such close understanding and collaboration between the two wives is absolutely essential for the smooth functioning of the home-

stead. Usually there is a balanced division of labour between the co-wives with the senior wife in a position of authority. While the several children eat and sleep in the medi of their own mother, they are all expected to obey the first wife of the father even when this means going against their own mother. It is expected that the younger wives work under the senior wife's leadership. Such collaboration and obedience is better achieved if the co-wives belong to the same kinship group or atleast to the same neighbourhood. Often, when a woman feels it desirable that her husband should get another wife to help her in the homestead, or when she realises that he is bent on having another woman, she would prefer one of her own sisters real or atleast classificatory as a co-wife to a strange woman, with whom she might not be able to harmonise easily. So she invites her sister on a long visit and sees to it that her husband sees more and more of her and that the girl behaves in a particularly attractive manner. If needs be, she would even egg him on to compromise the young woman - all that is needed is that he should catch her by the hand and put her into his medi. This tantamounts to an elopement and he is honour bound to have her. Only the bridewealth has to be paid to legitimise the union. In a quite larger proportion of polygynous families, the cowives are found to be siblings, while among the others, they are often from the same village. Jealousy and friction between the co-wives are not unknown. There have been many instances of wives leaving their husbands, on grounds of negligence and favouritism. But generally they manage to get along well with each other.

Associated with the frequent incidence of sororal polygyny is the tendency for a woman to persuade the younger brothers of her husband or the other younger males of her affinal group, to establish friendly relations with her own younger sisters or agemates, and to elope with them. Where the girls are not very amenable to the wooing, she might even persuade the young men to seize the girls forcibly when they are on a visit to her and compromise them. The motivating factor is the same - a desire to have as many of her sisters or agemates as possible around her, in her affinal surroundings. By such an arrangement, her own links with her natal home are strengthened. Further this would result in minimising of the areas of tension and conflict in her relations with the other female members of her affinal group. Incidentally strong ties of kinship and collaboration tend to develop between villages so linked by a chain of alliances.

Leviratic alliances are permitted in theory. Normally, the relations between a woman and her husband's younger brother (dazi) tend to be very informal and cordial. The dazi is regarded as one of her best friends in the affinal group and as one to whom she can go for any help or assistence. Naturally he is the one person among her affines, before whom she need not cover her face or behave with circumspection. He may enter her medi at will, joke with her or discuss with her his most intimate love experiences. Often she takes considerable trouble in choosing a suitable bride for him, to the extent of securing her own younger sister. Considerable amount of intimacy,

might develop between them without exciting any comment. On certain festive occasions such as the Holi, a man indulges in much horseplay with his elder brother's wife, going to the extent of pulling at her skirt or touching her breasts. So it seems logical enough that after a man's death, his younger brother sets up with his widow.

However, there is a tendency now a days to regard this custom as incestuous and sinful, though no direct pressure is employed to restrain a woman from 'setting house' with her dazi. Their objections seem rooted in a conviction that since one's elder brother has a status comparable to his father, it follows that his wife (bhabi) has a status comparable to one's mother. In fact, she treats him affectionately as she would a son, feed him and take such an interest in his welfare, that she goes to the extent of advising him on the affairs of his heart. "Till now, he has been looking on her as a mother, who should be respected and obeyed. How can he now regard her as his wife, have sexual relations with her, or expect obedience and respect from her? Do we marry our mothers"? was the substance of the opinions voiced by many elders, I consulted on this point. But they all conceded, that a woman is entitled to go on living with her affines, even after the death of her husband, should she so prefer. Then it would be the duty of her dazi to take care of the widow and be loco parentis for her children. He would be generally responsible for their being brought up, trained and set up as cultivators on their own rights and to pay bridewealth for them if sons, or receive it in the case of girls.

IX

From the discussion till now, it has emerged that bridewealth plays a very important part in their marriage complex, irrespective of the way the alliance has been brought about,— by way of formal negotiations, elopement or abduction. Ultimately the union gains recognition only through a certain amount of money or an equivalent value in cattle or services, being transferred from the bridegroom's kin to the bride's kin. The amount of bridewealth itself varies from six hundred to a thousand rupees, depending upon the personality of the girl, her capabilities as a housewife and her temperament. To a considerable extent, it also depends upon the social and economic status of the suitor's kinship group. Cattle are accepted as a conventional medium of payment. Cattle are a form of productive wealth that the Bhils as any other agriculturist of India, prefer to own in as large numbers as possible, especially since there is no problem of fodder in these fields. They yield good manure for their fields, and their products such as ghee can be sold at a good price in the nearby markets. Further, they represent a form of easily negotiable wealth in these parts.

Students of kinship may look at bridewealth from two angles. While discussing the general aspects of African marriage complexes, Professor Radcliffe-Brown views marriage payments as related to three of its most important aspects[5]. Marriage involves breach of solidarity in the girl's natal family. There is a loss of member and therefore a gap in their social and domestic relations. To an extent, this may be seen

in the simulated hostility between the two groups even in a negotiated marriage, expressed through aggressive dances by the woman of either side, ranged face to face, brandishing their fists and singing obscene songs at each other. Viewed from this angle, marriage payment or bridewealth(dej) may be construed as an indemnity paid to the bride's kin for the loss of their daughter. In fact, the marriage payment is given not so much to her natal family as for distribution among certain categories of her cognates and the local community. In a marriage which I attended the total amount of bridewealth fixed upon was about 525 rupees. About 225 rupees were paid in cash and 300 rupees were to be handed over during the course of the year. The ideal distribution of the amount among her several cognates was expected to be as follows:-

	Rs.	
Bride's father	200	40%
" mother	60	12%
" elder brother	60	12%
" father's brother	60	12%
" mother's brother	60	12%
" father's sister	25	5%
" sister	15	3%
Local community	20	4%
Tadavi of the village	25	(not included in the bridewealth, but levied along with it)

Except for the tadavi and the local community, all others are close relatives of the bride. They belong to three

families, the bride's own family - consisting of her brothers and sisters; her father's family consisting of his brothers and sisters; and grand parents if alive and including the father himself, and finally the mother's family - i.e. her brothers and herself. Since the corporation of a lineage is through the male members, the mother's sisters are not specifically mentioned and are probably represented by the mother herself. The position of the daughters in their natal agnatic lineage has been fully recognised by the allotment of a portion however small, to the father's sister and the bride's own sisters. All these are close relatives both paternal and maternal, who have contributed directly or indirectly to her growth and development. She will have established close personal links with these persons and her removal to her conjugal home means a break of the solidarity of her family interms of services and associations. It may be noted that the bride's father receives on behalf of his family, a very large chunk of the bridewealth. The portions given to the elder and younger siblings of the father represent the compensation to the agnatic lineage for the loss of a member and her productive services. Professor Evans-Pritchard, discussing an almost similar situation in the Nuer bridewealth distribution, tends to interpret the payment to the mother's brother and to the mother herself as the deferred compensation due to the mother's lineage at the time of her marriage. Due to several reasons, the entire amount of the bridewealth is not given at the time of marriage. While the major portion is paid off, a small portion is retained, and payment on this is promised later -

"when the girl's daughter marries". Since the portions of other relatives has to be paid up then only, the shortage is borne on the accounts of the girls own family, and is made up out of the bridewealth received for her daughter. Among the Bhils, this argument is not explicit. But it is significant that the mother and the mother's brother are named as recipients of portions and have equal weightage with the father's siblings. With the father's share repres nting the compensation paid to the natal family of the girl then, we find a balance struck between the maternal and the paternal kin. It is significant that the cattle received by a mother as her portion in the bridewealth of her daughter, is often distributed among her other daughters, thus stressing the uterine ties once more.

Since only a portion of the bridewealth is paid, it becomes imperative that the 'outside interests', should be satisfied first. In this regard, priority of settlement is given in the following order; the local community - usually in the form of a communal dinner given at the time of marriage, the father's sister, one's own sisters, the father's brothers, mother's brother, mother and brother and finally the father himself. Assuming that it is the outside interests "the people who might make trouble" that are paid off first, it is significant that the mother's brother is placed nearer to the bride then her father's brothers and is considered to be a "person of the house" who can wait, or conversely as one who is not likely to quarrel over the issue. I wonder, if this can be taken as an indication of a greater solidarity with the maternal uncle rather than with the paternal uncle - so far as the

girl is concerned.

It may be noted here that the portions of the mother and brothers come into the girl's family itself. But whereas the brother's share goes into the common pool of the family, the mother is allowed to retain her portion as her personal property to be disposed of at will. The bride's father has to meet certain other claims not usually listed in the claims presented to the bridegroom's kingroup. The most important of these is the one due to the bhang-jadio (mediator) on the bride's side. After the marriage is over and the major portion of bridewealth has been received, the mediator on the bride's side is given a milch cow and a calf, so that " he and his children may drink its milk". This obligation towards the mediator is not interpreted so much as a fee for his services but as a gift in grateful recognition of his onerous responsibilities as the mediator. He has already been put to considerable trouble in negotiating and seeing the alliance through. But his responsibilities do not cease here. He is responsible to his party for the stability and harmony of the conjugal family which has come into being as a result of his endeavours. Should the alliance go on rocks for any reasons,- the girl is quarrelsome, or elopes with another man, the bridegroom drinks heavily and ill treats his wife too much or the affines are found to be a mean lot, the mediators of either side are jointly held responsible for the unhappy incidents and are required to find ways and means of resolving the conflicts and restoring harmony. The role of a bhang-Jadio is much an important one, and so significant in the

larger social relations of the kingroup, that it is always entrusted to an affine. Preference is generally given to the mother's brother, the father's sister or to a sister's husband of the party to the alliance.

Another important feature of the Bhil system of payments that continue in the case of some persons upto the birth of a son to the young couple. With the exception of the tadavi and the local community whose claims to portions of bridewealth are based on extra kinship considerations as members of the neighbourhood group, the others are expected to give gifts to the bride, when she sets out for her new home. Her father is expected to spend atleast a sixth portion of the amount of bridewealth that goes to the family (i.e. the portions of the father, mother and of the elder brothers), on ornaments for her. In addition, the bride is given a milch cow each by her father, mother, mother's brother and elder brother, so that 'the milk of her natal home might never be lacking'. They give her other gifts of clothing etc. on specific occasions in the year, during Diwali, when a child is born and son. The other partakers of her dej also give her gifts, sometimes of value for exceeding their share. The main idea is that a daughter should not be allowed to go with empty hands. A bride with a full heart makes for a greater solidarity of the affinal kingroups.

Bridewealth may be viewed in another aspect, as a complex of highly reciprocal payments and receipts resulting in a significant collaboration between kin and affines. Those persons who share in the bridewealth received for a girl are

also the persons who contribute towards the bridewealth to be given when a boy is married. Once it is announced that an alliance has been agreed upon and the several kinsmen and affines rally round to contribute towards the amount of bridewealth to be paid. On an appointed day, the father or whoever is in loco-parentis to the bridegroom sits in his byre with a large plate in which some kumkum.is placed. One by one, the several kinsmen, affines and the heads of the other families in the village, and certain other individuals with whom he might have close social relations, come forward to sit before him. They apply saffron marks on each other's forehead and then the contribution is put in the plate, if it is in cash, or merely indicated, if in grain or in cattle. It is carefully marked as to who has 'applied the chandlo' (a mark applied on the forehead) and who has not, for future reciprocation. What is held significant is that a person contributes. It is the gesture of collaboration that is more important and not the monetary value. It is assumed that a person contributes to the extent of his capacity. It would be very mean of a person if he should try to assess the chandlo in terms of money and limit his reciprocation to that an extent only when he could better it. Needless to say the extent of contribution depends to a large extent upon the nearness of a kin or affine or on the amount of goodwill between them. The major portion of the bridewealth has to be got up by the bridegroom's family, a significant contribution coming in from

the mother's brother, members of the agnatic group, and the other close kin and affines. The contributions from the members of the local community is generally, more a token of goodwill. Further their collaboration as neighbours is more varied and extensive in certain other directions. The headman of the village is not bound by convention to contribute anything at all, unless he does so of his own volition as a member of the agnatic lineage or as an affine of the person whose son is to be married.

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In this sense bridewealth may be interpreted as an instrument of collaboration. Whether it is to be paid or it is to be received, the several members of the kinship group and some affines come together in a situation of collaboration, where they share responsibilities and privileges. So far as the bride is concerned, all those who have contributed towards her bridewealth are significant affines having a claim on her. She is responsible to all those persons, for good behaviour and conduct. Similarly, all those who receive the brideprice and share in it are directly responsible to the bridegroom and his kingroup for the stability of the union. They all regard him as a son-in-law and extend to him courtesy and hospitality as befitting his status. If anything should go wrong to the marriage, the bridegroom has a right to demand redress of them all. Bridewealth also binds the two kingroups, the one which

collectively paid it and the other which took it and shared it. They are affines to each other with a right to hospitality and courtesy of manner and address. There is an increased interaction between the two groups as a consequence of bridewealth.

Conversely, in an uxorilocal marriage, where bridewealth is not paid or atleast paid partially, the two kingroups concerned are not necessarily brought closer. Only the groom goes over and his kin rarely visit him. It is an inversal of the normal situation and hence considered not proper. Even the children in a uxorilocal situation are under the control of their maternal kinsmen. Thus bridewealth seems to be definitely functional to the solidarity of the kingroup. It binds two kingroups in a marriage, as partners to a contract.

This institution of dej has been condemned in recent times as bridepurchase, by the several Hindu dominated social service agencies in the area, particularly the Bhil Seva Mandal of Dohad and attempts are being made to eliminate or atleast regulate the mode or manner of payments. On 20th February, 1954 a large convention of the literate Bhils of Gujarat and Khandesh, calling itself the Adivasi Bhil Panch (The Council of the Bhil tribe) met at Jhalod. Sri Dahyabhai Naik, the President of the Bhil Seva Mandal was in chair and the Deputy Collector of Eastern Panchamahals inaugurated it. One of its main resolutions which were adopted after much discussion sought to limit the dej then ranging from Rs.700-1,000 to a maximum of Rs.325/-. Out of

this, ornaments of silver of about 90 tolas (2¼ seers) in weight was to be given to the bride herself. An appeal was made to enforce this resolution strictly and to break off all social relations with the offenders till they came down in their demand. So far as I am aware, this resolution had little effect on even the Bhils of Jhalod, where the Bhil Seva Mandal most dominates. It is not surprising, for the resolution ignores two vital aspects of the dej. It makes no provision for the distribution of dej among the kingroup of the bride, but treats it as purely the concern of the natal family. Secondly, the cut is too drastic for the prestige of the Bhil, who generally likes to boast of the high dej that he paid for his wife or for his son's wife or that he received for his daughter. It is not a situation where a single family grabs or is burdened with a heavy dej. It is always a kinship group that is involved. Further it is a very flexible system whereby bridewealth can be transferred in money or in cattle and at one's own convenience. A person who would readily give away half a dozen milch cows, is appalled when asked to produce Rs.425/- in a single instalment.

Another resolution that was equally unrealistic condemned the practice of abduction or of elopement with a married women and enjoined that the offender should be prosecuted ruthlessly in a court of law and that there shall be no attempt at a compromise by the Panch (village assembly) of the village concerned. Needless to say that

it has been unequivocally rejected by the Bhils, particularly in the interior regions, where a compromise is always regarded as the best way of resolving a conflict and where it is bad manners to fight over women, who should bring together and not disrupt the relations between kingroups.

X

One important consequence of marriage is that two kingroups are brought together into a complex pattern of social and economic relations and corresponding behaviour referred to as hagavevhar (lit. affinal behaviour) and which has a very important place in the normal day to day life of a Bhil man or woman. It was pointed out in an earlier context, how by a single alliance, the entire agnatic lineage and certain close cognates of the bride is brought into affinal relationship with the kinship group of the bridegroom party to the alliance, with clearly defined mutual rights and obligations. Because Kanji, a Vaghla of Pipergota married Ratni a Damor of Bhuvara, he is regarded as the son-in-law of not only the Damor lineage group, but of the entire village. Unless there has been intimate personal relations with him, dating from before his marriage, Kanji may not be addressed by name by any senior member of the village, but formally by his clan name. He is to be treated formally by all the women who have married into Bhuvara. Similarly Ratni is the vahu of all the people of Pipergota and her behaviour should accordingly be regulated. The two kingroups concerned especially the senior and the

married persons of either sex, are expected to be very courteous and formal in behaviour and address towards each other. They may not address one another by name but more formelly as haga (lit. an affine,"Please be seated haga? Would you wash your hands haga," and so on. Generally the relationship with one's affines is expected to be cordial. Bhils set a great value by hagaivevhar, which chiefly consists in maintaining friendly and intimate relations with their affines, through frequent visits, collaboration on social and ritual occasions and by undertaking debicate missions of arbitration of disputes, negotiations for alliances etc. They believe that a family which has wide affinal relations in the area, is enabled to tide over most critical situations with each marriage. The kinship group establishes links across the boundaries of its local community, and is brought into personal relations of collaboration and dependancy with an entire group of individuals whom they might never have known before, and with whom their prestige and status is bound up. As Dalhing the badawa once expressed "A daughter is of little account to the family as she goes out just an age when she might be of some use to the family. Yet it is good to have many daughters as the area of affinity is extended because of them. A daughter given means, a family gained." Similar sentiments were expressed by Royala, when he said that daughters should foster friendship among people. It is not proper that we should quarrel over them.

Once a link is established with a kingroup, it is expected that the members of the two kingroups develop personal relations of friendship and understanding, by frequently visiting each other and by cooperation and participation in social and ritual activities. Whenever a person engages on a major ritual or social undertaking such as an Indraj festival or a marriage of a son, he sends out a notra or a formal invitation to all his cognates and affines to attend and collaborate in the undertaking. Not to respond to a notra, especially from an affine, is unthinkable to a Bhil. His family must be represented atleast by one or two male members and they may not go empty handed, but carry some contribution towards the expenses of the undertaking in money, grain or a goat or two. Failure to receive notra may be construed as an insult by the affine or kinsmen so b neglected and results often in the suspension of social relations between two parties for considerable periods of time. It is expected that one's affines are kept informed of any changes in the family fortunes, a crisis or of any significant developments in affairs of the family. "Does my haga think that we are of no account at all, that we have no interest in the welfare of our people? After all where is the sense in having affines, if we are not to be of any use in a moment of distress?" said Kathia tadavi of Ladvad, when he came to know that there had been a big conflagration in the homestead of his son's wife's father, resulting in considerable loss of property and cattle. He started immediately to Vakota to ascertain

for himself the present state of his affines, and to help them if need be. There are numerous instances of people going to the aid of their affines voluntarily. Nathia, the ex-tadavi of Pubera was asked to settle in Pipergota by his wife's sister's husband, the then tadavi Rewla. Gangaji Badawa was invited by Dale tadavi, to settle down in Alindra, when the former was very ill and it was believed that a change of locality was necessary for his cure.

There is generally a good deal of visiting between affines - especially among the younger set. When a girl is married into a particular village, her affines generally extend a cordial invitation to the young men and women of her natal group to visit their sister (in a classificatory sense), as often as they want, so that she might not feel too lonely. Such invitations are readily accepted, for two reasons - one their natural desire to be in frequent contact with their agemate and secondly a desire to establish friendly relations with the youngmen and women of that community, and to look out particularly for pretty girls of a marriageable age. It often happens that as a result of a single alliance, many others of less orthodox variety, follow in quick succession - whether by elopement or abduction. Thus a single link tends to be repetitive and becomes a chain of links binding the two neighbourhood groups closely to each other in a network of social and ritual obligations. Such relations have developed for instance between Pipergota and Panam, Alindra and Samlakund and Bornavar, Bhuvara and Dumka. Often this strengthening

of ties might take place inspite of parental opposition. Bhils of Ratanmal are generally despised by those at the foot - i.e. Panam, Jholio, Bhindol, Kanjeta, etc. However, the girls of these villages seem to prefer the half-starving but cheerful young men of the Ratanmal villages. The girls of Panam and Bhindol are wellknown for their beauty and have no lack of suitors. Yet, the Vakhla of Pipergota alone received their six brides during the last three years from these villages, and significantly enough through elopement. Their parents were furious, but helpless against the firm resolve of their girls who would rather starve on the hills with the Vakhlas than be rich elsewhere. It is against this background that we must understand the peculiar significance attached to the term vevan, which literally, means a young woman of the affinal group, but because of the numerous romantic situations that might develop between the vevai and the vevan, the terms are used almost synonymously for the term lover, and indicate an eventual probability of marital relations developing between them. These terms vevai (male) and vevan (female) are used frequently in Bhilodi songs, in romantic or even vulgar situations.

Relationships hinged around affinity or the hagai-vevhar as they call it, are very significant to a Bhil in his normal day to day life. Affinity imposes numerous mutual rights and obligations upon the persons so related and enjoins particular modes of behaviour and address, with a heavy accent on collaboration and harmony among them. One should be hospitable to affines. When an affine comes on a

visit, the host gets up and goes forward to take him by the ends hands and greets him with the words of well-come. Refreshments such as water,tobacco and food are provided in course of time. He is not allowed to go away without partaking of a meal, even if the family is half-starving. Sometimes, some grain is borrowed from the neighbours for the guest, lest the prestige of the family and the community should suffer in consequence.

A Bhil always makes it a point to carry some dry breed and groundnuts with him whenever he goes out for a journey When he is invited by his host to wash his hands preparatory to eating, he declines, courteously indicating that he has his food with him. However, he is usually pressed to take some hot food and the dry and cold bread is passed on to the medi to be eaten by the members of the host family at a later time.

It is discourteous to ask of an affine as to the where and why of his visit. For one thing, it is not necessary that there should be any purpose behind an affine's visit, other than a desire to maintain veyhar. Secondly if he a should have a purpose, he should be allowed to mention it in his own way and at his leisure. In fact, mark of a good haga is that he does not wait for a reason to call on his affines, but just drops in whenever he is in the neighbourhood, to see how they are getting along, sit there for a while, exchange ~~gesse~~ gossip and smoke a pipe of tobacco with them and proceed on his way. Failure to do so is construed as discourtesy and unaffinal behaviour. "That my

haga should be within a horn's blow of my house and go along his way, is a matter of concern for me (lagani). Does he think that we are so poor that he can not rest in our yard (angal) and smoke a pipe with me or does he think that we are not good affines?"said Hoyala, when he once heard that his son's wife's mama (mother's brother) was in Pipergota and went back to Samlakund without seeing Hoyala because of urgent work elsewhere. In olden days, when liquor used to flow freely, it was a matter of pure speculation, whether a person going on a long journey on some urgent work, would reach his destination at all - especially when his way lay through a number of affinal villages. Unless he was conscientious and bypassed all his affines, the chances were that he would have forgotten his errand in a drinking spree with an affine. The host himself would not dream of ascertaining whether his visitor was on an urgent errand and the visitor himself might be too polite to mention that he can not drink as he is on an errand.

A hagavala is entitled to be treated with respect and formality even by those senior to him in age. Ordinarily no person may remain seated on a cot (khatli) when there are persons of much senior to him in age and status around him, unless it be a child or the senior person is one's own father with whom not much of formality is observed. But a person on a visit at his affines, need not get up even if an aged tadavi of that village comes. Unless he does it out of respect for the elder and of his own volition. Once it happened that some relatives of Lalji's wife had come on a

visit to Alindra and were sitting on a cot, talking to Royala, the old tadavi. Just then a forest official rode up on his horse and got down. The visitors remained seated on the cot, while Royala rushed inside to drag another one outside for the official. If this had happened in their own village or in a place where they were casual visitors, this incident would have been thought of as highly discourteous. But as it was, the official knew who they were and took it as very natural that they should have priority over him in their bagavala's house.

It may be recalled how the reputation of the entire group is discussed before a proposal for alliance is accepted by the lineage group (infra IV.P.) so that an alliance brings them into contact with people with whom it is possible and desirable to have bagaivevhar. Yet due to certain factors discussed earlier, the lineage group is often forced into alliances which they would have normally avoided and so are brought into relation with undesirable persons. Even in such cases, it is expected that they maintain as cordial relations as are possible under the circumstances. As far as possible, open conflict or violence is to be avoided.

Unpleasant situations may often develop in their relations, as for instance, when the remainder of bride-wealth is not paid off by the stipulated time, or when the bride is unwilling to as remain with her husband and keeps running off to her natal home. Kagadi, a daughter of Khuman would not stay with her husband Vesto Pesaya of Dunka. He had running sores all over his body and she could not

even endure to see him. Khuman and the others in the village would persuade her to put up with the sick person, pointing out that everybody had been ill some time or the other and were not deserted by their spouses because of that. But she would be back again within two or three dy days. Her affines began to suspect that probably she was interested in a young man in the neighbourhood and that her family were aware of the liaison. Normal procedure in such a case would have been to send a bhangjadio to demand that either she stays or the bridewealth is given back. Whatever bitterness is aroused, would not affect the absentee affines and their social relations are not significantly impaired. But one afternoon, Vesto's elder brother, Lalchand was in their midst, roaring in drunken anger, accusing every Vakhla of complicity in Kagadi's misbehaviour and demanding instantaneous return of the bridewealth. Tadavi Surpal, Khuman and a few others of the village tried to pacify him in vain. It was only when Khuman threatened to bind him to a neerby tree for a drunkard and leave him there till he was sober, that the irate affine went away. Khuman was very unhappy that a friendship of many years is now laid in dust. However, Lalchand was back the very next day to apologize for his drunken behaviour, bringing some liquor with him to make amends. Khuman and other Vakhlas were only too happy to accept the compromise and restore cordial relations with him. In a similar situation, Doli's father-in-law had rushed up to Pipergota in a drunken fury to berate her mother Kesari, for not sending Doli back to his son in spite

of repeated demands. He too wanted his dej back and said so, emphasising his demand with a torrent of abuse relating to Doli's parentage &c. He had come through a dense and dangerous jungle, arriving just after midnight and was driven back into the jungle by his engry affines. Morning found him also repentent, apologetic and willing to make amends. He left later in the day after a good meal, taking with him a promise that Doli would be sent over"even if we have to carry her all the way."

Magaivevher is of such importance in Bhil social life, that it persists even when the alliance which first brought the kingroups together, has been dissolved or broken off by one or the other party. Usually a woman takes the initiative in breaking off marital relations with her husband, either by eloping with an another person or going off to her natal home finding no happiness with her husband. Considerable bitterness is roused. Her affines demand immediate return of bridewealth, particularly when a woman elopes with another person, but do not usually get it. They have to wait till such time as her natal kin receive bridewealth for her again from another alliance and transfer it to her former husband's kin. However, goodwill between them is restored after a time and their relations might continue to be as close as before. Sometimes both the kingroups may combine to punish and ostracise such an offending couple - as it harpened for instance in Kotumbi some years ago. Hari Kobad's wife ran away with Pemlo, a brother of Hari's sister's husband. They all felt that

Bamlo had abused the privileges of a haga and drove him out of the neighbourhood altogether. Even his own maternal uncle would not receive them.

Finally affines have a very significant function in relation to the agnatic kingroup. Whenever there is a crisis in their affairs - economic or social, it is to their affines that they look for aid. When a family has grown far too large for the land available to it for subsistance, when there is a persistent famine in the area or chronic illness in the family, the affected persons might leave their villages and migrate to the villages of their affines. There they are confident of being assisted. Often such migration of individuals and families to other villages occurs at the express invitation of their affines. A cursory examination of the lineage structure of any Bhil village and a study of the circumstances of their settlement amply illustrates this point (cf.post pp.).

Further, whenever there is a dispute likely to create much bitterness and affect the prestige of a kingroup or of the community, certain affines are requested to mediate. It is felt that any member of the lineage or the community would be unsuitable for as a negotiator, for his prestige and interests too are closely involved and he may not be able to keep a level head in a critical moment. For instance, when Lakki wife of Panji Damor of Jholio eloped with Kanji Vakhla of Pipergota, her husband asked Bai Bangli, a paternal aunt, to use her good offices for him with her brother Tadavi Poyala of Alindra, and help him in getting

back either his wife or his dej from Kanji Vakhle. He knew that the Vakhlas of Pipergota held Royala in great esteem and since Royala's sister was married to the Damors of Jholio, he could not very well refuse to mediate. Kanji Damor or any one of his kinsmen would not do. Their honour was involved in the affair and at some critical juncture in the negotiations they might lose their temper and even kill somebody. What is wanted is not bloodshed or vengence, but a promise. And a casual acquaintence was equally out of the picture, as he would not be able to understand the internal ramifications of the situation and further he will have no interest in hammering out the best bargain. Again, the mediator should be a person whom both the parties know and respect and whose prestige itself is bound up with theirs to a considerable extent. So the task of mediation is almost exclusively the responsibility of the affines and is an essential part of their obligations under hagaivevher. Thus the entire complex of affinal relationships resolves itself into a system of rights and responsibilities against the family, the kingroup and to a considerable extent even the local community itself.

XII

The one person whose status undergoes a drastic change as a result of marriage is the bride herself. It may be recalled that till she is of an age to get married, the girl leads a carefree existence. Very few responsibilities of the household are entrusted to a daughter, except for

such light tasks as milking, feeding claves, grazing cattle and minding young children. She roams about freely in the company of friends. She might sit by her elders when something important is being dus discussed and may occasionally take part in it too. There is little seggregation of sexes and hence the girls lead nearly as full a life as boys, living mostly out of doors coming in only to eat and sleep. During the festival months of Divali and Holi, they go out with the boys to dance and sing till late in the nights. A girl is houseborken only when her mother is dead and she has to shoulder the burden of the homestead. When Rangla's parents died of smallpox a few years ago, his young sister Sunki had to take over her mother's duties, at an early age of eight or nine. She has been doing it very efficiently too. At Pipergota, both Mansingh and his wife are thoroughly shiftless. His household is managed largely by Sunki, his young daughter, in a pretty thorough way. However, such instances are hard to come by.

But the moment she goes over to her affinal surroundings, the environment changes. She is now placed in charge of a medi and for the first time cannot depend upon anybody else. Further her social relations are largely limited to the other women of the affinal family who are often total strangers and generally critical of whatever she does or does not do.

For the first time in her life, she is subject to the authority of people not of her own family and is forced to observe a number of restrictions, regarding her speech

and general deportment. She may not uncover her face when any senior male relatives of her husband are anywhere in the vicinity. She may not speak directly to such a person nor may she participate freely in the dancing and singing parties, except with the approval of her husband or his parents. Even when she is dancing she has to keep her face covered upto her neck and look out only through a narrow chink in the folds of her head covering. To look upon the face of the wife of a junior agnatic kinsman, is almost an incest, frought with magico-religious dangers to the individual concerned and to the kingroup itself. So, in order to avoid coming upon her as unawares, a Bhil never enters the medi of a junior kinsman. When he has been out for some time and returns, he sits outside in the yard of his homestead with his back towards the medi and calls out to let the inmates know of his presence. However, a bride soon learns to keep her face always covered and to avoid all intimate contact with the senior male members of her affinal family. The area of conflict with the women of her affinal group is also minimised. Each one of them have their own medi and since the homesteads are separated from the others by fields etc., she can easily avoid too close relations with such women as are hostile to her, while maintaining apparently good relations with them all.

Since women in a Bhil homestead have to work very hard in the field and in the homestead, they have very few opportunities to seek the company of other women except to a limited extent and in a way that does not interfere with

her work. Women who are friendly with each other go out together to fetch water and bathe in the same spring or water hole, go together to the distant markets and also collaborate in many household activities. Probably a young housewife enjoys herself best when she is out on such errands with other young women unweighted by the presence of their affines.

Jurally, the position of a wife in the agnatic family is somewhat illdefined and we may say very weak. In spite of her marital relations and residence with a male member, and in spite of the fact that she works hard to keep the homestead of her husband going smoothly, and bears children for the continuance of the lineage, she has very little rights in it, whether over property or over the children themselves. A housewife is not given new clothes frequently. Even in a fairly well-to-do family, the woman might be having just two sets of clothing, one bought probably at the time of her marriage and kept for festive occasions, and the other for ordinary wear. Normally she gets a new one annually, and tries to keep it clean by making the old one go as far as possible, so that in course of years, she might actually have two sets, one old and the other no so old for daily wear. But quite often, a Bhil does not allow her to buy clothes until he sees her going about in absolute rags, and even then after a good deal of protests from the angry wife. Occasionally she might even go away to her natal home and refuse to come back unless she gets a set of clothes from him. Even women, ridicule a husband who buys them new

dresses frequently, as weak and spendthrift. A woman who goes about sporting clean clothes is called a natkali - a showy woman, who will not bring a good name to her affines. Such goings on are disapproved by her affines, who might be indulgent towards for worse behaviour or even positive floting on the part of a married daughter come home on a visit. Their argument is simple."We are not much concerned with the deportment of a daughter unless she misbehaves grossly. But a wife is another thing altogether. Her behaviour affects our prestige. When people see a woman misbehaving, they don't ask whose daughter she might be. They would want to know whose wife she is and whose daughter -in-law and cry shame on her affines for letting her loose like that. We don't care how she carries on when in her natal surroundings, but when she is with us, she should behave herself." To avoid any scandal a woman in her conjugal home is very sober in her dress and in deportment even in the presence of other women. It takes a long time before she is accepted uncritically by the people of her affinal group. Often, even a middle-aged woman may be accused of trying to 'show of' and beheving in a very forward manner.

I have already indicated the position of a woman in her own family; except over such cattle as were given to her by her kin from time to time and her ornaments, she has very little rights in the property of her husband. In the event of her being widowed, she has only a right to maintenance from her children or her affines. If childless, she may be permitted to cultivate and subsist upon a

portion of her late husband's land. Her husband's younger brother's or their children help her by ploughing and sowing the land for her and also assist her in harvesting etc.But she may not alienate land or even cattle to anyone outside the lineage. In the event of her marrying again, her claim to maintenance on her late husband's land ceases automatically.

Similarly, she has very little rights of participation in the ritual affairs of her affinal group. In fact, a married women is regarding as a potential danger to her agnatic family. She is spiritually weak and might easily come under the influence of the numerous maleficent spirits to the detriment of her affinal family and lineage. She is excluded practically from all areas of ritual activities except those relating to the benevolent deities such as Mahadev and Kalika and a few other harvest festivals such as Indraj, all of which are free from magical influences. It is proposed to be demonstrated in a later context, how the denial of ritual rights to a woman is associated with her own dubious position in her affinal family and is an expression of affinal conflicts and tensions. It is enog enough for our purposes to a point out here that a daughter has relatively far more rights to ritual participation than a wife in the agnatic family.

Structurally she has an associative status in the affinal family, with a few limited rights of participation in the social and economic relations, and only in a very small part of their ritual relations. But she does not have a corporate status in the lineage, in any sense of the term.

A woman might have lived with her affines for twenty or thirty years, and might be exercising considerable influence upon the other members, because of certain personal considerations. Still jurally, she does not form an integral part of the lineage. With the death of her husband, her relations with the lineage group rest more on personal considerations.

Conversely, she never ceases to be a member of her natal family in a jural sense, though operationally, she might cease to be an active member. She has definite rights in her natal family even after her marriage, and may return to it at any stage in her life, with or without her children and demand that provision should be made for her. Further her lineage and kingroup continue to exercise certain rights in rem and in personem over her. For instance, a man has some authority over his wife and may occasionally beat her for misbehaviour. So long as the beating is not very severe or frequent, he is let alone, though the girl is free to leave him and return to her natal family. But where they ~~as~~ suspect that she is being deliberately illtreated, and the girl is unhappy in her relations with him, her kin may forcibly remove her from his custody, even against her own inclinations, and refuse to send her back unless a guarantee is given for good treatment in future. Similarly they may even remove her children from the custody of their father in their best interests.

Substantiate by example

Further when a woman is ~~deve~~ widowed, rights over her person return to the natal kingroup. Whoever wants to 'set up house' with her again, has to pay bridewealth to

her natal kin, through her father, or his heirs and this amount is distributed among the several dangvalag as in the first instance. If she is a divorce and the bridewealth has not yet been paid back to her first husband, this amount is transferred to him to compensate for the loss of his wife.

I have indicated in an earlier chapter, the persistence of sibling unity even after their marriage, and of the rights to be exercised by the siblings against each other, as expressed in the amount of rights and responsibilities given to a man vis-a-vis his sister's children, right to remove them from the custody of their agnatic kinsmen during their infancy in the event of his sister being divorced or widowed, and of his undisputable rights to make them his heirs on a par with his own children. In all these cases, the understanding is that the final rights over the children vest with the agnatic lineage. Once they reach the years of discretion, they should be allowed to return to their paternal home and to take up their rightful position in it. As often as not, however, they prefer to remain with their maternal uncle only, and are settled on portions of his lands.

Such protective steps are not usually necessary where both the parents are living. However, even then special rights of superintendence are exercised by a person over his cross-nephews and cross-neices. The maternal uncle seems to have a more significant role in Bhil kinship than the father's brothers, as evidenced by the priorities in the distribution of dang in the bridewealth. Further, he seems to be more important than the mother herself,

vis-a-vis her children, in the context of the facile ease with which marriages are dissolved by either party. The custody of the very young children devolves upon the divorced woman by convention, but more often that not, she might decide to form an another alliance. In such cases, children by the previous alliance are usually taken away from their mother, except in cases where the couple want to rear them up and the man is known to be a kind person and brought up by either the father of the children or more usually their maternal uncle.

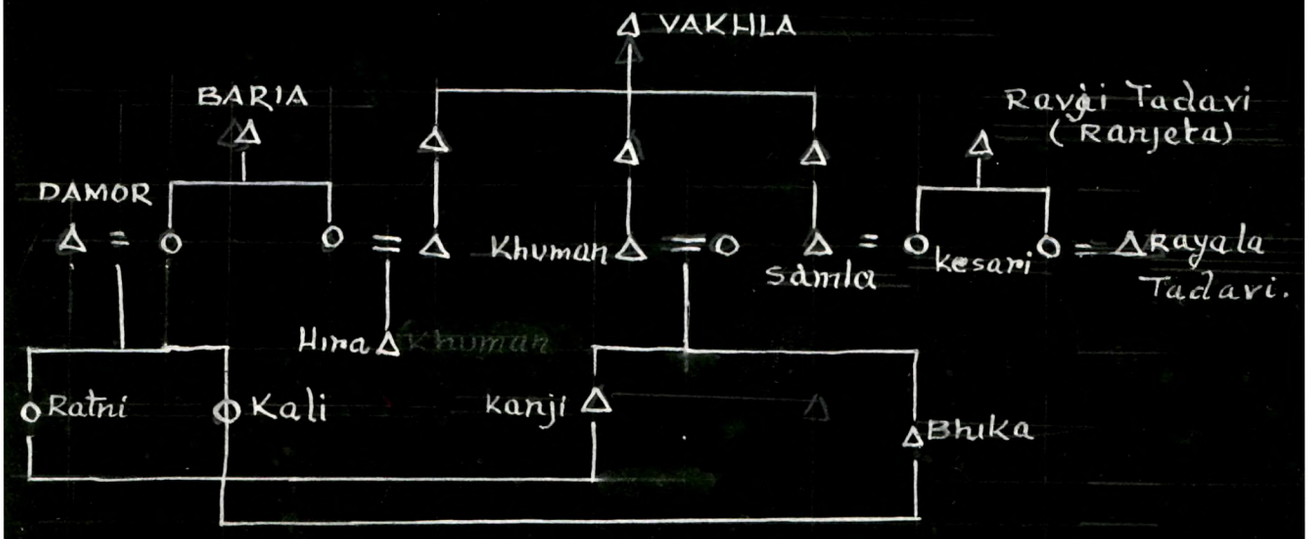
He has a right to be consulted whenever an alliance for any one of his sister's children is proposed, and is often nominated as the mediator to negotiate on their behalf whether it is a proposal for an alliance or a dispute involving one of them, as he is supposed to have their best interests at heart. It may also be noted in this context, that when a man dies, his sister's son is one of the persons who must be informed and to whom dan (a ritual gift) is to be made by his heirs on the twelfth day of mourning. By such a dan it is supposed that the dead man's soul will be more restful. Conversely, a man owes a special alliance to his maternal uncle, which persists even after his death. He gives gifts to the priest on the twelfth day of the mourning and is one of the joint sponsers of the Kaita ceremony. He has the right to erect memorial stones for him, if he so desires and to go over to Bhimkund - an ancestral shrine on the Narmada bank where Bhils from very far off places come

to worship Mahadev, to make special gifts to Brahmans there for his uncle's soul.

XIII

Finally, the relationship of a person towards his or her affines is tempered by a recognition of what they describe as (hama) relationship, or relationship which prevailed before the alliance. As a consequence the behaviour pattern between the two individuals, is often not at all what should be by the genealogically assessed relationship between them. For instance, I often used to notice in Pipergota, that Kesri, mother of Surpal was going about the village with her face uncovered, when there were at least three persons in the village who ought to have been avoided. Two of them Revla and Mathia Bariya were very senior to her husband late Samla tadavi. On inquiry, I learnt that her father Bowji tadavi of Kanjeta, Mathia and Ravla were friends and like brothers. Further her mother and Koyala tadavi's wife were sisters and so she was a masi bhaida of Khuman and was calling Koyda, Revla and Mathia as baba even as a child. Even after her marriage, she continued to address them as baba and Khuman as dada (elder brother). So inspite of her being a daughter-in-law of the Vakhla lineage, she was a daughter and a sister by a hama relationship. So avoidance is not strictly enforcible.

This is a fairly simple instance. In practice, however, it so complicates the picture, that one has to



△ MALE.
○ FEMALE.

" ANALYSIS OF A KINSHIP SITUATION."

delve quite deep to reconcile the operative system of behaviour, with the picture he is led to expect from his genealogical knowledge of their relationship. Sometimes it is the uterine kinship that is the basis of such hama relations, at other times, it relates to an adoption in the distant past. In some other cases, it is just a matter of convention. If two people knew each other very well and had got into the habit of calling each other by a term signifying a sibling, their children and near relatives could derive their relations to those persons and interalia on that basis. Since such a hema relation does not carry any exogamous injunction with it, a marriage between them might create a situation which an observer might find quite confusing. But obviously, it is quite clear to the Bhil.

Similarly confusion is likely to arise in a sororal polygynous situation, or where two sisters have married two brothers. The younger girl would have come into contact with her sister's affines previously and is likely to have established certain relations with the several individuals. Later when they become her own affines, there is a persistanceof the previous adjustments. Khuman's family provides a typical situation of this sort. (Plate XII opposite)

When Ratni married Kanji, her sister Lali came to know the people of Pipergota very well. Khuman was kaka to her and Kanji and most people of his age were called dada. So later when she married Philla, a younger brother of Kanji, she chose not to readjust her relations with the Vakhlas, but allowed her previous relationship and behaviour

to continue as before. So that she does not veil her face even for Khuman her husband's father, while her sister does it to most of Kanji's elders except to Hira and his brothers. Hira's mother and her own mother were sisters, so they are masi bhaida. She calls him dada Hiro, and deriving from there, she calls Khuman by name as kaka Khuman. Though she covers her face to all the senior male members of the Vakhla lineage, her behaviour in other respects, is as familiar and intimate as of any daughter of the village. It is well to keep note of these nama considerations for a proper understanding of the Bhil kinship system.

XIII

Then there is the general problem of bridewealth and its relation to the stability of marriage. Does it act as a strong deterrant to the dissolution of marriage in terms of the conjugal relations and the jural bonds of marriage? So far as I have been able to observe, the bond between the husband and wife tend to be very weak, particularly during the early years of marriage. A woman finds it rather difficult to reconcile herself to her change in status - from that of a daughter of the house petted and indulged by all and with very few responsibilities, to that of a housewife burdened by the many cares of a household working hard from morning to evening and subject to the unsympathetic and critical appraisal by her affines. During the first two or three years of her life, she is invited to

go over to her natal home frequently and stays there for considerable periods of time. Normally neither her husband nor her affines mind her visits to her natal home at first, but as time passes, her husband becomes less indulgent. At this stage in their relations, there would not be sufficient adjustment between them and often the young woman runs away to her natal home protesting against his alleged neglect of her, and demanding gifts of new dresses, eatables and other tokens of regard for her, as a condition of her return Such temporary lapses in conjugal relations might occur frequently during the early years of their married life, as for instance in the cases of Doli and Kagadi, both girls of Pipergota. Doli was angry with her husband because he was more attentive to her elder co-wife and was neglecting her, to the extent that he would not even buy her clothes. So, she would come over to her natal home and refuse to go back till she was given at least a new dress. Kagadi's grouse was that her husband Vesto, a Paaya of Dunko had running sores on both the legs and she could not even bear the sight of him. So she would also come over to her natal home, and stay for as long a period as she could. Each time Vesto or his elder brother had to come in person and start shouting at her kinsmen demanding that either she is sent over or the bridewealth paid for her might be returned. Then she would go with them, but would be back again in a few days. There are numerous such instances where the bride would break off conjugal relations with her husband for considerable periods from a dissatisfaction with her husband or affines. Ill

treatment by the husband or his kin, disease or drunkenness were the several grounds on which such breaks in conjugal relations were based.

In all such cases, her affines take it for granted that she would be sent back by her kin. If she is not sent back even after two or three demands, then the mediators are called upon to resolve the situation, either by getting the girl back or the bridewealth given for her. When this happens, the marriage may be regarded as formally annulled.

However, matters do not usually go to such a length. The bride's kin take it upon themselves to persuade the girl to go back, telling her that she should learn to adjust herself to her affines. They have paid the bride-wealth for her as per agreement and her kin will see to it that she is not neglected or illtreated by her affines. Such an agreement is extracted before the girl is sent back. It is to be noted that except in cases of pronounced disharmony neither side attempts to secure a dissolution of marriage. In fact, cases of a woman having been living apart from her husband for a number of months without the jural bonds being affected, are fairly frequent.

Generally, it is the woman who takes the initiative in breaking off conjugal relations by running away, often on flimsy grounds. A man does not send his wife away unless she persists in deserting him again and again. On the contrary, he tends to retain her even when she has been guilty of infidelity - which again is not infrequent.

Frequently, Bhil women dissatisfied with their husbands tend to elope with another man, whom they might have come to know in the weekly markets or in fairs. And men too do not seem to be very scrupulous about eloping with married women often wives of their own affines. I was surprised to learn on a genealogical check up that quite a few people who are regarded as very respectable persons in the area have been guilty of either successfully persuading a married women to desert her husband or in having accepted such a women, when she voluntarily came to him and offered 'to set up her home' with him. Phuman Vakhla, a veritable piller of local society, shamefacedly but with obvious relish, confessed that he obtained his second wife in this way. She was then married to a man in Ganvel, and was on a visit to her maternal uncle's village as a guest. When she came to Pipergota on her way back, Phuman caught hold of her and forcibly put her into his medi. She protested at first, but later accepted to live with him. His son Kanji too has now a women who was formerly married to Kanji Damor of Jholio. Formerly she was bethrothed to Kanji Vakhla and even the anu had been paid. But later her father had broken off the alliance and married her to the Damor. Recently, she came across Kanji's wife Ratni at the market in Khabra and quite casually happened to express considerable dissatisfaction in her marital relations with the Damor. He beat her frequently when intoxicated and would not even give her clothes. Ratni who knew and seemed to have liked her well, suggested that she leaves the Damor and set up house with Kanji Vakhla and they could be good

co-wives together. And Kanji was apparently glad to have her, partly because she was a good worker and because that gave the Vakhlas an opportunity to avenge themselves for the insult done by her father in returning their ~~ann~~many years ago.

Even in such cases, the husband or his kin do not usually press for a dissolution of the jural bonds. Mediators are sent to persuade the man to send her back under the threat of reprisal, and attempts are made to persuade the woman herself to return, promising her better treatment in future and that she will not be punished for her lapses if she returns. The anger of her affines is more directed against her husband than against the woman. The former is blamed for having forced his wife to such a serious step as to run away with another man, for his inability to keep a woman for whom much wealth (mal) has been paid. If they succeed in getting her back, he is admonished publicly by his kin and affines alike, to take good care of her atleast now and give her little cause to run awey.

Attitude of a kingroup when one of their married daughters elope with an other person is a little difficult to assess. They certainly disapprove of her action as too drastic and generally support their affines by persuading her to return to her husband. But, once they realise that she is bent upon living with the second person, they are mostly concerned in getting the bridewealth from the seducer and transfer it to her former husband. However, they do not

accept direct responsibility for the repayment of the bridewealth, though conventionally it is recognised that when the marriage is dissolved through no initiative of the husband, he is entitled to receive the amount of bridewealth he paid for her. Where the payment has been made wholly or partially in cattle, however, he is entitled only to the original number of cattle, not to any increase in their numbers during that period. Further, the repayment may be effected at their convenience. Usually, when the jural bonds of marriage are broken off under any circumstances, the former affines of the woman concerned have to wait till she forms another alliance for the repayment of their due.

The man himself is interested more in the return of the wife than the bridewealth. To lose a wife is a matter of personal humiliation and so the husband tries to get her back, no matter if she had run away with another person on three or four occasions previously. Frequently, the woman allows herself to be persuaded to go back to her husband, once her displeasure with him is spent and she begins to long for his familiar company. I have known instances of a man taking his wife back and living with her quite cheerfully even after she had deserted him for another man for the third or fourth time. Each time, he might beat her just to assert his authority over her, but the equilibrium is achieved within the course of a week or even less. He gives her up only when he realises that her repeated desertion of him is not due to temporary aberrations, but to a deep seated disharmony in their relations.

That I am trying to establish is that while conjugal relations are frequently broken off among the Bhils, they are temporary for the mostpart and do not result in a severence of the jural bonds of marriage. Such a break in conjugal relations occur frequently during the early years of marriage and may be construed as a part of the transformation of the temperamental and much indulged Bhil maid into a hard-working and steady housewife. Marriage gains considerably in stability as the time passes and the couple achieve a greater adjustment to each other and as the family grows with the birth of many children.

However, I do not mean to imply that divorces are infrequent. On the contrary, permanent dissolutions of the jural bonds of marriage occur frequently, whether because the woman deserts her husband for another man or she just refuses to be bound to him any longer. The consideration that bride-wealth might have to be returned in that event, does not seem to be powerful enough to prevent her from seeking a dissolution. In any case, her people are not bound to return it, except when she see sets up home with another man, as the dissolution of jural bonds achieves finality only then. This consideration that he might lose his wife without the certainty of getting his bridewealth in the near future, might and usually does act as a powerful motive with the husband to dissuade his wife from breaking off the bonds of marriage. In such an event, it is the husband who is put to loss. He loses her services as well as his sexual rights in her without getting back even the amount he had given for her

Even children do not seem to act as a sufficiently powerful deterrent. As I mentioned in an earlier context, the children are weaned from their mother at a fairly early stage in life, partly because she has little leisure to lavish affections on them, and partly because the children spend most of their time out of doors with the other children of the village. Whenever their parents separate, the custody of the child rests either with the father, or with the maternal uncle. Claims of the latter are the more dominant particularly when the children are yet very young. However, it is expected that they may return to their father when they are older. Only infants are usually permitted to go with their mother, if she should desire to form another alliance. Such children may be permitted to be brought up by their step-father when the proviso that either the father or the maternal uncle have the right to remove them from his custody to their own, should they feel that the child's interest is best served that way. It may be noted however, that even in the case of girls brought up by her maternal uncle or foster-parent, the right to collect her bridewealth for her vests with her father or his successor, and the rights in it are distributed among her kin in exactly the same way as in the case of a daughter reared up in the normal way, by her parents.

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Notes and References

1. Nath, Y.V.S. A Note on the Religion and Witchcraft of the Bhils., JMSU.III,1, pp.135-8

2. Loc.cit. p.116.

3. Radcliffe-Brown,A.R. Introduction to African Systems of Kinship and Marriage (Ed. Radcliffe-Brown A.R. & Forde, C.D.) p.50-53

4. This is amply demonstrated in the writings of Verrier Elwin Hivale and others on the Muria gonds Baigas, Santals and other tribal societies of the Madhyapradesh, Orissa and Bihar.

5. Radcliffe-Brown A.R., Loc.cit. p.49-51.

6. Evans-Pritchard, E.E., Marriage and Kinship among the the Nuer, p.93-95.

7. Reported in Loksatta, a Gujarathi daily paper from Baroda - issue dated 22-2-54.