

CHAPTER XI

BIRTH OF A CHILD AND THE CHILD REARING SYSTEMS

I. INTRODUCTION

The study of the life cycle of the individual in a given culture is necessary to know the development and structure of the psychology of personality. The pattern of child training, the experiences of home in infancy and childhood, the attitudes of the parents and society towards adolescence and marriage, the responsibilities to be fulfilled as an adult member of the society, the place of old age etc. are the significant factors which determine the personality of the individual. Of primary importance in the initial stage of this

process are the relations of parents and children. Parents groom the child for its role in the social, economic and religious structures of a given society. Also it is through the psychological process of identification with parents and the introjection of their prescriptive commands that a super-ego is built up, which functions as an inner source of control for the instinctual impulses. An attempt is made in this chapter to review the customs relating to the birth, experiences and training in infancy and childhood of a Dangi child.

"Personality, partly through child rearing practices develops into a capacity to maintain the culture in a steady state. The completely formed personality is an individual capacity to maintain the total pattern of adjustment that the culture has made to the natural world. Hence, personality contains adaptive qualities and reflects contradictions that have developed in cultures through time"(1)

-
1. Henry and Boggs as quoted by Clyde Kluckhohn
'Culture and Behaviour' in Charles Lindzey (ed.)
A Handbook of Social Psychology, Vol.II, p.951.

II. BIRTH OF A CHILD

The belief prevalent in some primitive tribes that a woman is fecundated mysteriously by the spirit of a dead ancestor and that the relation of a male with a female has no connection with the birth of a child was not only turned down by Kolgyabhai and Bhikhu as a foolish idea but also they laughed at it. The Dangi knows that he is the creator and father of his child. Pregnancy is not something mysterious but a result of relation with a male. Kolgyabhai said, "the child is the product of my labour". The Dangi knows that the conception of a child is a function of semen-water as they call it. As a result of sexual intercourse the semen is poured into the mother's womb and the egg therein is fertilised. Kunwar, my Bhil servant in Kirli said, "when the menstruation flow stops, it is the sure sign of conception. Last year my brother's unmarried daughter of fifteen years was suspected of conception. Before the matter became public some roots were given to her and there was an abortion". The old mother of Kolgyabhai told me, "I had a terrible time when Kolgya was in my womb. I could not eat anything.

I was troubled because of nausea and restlessness. A girl child does not trouble so much. Kolgya's daughter was born after nine months, while it takes ten days more for a male child. I can tell what month the pregnant woman is running from the state of her body. The young pregnant woman does not know her responsibilities. I had to warn and advise Kolgya's wife what to eat and what not to eat. She was warned not to eat clay, stale and decaying vegetables. She was prohibited to cut or eat anything during the eclipse, and even seeing the eclipse. My neighbouring woman only last month miscarried, for she had crossed the cremation ground, the place infested with evil spirits". There are no religious rites related to pregnancy. There are not many taboos observed by the couple in the prenatal period, but sex relations are avoided in the last three four months.

The Dangis can calculate the day of delivery and the delay in delivery is watched with anxiety. In the hours before the delivery, when the woman is not at ease and her bowels become loose, a midwife, an old and experienced woman, who has become proficient only by experience is called. At the time of delivery the children are sent out and the males wait outside.

Only some elderly woman of the family or relation remains present there. The mid-wife gives some roots as medicine if the woman is labouring, and applies her hand on the stomach.

The child is born, the umbilical cord is cut with an arrow and buried in one corner of the cattle shed. It gives protection to the cattle and agriculture against the evil spirits.

Soon after the child is cleansed, a drop of wine (now a drop of tea) is put into its mouth. The mid-wife takes care of the mother and the child, and gives some instructions to the mother. She is paid rupees two to five for her services. Kolgya-bhai said, "At a late age I got a son. So I was pleased and gave a saree to the mid-wife". The males waiting outside are informed about the birth of a child and the birth is announced by beating a metal plate.

The confined woman is regarded impure and hence is not allowed to touch anything in the house for five days if the child is a boy. In case of girl child she is untouchable for three days. Even after

this period of seclusion she is not allowed to touch the cooking vessels upto twelve days.

After the initial period of impurity of three or five days, a religious ceremony of 'Panchora' is performed. A stone is besmeared with red lead and placed ^{in front} before. One and a half pound of rice is brought in a seive and small heaps of rice are made before the stone. The mid-wife who performs the ceremony invoking all the gods requests them to reside in these heaps of rice. She asks their favour and requests them to protect the child against the evil eye and other influences. On this occasion five children of the neighbours and relatives are given dinner. The mother is now allowed to touch in the house. Kolgyabhai said, 'Generally the mother is given rest and exempted from doing work in the fields, but in a poor family like that of my neighbour his wife had to go out for work soon. While I could afford and so did not allow my wife to do hard work for three months when this son was born'.

"We believe that 'Devi Vidhatri' the goddess of fortune visits the new born child on the sixth day and writes its fortune or misfortune in its

forehead. What is written once in one's fate cannot be undone afterwards".

III. PATTERN OF NAMES

There is nothing like the 'naming' ceremony. The parents give the name whichever comes to their mind or have caught their fancy. The following list of the names will reveal the general pattern of names.

Male Names

Amad	Gundu	Laxu	Sakharam
Bablu	Govind	Mavji	Tana
Bapu	Iku	Moti	Vanu
Bhangu	Janiya	Navsu	Varia
Chiman	Jiparya	Pandu	Vesta
Damu	Kalu	Radkya	Yashwant
Daju	Kashiram	Raju	
Dashru	Kolgya	Ratu	
Dharma	Lahanu	Sukar	
Devaji		Soma	
Fulji			
Gansu			

Female Names

Anandi	Maynu
Ansu	Lasi
Amali	Masumbi
Budhi	Ramju.
Banu	Ratni
Bharji	Ravju
Bhikhi	Rangu
Chamaru	Sonu
Gangu	Suman
Jivali	Situ
Jiman	Somi
Kasi	Patu
Maharu	Yamuna

This survey reveals the influence of the varieties of sources in adapting the names. They adopt^a name of a god (e.g. Ganasu), a name of colour (e.g. Kalu - black), a name of a day (e.g. Soma, Somi) Monday), a name of an epic character (e.g. Daxu, Situ) a name of a tree (e.g. Amlī), a name of a river (e.g. Yamuna), a name of a fruit (e.g. Masumbi) Orange, etc.

IV. THE ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE EXPECTANT MOTHER AND THE NEW CHILD

The conception for the first time after marriage is naturally looked upon by the spouses as well as their parents with joy and curiosity. The attitude towards the expectant mother is neither of despise nor of praise. "It is a matter of natural course". A child is welcomed for it adds to the membership of the family. A male child is more liked for he continues the line and feeds the parents in the old age. It does not make much difference if there is only one son and other daughters. "If there is no son and all daughters", said Iku Karbhari, "the father will keep a 'khandhadia' for one of his daughters who will be a son in place. My brother has no son. He has kept a khandhadia for his youngest daughter who stays with him and helps him". A son does not enjoy an obvious and evident superiority over a daughter. The social and economic equality of a boy and a girl child in ^{the} Dangli society creates a situation quite different from that in the Hindu society where a girl child is a liability, so the

attitude of the Dangi mother is same to the male as well as female child. A girl child in the Hindu society is taught to submit to and obey the male superiority while a Dangi girl is not taught so. In that respect a Dangi woman is different from a Hindu woman. A Dangi woman does not feel inferior to her husband.

The review of the family survey shows that the number of children in a family varies from nil to twelve, the number five to six being very common. The average gap between two successive births is sixteen to twenty months. The birth of a new baby does not add to the existing worry of ^{the} feeding problem. For, the child's needs are very few and it also brings two hands to work.

V. CARE OF THE INFANT

The child's primary needs of food and rest are carefully and immediately attended. For many months in the first year the child subsists exclusively on mother's milk. There is no such scheme as timings of food. Whenever the child cries it is taken to the breast. At night the child sleeps by

mother's side. So that she can easily take him to the breast. Till the child is able to sit erect or stand it is made to sleep in the lap for the purpose of feeding and the mother leans forward to put the nipple into its mouth.

There is no haste in weaning the child nor there is any definite period for which the child is breast fed. I saw the two years old child of Lahanu in Silotmal clinging to his mother's breasts even though there was a two months child in the lap. She neither showed any resentment nor made an effort to discourage him. She said to me, "It is like this". Sometimes the child comes running, holds up the mother's saree, uncovers her breasts and puts the nipple in his mouth.

At the age of ten to twelve months the child is given liquid food like 'rab' or 'tur dal'. Gradually it begins to take solid food like rice, bhakhara ground nut, maize, etc. The hard food is masticated by the mother and put into the child's mouth. Now the child is encouraged to take the solid food and even put forcibly in his mouth. For, they say in many a cases there is no milk in the mother's

breasts, hence the child would remain half starved. If the mother's milk fails too early a wet nurse is sought from amongst the kins women.

The methods of weaning are mild and slow. The child is not spanked or beaten if it continues to cling to the breasts till a late age. It is not despised or treated harshly but addressed, "You have grown old, if you cling to the breasts people will laugh at you". Avsubai told me, "Sometimes some bitter substance is applied to the nipple and the child gradually loses the attraction for the breasts".

The act of breast feeding is not something that is to be performed in private as done among the civilised classes. The woman feels no hesitation in doing so in the presence of the males. I saw the daughter-in-law of Iku and many other women many a times feeding the children in my presence.

VI. SWADDLING

The child for making him asleep is put into 'Hindi' a swaddle, and it is moved to and fro with a push. The mother or the sister attending the child sings a song.

Oh, my child fall asleep, get asleep,

What are your desires,

What do you want ?

Get asleep, fall asleep.

The rhythmic movement of the swaddle and the sweet voice throw into background all the disturbing stimuli and also creates the impression in the mind of the child that it is not alone and soon gets asleep.

To prepare a swaddle first two thick strings or ropes are tied horizontally to the two pillars about six feet apart. In these ropes a big piece of cloth, a saree or a dhoti is wrapped in such a manner that it becomes like a bag 'jholi', with the upper end open. The child is put into this bag, and it is swung to and fro. Because of the weight of the child the two sides are stretched and there is no possibility for the free movements of hands and legs. Sometimes, some elderly person sits on the ropes of the swaddle, keeps the child in the lap and swings it. As the child grows older it forms the habit of sleeping on the ground and

avoids the swaddle. While going outside a long distance, the infant is not carried in the arms or on the waist, but is put into a big piece of cloth a 'jholi' and hung over the back, with the head as the pivot for hanging.

VII. SPHINCTER CONTROL

Sphincter control in a Dangi child is not so hastily and as early insisted as it is done amongst us. Habits of urinating and defecating are not firmly established till the age of four or five. In the early months the child is allowed to urinate or defecate in the lap by the mother or any other who has carried the child. It is not thrown away in contempt. In fact nobody bothers about the sphincter activities of the child. A one year old child, is often taken out regularly for sphincter activities. It is seated on her feet by the mother and encouraged to defecate by whistling and patting. If the child defecates in the house it is not left there but taken outside. "Even though told and led often to the place for sphincter the child commits mistake but he should not be 'thrown away' in disgust or

spanked and frowned. After all it is a child, and takes its own time to learn". A two or three year old child knows the place where to go for sphincter but he would not do so always. A still older child will itself go to the place shown behind the hut. The child old enough to move in the neighbourhood alone needs no instruction. While wandering he may select any place and perform his activities.

The bringing up of the child is a joint responsibility for both the husband and wife. Both readily carry it out. "I am the father of my child so I must take care of him, fondle and play with him". That is the attitude of the father. A crying child is at once attended and efforts are made to silent him. His attention is diverted by ringing some vessel or by the jingling noise of the iron chains or by whistling. He is fondled by throwing him up in the air and receiving and tickling in the legs and arm pits.

Because of poverty the mother has to go for work very early after delivery. "The wife of my neighbour", said Iku, "had to go for work soon

after delivery. But the child was not left unattended. The grandmother or the neighbour or the elder sibling looked after the child. And she also did not remain out for long. When there was no body in the house to look after the child, ^{she took} ~~she~~ takes him with her in the fields".

VIII. INDUCTION OF ACTIVITIES AND EMOTIONAL EXPRESSIONS

The Dangi child because of lack of proper nourishment is weak in structure and lacks vitality, hence learns to sit or walk or run a little later than a normal child in our society. Parents take interest and help the child in learning. The child is first taught to walk by giving support with a finger and then encouraged to walk a distance independently. An eight months' child can sit without support, a fifteen month's' child can walk and an ~~xx~~ eighteen to twenty months' child can run independently. At a fairly early age the child smiles and responds to a smile. It can recognise its mother and father and acquaintances and stretches forth the hands to go to them.

The child receives a very early notion of fear from the voice and expressions of those around it. There are very few objects to be feared in general. The child would look upon a stranger with a suspicious eye in the beginning. The 'saheb' and 'sepoys' are thus feared. But soon that fear drops out.

The other objects which the child fears at an older age are Mavli Ma, Dungen Dev, evil eye, witch, dev, etc. These fears are induced into the child intentionally or unintentionally by the parents. For, often they talk of the disfavour of these gods and its consequences. Moreover, the child has often witnessed the ceremonies of worship and witchcraft and also heard that "a particular man died of witchcraft", the son of 'A' is having pain", etc. So the children fear of touching the remains of worship, and fear of ^{the}ghost and witches.

The general response to the feared object is 'keeping away from it'. The apparent natural expression in a fear stricken child is screaming and trembling and crying. Any elder nearby attends to

the fear stricken^c child and tries to reduce its fear by pampering and patting it.

Anger and aggression are looked down upon. An angry and aggressive child is discouraged for this kind of impropriety in behaviour. Fighting and quarrelling among the siblings are discouraged and always the elder child is at discount. The elder sibling feeling jealous of the new baby is just laughed at. "The children", said the Patel of Kasad, "are innocent. They may not obey our orders, but they should not be beaten". The child is prohibited from the undesirable activity by saying "You have grown older. The children of your age do not behave like this. Others will laugh at you". The reaction of a defeated child is sulking. He regresses from the situation.

IX. THE CHILD AS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY

By the time a Dangi child is four^{years old}, it is already a significant member of the family and group. It has been physically and mentally trained to respond to calls from the elders. It has become independent

in attending to the calls of nature. It can understand what the mother or the father means to say. It yields to the orders of the parents, and in turn expects its parents to do something for it. Its independent existence is granted and accepted. It is given a separate dish and cup for eating and drinking. It does not necessarily require the side of the mother while sleeping at night. It begins to possess small things, a toy, a cart, or a rattle and assert its right if anybody tries to take it.

Neither little girls or little boys wear any clothes until they are ^{at}four or five^{years}. A young boy is made to put on a 'langoti', a long piece of cloth covering the genital^{part} and tied around the abdomen. Sometimes he puts^{on} shorts if the father can afford. There is no emphasis on putting on the upper cover. At a later age a shirt and a cap are given to him. A little girl puts on a loin cloth of a bigger size and a blouse or a frock. Because the children have the habit of moving without dress they resist against the dress. It takes time to form a habit of dressing.

X. EDUCATION OF THE CHILD

From birth until the age of four or five the child's education is quite simple. It must learn ~~and~~ to crawl and sit and walk within the house and never to go down the verandah, to stay out of the Sun, not to tangle the weaving of mats, to keep the loin cloth fastened to its person, to keep away from fire, not to take water by himself, if the water stand is high. These are simply a series of avoidances. They are enforced by a good deal of shouting and inferential conversation.

Now the parents say, "the child has grown old, and we have not to bother about his food and sleep timings". From this age the conscious education of the child begins. It is expected to follow particular standards in behaviour, and learns different behaviours appropriate with the different members of the family. It learns how to look at a thing. It should not quarrel and beat or be jealous of its young siblings. It is supposed in terms of its age to be active and vigilant in carrying out the orders and do the work entrusted to it. By the

time the child is ^{of}six or seven^{years}, it has learnt all essential avoidances by heart.

A seven years old male child runs errands, looks after the younger ones, helps the father in the fields, go for wandering in the jungle, collects the dry fruits, etc. The little girl helps the mother in household work, sweeps the floor, fetches water, collects the firewood and cowdung, attends to the younger siblings. She also begins to learn the art of cooking.

Along with the social education the child also learns to cultivate necessary physical and technical skills. The child is never taught consciously by a special procedure. It acquires skills by 'doing' and imitation. It learns good many things by playing games individually or in groups.

During childhood a Dangi child acquires physical skills necessary as a basis for satisfactory physical adjustment to life. Through play, games and practices a boy learns to judge distance, throw straight, aim at an object, catch what is thrown at him, climb trees, and keep balance on the most

precarious and narrow footholds. The child also cultivates skills to make small balls or wheels out of bamboo strips, tie goats in the shed, go to the neighbouring house and bring a lighted piece of wood, and exercise tact in begging slight favours from relatives. The child joins the grown ups in dance and learn in imitation of the adults the different types of movements of feet and hands.

The child also learns and becomes proficient in many technical activities. The father for the sake of teaching him asks his help in rope making, tying bullocks, taking them to the water post, driving the cart, cutting and hoeing the grass, use of an axe in making pieces of firewood, use of a galol etc. As he enters maturity he begins to handle the bow and arrows. A grown up Dangi is a perfect marksman. He also learns to recognise the trees and roots which are helpful to them.

XI. MORAL TRAINING

Every grown up boy and girl should work and be helpful to the family. The grown up boy and

girl who do not respond to the parent's desires are in the first instance rebuked and scolded. In case they do not obey at all, they are beaten to be set right. Corporal punishment is in form of slaps on the face or buttocks, twisting of ears and tweaking of the skin. Moral axioms stressing social conduct are repeated to them. "If you do not work how would you get your food?". "Idlers do not get bread". "An idle man is not respected". "An idle girl cannot become a good housewife". "It is a sin to tell a lie". They are aware that too much beating is cruel. They say, "children are children after all. They commit mistakes, even we elders too".

XII. ^{TO}TRANSITION FROM CHILDHOOD

An important difference a Dangi child feels is the change in the attitudes of the mother towards him. An infant is very well attended, affectionately treated, and his needs are carefully satisfied. But as a child it is not so promptly attended. This discontinuity in attitude is not intentional. A Dangi mother said, "Now the child

is old enough to look after himself. I have not to worry about him". The child moves about in the neighbourhood. An elderly child wanders here and there in the company of his mates and does a little hunting. In the days of scarcity when there is no corn in the house, the children also sometime have to go without ~~g~~ food.

This discontinuity of attitudes has tremendous influence on the personality development. It creates mistrust in the mind of the child and 'mistrust' is generalised in all his dealings with the physical ^{objects} as well as living persons.

XIII. ROLE TRAINING AND ROLE DIFFERENTIATION

The Dangis do not make any distinction between a male and female child in treatment. As an infant both - a boy and a girl - are treated equally, but as they are to perform different roles as an adult, the things and tasks which a boy and a girl learn and the way in which they are prepared differ in certain respects.

In infancy and early childhood there is not much difference regarding the tasks to be performed by a boy or a girl child. The main occupation in this period is play. The play-group consists of siblings and small cousins who live in the same household. It associates very little with the contemporaries. Outside the household each child clings closely to its older guardian.

The first distinction which is maintained between a boy and a girl child is in respect of dress. A child of five can be identified as a boy or a girl from its dress and hair.

At the age of eight or nine years the children begin to form larger groups, a kind of voluntary association but only temporary. The members of the groups are recruited both from relationship and neighbourhood groups. These groups are divided on sex lines, yet there are a few occasions on which boys and girls meet and play together. But after the age of twelve or thirteen the girl becomes mature, there is a strong tendency of forming different groups. Some kind of antagonism

also begins to develop in this group life. The combined plays of boys and girls are also discouraged by elders. Expressed dislike is shown by saying to the girl, "See, you are no longer a small child. You should not play with boys". This bifurcation becomes stronger because of the freedom enjoyed by the groups. The boys are less burdened by household activities, and hence can move freely in gangs. They form a group of four or five and go out in the forests for wandering. They 'climb the trees, kill the small hunts like birds with a galol or go out on field work. They also form a bigger group and engage in dance and 'tamasha'. The girls have to carry their heavy little charges with them. Baby tending, helping in cooking and doing household work are their main occupations. The girls of neighbourhood form a group when they find time, chitchat and sing. A boy is never allowed to join. This makes the difference between the sexes wider and deeper.

The knowledge of difference in sexes and sex functions is cultivated in early age by a Dangi child. The nakedness among children is so common

that the physiological differences become evident to the child. The sex differences which they feel from the age of five are sustained and strengthened by the differences in the dress, tasks which they perform, games which they play, ideals put before them and freedom which they enjoy. When they enter puberty they know their place in the house and the role they have to play in life.

XIV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The child is in many respects the father of the man'. This expression is not to be taken literally. It just emphasises the importance of early child training and childhood experiences in the development of later adult characteristics. Owing to the extreme simplicity of their huts and the scarcity of food and clothes a Dangi child has to be hardy, if it is to survive and this toughening process begins early. ^{The infant} ~~and~~ is attended to carefully. But because a Dangi mother has to observe less rigid seclusion after a birth, there is no regularity in the amount of attention an infant receives except

that it is irregular. There is no emphasis on early weaning and forming habits of sphincter control.

The child is helped in learning and taught various motor and physical activities and skills. Habit training is leisurely and unforced. At the end of the childhood period a Dangi child is aware of his role to play and tasks to be performed.

An important aspect from the point of view of personality development is the process of socialisation, educating the child. In this respect swaddling, emphasis on forming the habits of sphincter control, emphasis on weaning, and ^{the} role training are important. These categories of basic training have great effect on the patterns of intra-familial and inter-personal relations of the Dangi. The absence of severe discipline and punishment have influence on the constellations created around depending ^{once}. No image of the parents is rigidly formed in the mind of the child.

Another important thing to be noted having bearing on personality development is the discontinuity of attitude towards the child. The

infant who is carefully attended in infancy, ^{but it} is not so much attended ~~to~~ in the childhood. A grown up child who is able to move ~~only~~ out freely and independently is, if not neglected, is little cared. In some cases it is clear that certain traits introduced early in childhood are directly related to the later adult characteristics. "Different practices in child training are consequences of differences both in culture and in personality", and that "different practices in child training also lead to differences both in culture and personality".¹

1. Newcomb, T. M. : Social Psychology. p.429. 1950.