

### MAJOR CASTES AND TRIBES \*

**Ahir :** The word Ahir is derived from Sanskrit word Abhir. We come across frequent references to Ahir caste in ancient inscriptions and books. The ancient history shows that Abhir or Ahir Kings had been in the first five centuries A. D. A stone inscription at Nasik shows that in A. D. 419 Abhir King Virsen *alias* Ishwarsen ruled over Khandesh. Ahirs are found in Bihar, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Saurashtra and Maharashtra. However in different provinces they are known by different names. According to Risley, the Ahirs might have come to India through Central Asia just before the beginning of the Christian era or immediately after it.

There are two main sub-divisions among Ahirs, namely Kachchhi and Maharashtri. This community of cowherds is known in Maharashtra by such synonyms as Ahir, Gavali, Gondan and is traditionally engaged in milk supplying and cattle breeding. According to 1931 Census, the population of this community was 88,439 in the erstwhile Bombay Presidency and Vidarbha. Their habitations are found in Jalgaon, Dhule, Nasik, Jalna, Nanded and Amravati districts. According to Russel and Hiralal sub-castes among Ahirs arose due to inter-caste marriages. This community is divided in eight sub-divisions or sub-castes which are as follows : Nandavanshi, Yadav, Lingayat, Raghuvanshi, Gadaria, Gavali, Gadiagavali and Suryavanshi. Marriages take place within the sub-castes. Each Sub-caste is further divided into several exogamous clans. People use these clan names as surname and Marriage between persons belonging to the same clan is prohibited. Ahirs are vegetarians although some are non-vegetarians and accept food from such castes as Kunbi and Sonar. Though they are mainly the devotees of Krishna they worship all Hindu deities. They revere the cow. Divorce and widow re-marriage are allowed. The dead are cremated. Besides following the traditional occupation, in recent times, the Ahirs are also found to have engaged in trade and commerce and in various other occupations and employment.

**Agari :** This community known by the name Agari (Agri) or *Mith* Agari is dwelling in Thane and Raigad districts of Maharashtra, as well as in the suburbs of Mumbai. According to the Census Report of 1931 the population of the Agari community in the Bombay Presidency was 2,58,603. There are several legends about the Agaris who are well-known for their orchards. A village where coconut trees and areca-nut orchards are grown is called Aagar or an Agari village. Aagar also means one who grows coconut and areca-nut orchards on contract. This word appears in the inscription of

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\* The population of 1931 Bombay Presidency is that of present Western Maharashtra comprising Greater Bombay, Thane, Raigad, Ratnagiri, Sindhudurg, Pune, Satara, Kolhapur, Sangli, Sholapur, Ahmednagar, Nasik, Dhule, Nandurbar and Jalgaon districts.

1289 A.D. at Nagaon. The word Agar also means a place where salt is made. Agaris are referred to as workers in the salt-pits. They are also known by such names as Kharki, Kharpate, or Agare Kunbi. According to their folk lore Agaris were musicians at the court of Ravana; as a reward for their art Ravana gave them a gift of land on the West-coast. The name Dhol-Agari is suggestive of this ancient tradition. Even today some Agaris follow the occupation of musicians. About 600 years ago the king Bimba of Mungi-Paithan captured a Muslim Sardar of Sagargad in Alibag Tahsil at the instance of the Sultan of Delhi and himself continued to reside at the place. He conquered the neighbouring Hindu Kingdoms of Chaul and Aavas. In the peace time he maintained enough military force with him and for the rest of his subject he built salt-works and settled them in villages.

The Agaris are somewhat short and in strong stature and have dark complexion, oblong or round head, and narrow or somewhat broad nose. Enthoven has recorded the existence of two endogamous sub-groups within the caste, namely Shuddha Agari and Das Agari. Shuddha Agaris are further divided into three divisions, namely, Mith Agari, Das Agari and Dhol Agari. Das Agaris are found in Palghar and Alibag Talukas. They are also known as Karad Agari and they do not inter-marry or interdine with the Mith Agari. Agris are divided into several exogamous clans and use their clan names as surnames. Some of the surnames are : Mhatre, Thakur, More, Mokal, Patil, Karve, Dhumal, Dandekar, Pingle, Thale, Raut, Naik etc. The position of village Patil is held by Agaris in several villages. Marriage with mother's brother's (Uncle's) daughter is allowed. Divorce and widow remarriage are permitted. However a widow is not permitted to remarry in the family of her deceased husband. The age at marriage for the girls is between 14 to 18, and for the boys between 18 to 25. Marriages usually take place in Hindu Calender Months Margasheersha (Nov-Dec.) and Vaishakh (April-May) as the crops are newly harvested at that time and their cornbins are full with grains. Marriage ceremony begins with *Sakharpuda* or Engagement ceremony and includes as many as forty rites which are performed under the supervision of a female priestess known as *Dhavalarini*. Each ritual is accompanied by ritual song known as *Dhavale*. A Brahmin priest is invited for conducting only two rites namely, establishment of *Mandap Devata* (Goddess of Pandal) and garlanding each other by the bride and the groom. The newly married bride is sent to her in-law's in a procession called 'Vavsa'. When the Agari woman returns to her in-law's house after her first delivery she is welcomed with great pomp. This ceremony is called *Panvet*. These are the two joyous occasions in the life of an Agari married woman.

Agaris mainly worship Khandoba, Bahiri, Bhavani, Mhasoba and Maruti and celebrate festivals in their name. In the month of Shravana religious books like *Pandavpratap* and *Ramvijay* are read with devotion. Ganesh festival and Holi are their major festivals.

They are superstitious and believe in ghosts and spirits. As a result, they are inclined towards magical cures. Their death rites are similar to those of other Hindus.

A distinguishing feature of the Agari village is that it has an exclusive population of the Agaris. A village has about 50 to 60 houses. A large village is divided into *Padas*, and each *Pada* is inhabited by 25 to 40 families having the same surname. Their houses are rectangular in shape and have mud walls and roofs thatched with straw. The Agaris are hospitable and hard-working people. Women, besides doing the household work, work on farms during farming season. The Agari male wears Dhoti and Shirt, while the female wears tucked saree upto the knee. Their style of wearing a Saree is also very distinctive. The old-fashioned women wear on their heads a kind of coarse blanket called 'Khonda'. Although Agaris are meat-eaters their diet includes dal, rice, or Nagli bread called *Bhakri* and fish curry. Now-a-days the Agaris speak Marathi, both at home and outside. At the time of festivals like *Ganesh Chaturthi*, *Gauri*, *Divali* and *Holi* sweets such *Modak* and *Puranpoli* are prepared. Ganesh-dance and Holi-dance constitute a valuable cultural heritage of the Agaris.

The Agaris have caste Panchayat. The head of the caste Panchayat is called 'Mukadam'. The caste Panchayat gives warning to or imposes fine on those who violate its rules. At present there are very few Agaris who are following the traditional occupation of producing salt. The majority are farmers or agricultural labourers. They are experts in harvesting rice crop even in saline land. Spread of education has enabled numerous Agaris to enter white-collared class.<sup>4</sup>

**Andh :** This community of agricultural labourers or marginal farmers surviving on the traditional occupation of agriculture and hunting is inhabiting in the hilly regions of Yavatmal, Akola, Buldana, Nanded and Parbhani districts. Russel is of the opinion that Andh come from Dravid group of people from Andhra or Tamilnadu. The name Andh might have been derived from Andhra and the people might have acquired this name after their migration. According to 1931 Census the population of Andh was 58,519 in Vidarbha, and the population of 1981 and 1991 Census were 2,31,871 and 2,95,380 in Maharashtra respectively. Short stature, dark complexion, thick lips, mesocephalic shape of head, broader nasal and facial profiles, are the physical characteristics of this tribe and in this respect they resemble Gonds to a considerable extent.

The tribe is divided into two endogamous sections, namely, 'Vartati' or the legitimate and 'Khaltati' that is illegitimate. Their surnames resemble those in Marathi and are mainly connected with village, animals, birds and trees. Some of the examples are, Majiria, Dukre, Titwe, Wagmare, Umre etc.

The persons having the same surname are said to be exogamous group and marriage among them is prohibited. Marriage with mother's brother's daughter and father's sister's daughter is preferred. Divorce and widow remarriage are allowed, but a widow is not allowed to marry her deceased husband's brother. The Andh are Hindus and worship Mahadeo, Khandoba, Ram, Krishna and Maruti and celebrate *Aashadh*, *Gudhipadva*, *Nagpanchami*, *Pola*, *Mahashivaratri*, *Dassera* and *Holi* festivals.

The people of this tribe are meat eaters, and eat pork and the meat of birds. However those who are modernized have given up this practice and take either vegetarian food or eat only *mutton* and fish. The tribe has its Panchayat and the head of the Panchayat is called 'Mohataria' while the office-bearers are called 'Phoptia' or 'Dukria'.

Agriculture is the main traditional occupation of the tribe, while hunting and collecting forest produce are followed as secondary occupations. The Andh tribe is notified as scheduled tribe in Maharashtra. A literacy drive has been launched in this community and in 1981 percentage of literates in the community was 18.85 per cent. Persons of this community are now found in the Government services as clerks, teachers etc.

**Banjara :** The view expressed in the 1961 edition of the Gazetteer of Maharashtra that Banjaras and Vanjaris are the two sub-tribes of a larger tribal community needs to be revised in the light of the available evidence. It is more realistic to treat Banjara and Vanjari as two different ethnic groups unrelated to each other.<sup>5</sup> The description of the Banjara community in the reports of the British Government as exhibiting criminal tendencies is not applicable to the Vanjari community of Maharashtra which is mainly agriculturist community. Hence the two communities are treated as two separate groups. Various views are expressed about the origin of the name of the tribe. According to one view the word Banjara has come from a persian word 'Biranjar' which means one who carries rice. Similarly the word Laman which is used inter changeably to refer to this tribe means a human group adapt at carrying goods to a long distance. The word Laman appears to have been derived from the Sanskrit word Lavan which means salt as the community was the chief carrier of salt. Banjara community is the largest Gypsy community in India, According to some thinkers Rome was the home of the Banjaras.

In the third world Ramano Congress held at Gottingen in West Germany it was argued by some participants that there was similarity in historic cultural traditions of the Gypsy community and the Indian Banjara Community. It is possible that the Laman bands came to Jammu by a route passing through Kabul and Khyber pass. From Jammu they might have reached South India, and Gangetic basin and gone towards Karachi in Pakistan, travelling from Pharsa through Bolan pass along the western bank of the river Sindhu, and by sea route they might have reached the region of the western coast of India. These routes might be available during the period B. C. 600 to 350.<sup>6</sup>

Although the community had adopted the nomadic life, some groups have taken to settled agricultural life. In historic times the Banjaras used to supply food grains to the Moghul army at the time of war. For rendering this valuable service the Moghul kings granted them various facilities and gave them several gifts. In the description of Alexander the Great's Dholpur Campaign, we come across the reference to Banjara Community. The traditional occupation of this community started to decline when the British constructed roads and introduced railway. As a result, some groups took to agriculture, animal husbandry and labour. The Descendants of Rathod clan are numerically predominant in the community. Each clan is divided into a number of *Gotras*. For example Chavan clan has six *Gotras*, Pawar clan has twelve and the Turi clan has four. Vadtias have twelve *Gotras*, and hence they are called Barpada Vadtias. Banjara community is found throughout India. It is known by twenty-seven different names and there are seventeen sub-castes in it. They are as follows—Banjara, Banjada, Banajara, Banajare, Banjari, Singade (Banjari), Baldiya, Laman, Lambada, Lambadi (Sugali), Lambade, Laban, Labhan, Lathani, Lobhana (Labana), Labane, Ladheniya, Kandhi, Kanghsing, Kanghsingwale, Kanghera or Kanada, Nat or Osariya, Sirkibandh or Sirkiwale, Gor, Gamliga, Gawalia, Gawara. The lists prepared by the Central and the State Governments of backward castes and tribes from time to time contain all these names. The tribe is divided into seventeen sub-tribes the names of which are as follows : Gor Banjara, Charan or Charan Banjara, Mathura Banjare, Sonar Banjara, Navi Banjara, Dhaliya Banjara, Singadiya Banjara, Maru Banjara, Bamnniya Banjara, Bagora Banjara, Gigora Banjara, Rohidas or Ravidas Banjara, Dhankutta Banjara, Bhest Banjara, Jogi or Bhatava Banjara, Brijwasi Banjara, Dhadi Banjara. The Government of Maharashtra has included the names of the following Banjara sub-tribes in the list of Denotified Tribes: Gor Banjara, Lambada or Lambara, Lambhani, Charan Banjara, Labhan, Mathura Labhan, Kachikiwale Banjara, Laman Banjara, Laman or Lamani, Laban, Dhali or Dhalia, Dhadi or Dhari, Singari, Jogi Banjara and Navi Banjara, Banjari.

Lord Balaji is the chief deity of this community. They hoist the flag of Balaji on their huts and worship it. The flag is removed during mourning period, and at the time of performance of rites connected with vows and those concerning the deities. A new flag is hoisted on the full-moon day in the month of *Jyestha*, and on *Diwali*. They also worship Pohra-Devi, Tulja Bhavani, Ambabai and other Hindu deities. They show great reverence to Hinglaja Mata whose temple is situated in Sind on the border of Baluchistan.

The Banjaras have preserved the 'Tanda' Culture which is their distinctive feature. The chief of the Tanda is called *Naik*. The Banjaras have their own dialect. In spite of the influence of the regional languages on their dialect, it has preserved its basic linguistic identity. Their folk-lore, available in Maharashtrian Banjara dialect has been preserved in the oral form. Many words and terms of Banjara dialect are synonymous in Marathi, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Telugu, Tamil, Oriya, Malayalam, Rajasthani, Punjabi etc. It shows that the dialect has preserved its identity in any part of the nation. Banjara women are well-built, and have attractive features and fair complexion. Their apparel is specific. Females wear *Phetia* or *Ghagra* (a kind of Frock) and *Choli* (bodice) called *Kachali* which covers only the front part of the body and leaves the back uncovered. Embroidery work is done on *Choli* and cowries are embedded on it. *Odhani*, a special cloth for covering the upper part of the body, is called as "Chhay or tukri". When a girl attains six or seven years of age a small packet containing some rice, cowries, and betelnut is tied at both the ends of the *Odhani*, with one end falling on the front and the other on the back. This indicates the unmarried status of the girl. After marriage the two packets are tied at the waist. The females these days are very fond of ornaments. When unmarried, they wear ivory bangles on both the forearms upto the elbows, upto the upper arms after the marriage. They also wear a special ornament called *Ghugari* as a symbol of husband. The married women tie their hair on the head and tuck a wooden comb in it. The unmarried females wear a garland of cowrie called *Sadak* from the waist hanging along the *Ghagra*. A peculiar practice in the marriage ceremony of this community is that before marriage a bride is made to rehearse weeping which is called in the Banjara dialect 'Thanko modar' or 'Dialo'. The dead person is cremated, if married, and buried if unmarried. Banjaras celebrate *Holi*, *Diwali* and 'Teej' which is a festival of virgins with great Pomp.

**Bari:** This community popularly known as 'Panwale' is to be found in Western Maharashtra especially at Vasai, Kelve-Mahim and Dahanu in Thane district, Yaval, Shirsholi and Faizpur in Jalgaon district and Ramtek near Nagpur. Tambolis, betel leaf sellers

are also known as Bari. Baris are tall with dark complexion, hard-working and neat. As per the Census of 1911 the population of this caste was 6,727.

The Baris appear to be of North Indian origin. A large population of Baris is to be found in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. The Baris in Maharashtra appear to have come from the North India *via* Gujarat and Berar. However, they are now naturalized in Maharashtra and have accepted Marathi as their mother tongue. There are five subdivisions among the Baris, namely, Golait, Suryabanshi, Lumhar, Dag, Lingayat and Gondhali. Enthoven reported about the existence of three endogamous sub-groups among the Baris, namely Deshi, Nemadi and Vasvade. These endogamous groups are further divided into a number of exogamous *Kuls* or lineages. Persons belonging to the same *Kul* do not marry each other. Similarly marriage with father's sister's son, mother's brother's son and mother's sister's son is prohibited. However sisters from one household can marry brothers from an other household. Widow re-marriage is allowed. If an unmarried male decides to marry a widow he has to go through a ritual marriage with *Rui* tree first. Similarly, a virgin is required to worship a silver plaque symbolizing the deceased wife, if she decides to marry a widower. Although divorce is permitted by custom it is rarely taken place. Re-marriage of a divorcee can take place according to *Gandharva* form of marriage and not according to sacred marriage rites. *Deshastha* Brahmins are their priests. Goddess Bhavani of Tuljapur and Khandoba are worshipped as family deities. On the occasion of *Nagpanchami* festival, Baris in Vidarbha worship *Nagdevta* (Cobra deity) and *Nagvel* (betel leaf creeper). During pre-independence days caste panchayat exercised control over the affairs of the community. In recent times caste associations have come into existence. Bari Samaj (community) in Chandrapur district is a case in point. After the death married persons are cremated while unmarried are buried.

**Bhavsar :** This community engaged in the traditional occupation of dyeing the yarn and cloth and calico-printing migrated to Maharashtra from Gujarat in the thirteenth century. They are mainly found in Pune and Jalgaon districts, and also erstwhile dominion of the Nizam. Maratha Bhavsar and Gujarathi Bhavsar are the two regional divisions in the caste. Rangari and Shimpi are the two occupational sub-divisions. In Gujarat Bhavsars are known as Chhipa or Chhapgar and they consider themselves to be Kshatriya. Majority of them are banyas or traders. It appears that the Bhavsar community in Maharashtra is an off-shoot of Gujarathi Bhavsars. Although their manners and customs are similar to those of other

castes in Maharashtra, they worship Balaji in Kathewar and the Goddess Hinglaja Mata in Sindh, like their counter-parts in Gujarat. Such surnames as Banchhod, Lale, Lokhande, Modgare, Parpati etc. are found among them. Short in stature but well-built and hard-working, the Bhavsars are frugal and mild in nature. In respect of dress they resemble Maratha-Kunbi. They speak Marathi. In former days they had a tradition of marrying infant girls. Brahmin priests are highly respected in the community. They are vegetarians and permit divorce and widow re-marriage. The dead are cremated.<sup>7</sup>

**Bhandari:** This community is found on the West coast of Maharashtra in Raigad, Ratnagiri, Sindhudurg, Thane districts and Mumbai City. They are also found in Goa. According to one view the word Bhandari is derived from the Sanskrit word 'Mandharak' which means a distiller of liquor. However, the people of this caste believe that the word Bhandari has come from *Bhandar* which means treasure. In historic times they were appointed as keeper of the store-house. They are also known by the name Bhavgun. There is a legend about the origin of this caste according to which the progenitor of the community called Bhavgun was born out of the perspiration drops trickling from the forehead of Lord Mahadev who had yoked the demon Tilkasur to the oil-press. Lord Mahadev was thirsty and asked Bhavgun to fetch water. But water was not available anywhere. So Lord Mahadev created a palm tree. Bhavgun climbed the tree, plucked a coconut and gave its milk to the Lord. Lord Mahadev was pleased with Bhavgun and appointed him a keeper of the store house of Alkavati. Such legends however cannot be factually substantiated. From ancient times, the Bhandaris were associated with navigation. *Mahanayak* the title of the chief of navigation of the Buddhistic period which was in vogue in the community became corrupt as *Maynak*. In historic times the members of this community were engaged in piracy on the high sea. Among the navy officers of Shivaji Maharaj there were such courageous men of the Bhandari community as Maynak Bhadari, Udaji Padval, and Savlya Tandel.<sup>8</sup> Subsequently as the naval department was closed these people took to toddy tapping. From a letter written between 1672 to 1681, it appears that Bhandaris were in the service of Portuguese Government as Bhongali, that is the traditional horn-blowers. Previously people of this community were settled at Mahim, and used to look after the administration of some villages in Sashti and Konkan. They were also in the army of the East India company. In 1877 there was an increase in the tax on Palm trees, and as a result a large number of persons of this community took to agriculture, trade and gardening.

The Bhandaris are divided into eight sub-groups, namely Kittle, Bherle, Gavad, Devali *alias* Bande, Kalan, Thale, Sheshvanshi *alias* Shinde, and Kirpal (Kriyapal). Bherle Bhandari extract toddy from a particular variety of palm trees known as Bherle Palm, while Kittle Bhandaris extract it from a coconut trees, Kirpals are found in Thane district. Earlier they had embraced Christianity but subsequently they returned to Hindu fold. As a result they are now called Kriyapal. Shinde and Gavade Bhandari are found in Thane district. There are two territorial sub-divisions among the Bhandaris, namely, Kittle Bhandari found in Raigad and Thane districts, and Hetkari Bhandari found in Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg districts. These two groups observe endogamy. These endogamous groups are further divided into exogamous clans or Kuls. Bhandaris have *Gotras* some of which are Vasistha, Atri, Kadamb, Kalka and Dhruva. Families belonging to one Kul or *Gotra* do not contract marriages. They also have Devakas. Some of which are banian, pipal, mango, fig etc. Widow re-marriage and divorce are permitted. Bhandaris in Raigad and Thane districts speak Marathi, while those in Sindhudurg and Goa speak a mixture of Marathi and Konkani. They are healthy, good-looking and adventurous.

Bhandaris are mostly Shaivaites and have Mahadeo, Ravalnath, Nagnath, Shivanath, Kalika, Chandika as their family deities. A Brahmin priest is invited for performing all religious rituals. On *Narali Pournima* day some Bhandaris wear *Powate*. Shaiva Bhandaris avoid eating snake-gourd.

**Bhil:** The Bhil are the most numerous Tribes in Maharashtra among the Scheduled Tribes. According to 1981 Census the population of the Bhils in Maharashtra was 9,93,074 and in 1991 the population was increased upto 13,44,554. Their original home-land is the hilly country between Abu and Asirgarh. From this they spread Westward and Southward into the plains of Gujarat and Northern Maharashtra. They are also found in considerable number in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. In Maharashtra they are mainly found in Jalgaon, Dhule, Buldana, Nasik, Aurangabad and Ahmednagar districts. According to the opinion of the anthropologists, the Bhils are the progeny of proto Ostraloids of the Middle East in the ancient time.

We come across several references to this community in ancient literature and folk-tales. In *Ramayana* there is an episode of Shabari, the Bhil woman. *Mahabharat* contains an episode of a fight between Lord Shankar in the garb of a Bhil and Arjuna. There are several such stories about them. Gunadhya, the sixth century writer describes a great Bhil Chief mounted on an elephant and fighting with another

king. In Sanskrit literature Bhils are described as living at Vindhya mountain. In *Parashar Samhita* they are described as the progeny of pratiloma type of marriage. In Dravidian language (Kannada) the word 'Bhillu' means a bow, the main weapon of the bhils, hence the word 'Bhil'. In some Tamil poems the tribal communities from North India are mentioned as 'Billuwar', that is the archer.

In historic times Gujarat and Rajasthan were the chief abodes of the Bhils. Their relations with Rajputs were cordial. After gaining victory the Rajput kings used to apply blood from the Bhils thumb to their eye-brows, and also used to marry with the daughter of the Bhil headman. Children born out of such marriages formed a separate tribe of Bhilal. Bhils were evicted from this homeland by Rajputs between 1000 to 1400 A.D. as a result of which they migrated to Maharashtra.

From the beginning, the Bhils had a martial tradition. In seventeenth and eighteenth centuries A.D. the Bhils faced a good deal of persecution from the Muslim, Maratha and English rulers. Some Muslim rulers had adopted a conciliatory attitude towards them and treated them with compassion. Aurangzeb utilized the martial spirit of Bhils and generously gave them land grants as a result of which they lived an honest and peaceful life in the Moghul period. However, in the Peshwa rule, they rose in revolt as a result of extreme torture. The Marathas mercilessly killed them as a result of which they took shelter in the hills and started looting people on the plains. In the nineteenth century persons who had brought the British to their knees namely Kejarsingh, Lubia Naik and Tantya Bhil had created a havoc in Madhya Pradesh. Then the British developed cordial relations with them and granted amnesty to those who had surrendered. They also gave them land for cultivation, seeds and Tagai loans. As per the orders of Mount Stuart Elphinston, the Governor of Bombay Presidency, Lt. James Outram raised three platoons of the Bhils in Khandesh in 1825. This enabled Bhils to exhibit their valour, and many of them began to lead a settled life and undertook cultivation.

There are several sub-tribes among the Bhils. The Tribal Research and Training Institute of the Government of Maharashtra has identified following sub-tribes of the Bhils. These are Bhil Garasia, Dholi Bhil, Dungri Garasia, Dungri Bhil, Mewasi Bhil, Raval Bhil, Bhagaliala, Tadvil Bhil, Bhilalala, Pawara, Vasava, and Dhanka. As per the report on the 'Criminal Classes in the Bombay Presidency' Pawara and Dangchi sub-tribes form a part of the Bhils of the hill region. Mavchi Bhils are mainly found in Nawapur Tahsil of Dhule District. They claim that their ancestors were in the army of Rana

Pratap. Tadvī Bhils are seen in Jalgaon, Dhule and Aurangabad districts. Although they are followers of Islam<sup>9</sup> they worship Hindu deities Maruti and Mari Aai and celebrate Dassera, *Diwali* and Sankranti. Vasave Bhils are found in Ahmednagar, Dhule, Nashik and Jalgaon districts. Although a few of them are Christians, majority of them are Hindus. On the basis of clothes they wear, there are two sub-divisions among Bhils, namely 'Potiawal' or those who wear Dhoti, and Langotia or those who wear loin cloth. Langotia Bhils are found in the hilly regions of Khandesh. The three groups of Khandeshi Bhils are those who stay in the hills, who stay in the plains, and those who stay in the mixed region. Bhils, staying on the plains are known by the name 'Bhil' only. They are more refined as compared with those who live in the mixed region. Among the Bhils who stay in the hilly region, include Barda, Dhanka, Dhorepi, Gavit, Khotil, Mathwadi *alias* Panari, Mavchi and Nahal sub-tribes.<sup>10</sup> Bhilala, Tadvī and Nirdhi sub-tribes are included in the category of mixed Bhils.

Bhils do not have *Gotra*. At the time of marriage *Kula* and *Devak* are considered to be important. The custom of *Kula* exogamy is observed by them. Divorce and widow remarriage are permitted by custom. Polygyny is also prevalent among them. For fifteen days before the marriage, turmeric paste is applied to the bride and the groom in their respective homes, both in the morning and evening. Participants in the marriage procession, proceed to the house of the bride visit god Maruti on the way and sip water from the vessel kept there. When the marriage party reaches the village, onions and fruits are showered on the groom. The groom is welcomed in the Pandal by seven married women who carry vessels filled with water, by performing *Aarati*. The groom drops a coin in each vessel and sits before the bride facing the east. The Brahmin priest ties thread around them and holds a curtain (*Antarpat*) between them. Marriage is solemnized when the groom holds the folded hands of the bride in his own hands from below the curtain. Afterward, the groom's ceremonial thread tied round the wrist is removed at the groom's house.

Lord Mahadev is the chief deity worshipped by the Bhils. On the third day of the first fortnight of the month of Chaitra Lord Mahadev and Indraaj are propitiated by offering them sacrifice. They also worship Dungrya Deo (hill god), Shivrya Deo (god of the boundary), Waghdeo, Nagdeo, Mhasoba, Khandoba, Bahiroba, Mari, Asara and other deities. Rajapandya is regarded as the most powerful deity. Goddess Kalika protects them from wild animals and ghosts. The festival of *Holi* is celebrated in honour of this deity. Men and women

sing songs in praise of Kalika and dance to the accompaniment of the drum. Bhils believe in ghosts some of which are believed to be propitious, who provide them protection. They offer them clay figurings of a horse, earthen pots, and honey-comb shaped vessels. Among the animals worshipped by them the horse occupies the place of honour. If the vow is fulfilled a clay horse figuring is offered to the deity. Hanamant Naikwadi,<sup>11</sup> near Sangamner named after a martyr who died while fighting with the enemy, is their sacred place. A stone memorial is erected at this place in his memory. *Holi*, *Dassera*, and *Diwali* are the major festivals of this tribe.

When a Bhil is in the death bed his relatives give alms to the poor. A dead person is buried. On the eleventh day of mourning a successor of the deceased keeps a cow made of flour on a leaf and it is left on the water. On the twelfth or fortyfifth day a potter is invited to prepare a ladder of seven steps which is kept at the walls. It is believed that the soul of the deceased reaches heaven with the aid of this ladder.

Bhils are of medium height and have broad face, flat nose and mesocephalic head shape. Tadvi Bhils have more elongated face and have a better shape of nose. They are sturdy and agile. Bhil men and women are fond of ornaments. Men wear ear-ornament called *Bali*, and a silver ring on the wrist. Females wear a necklace called *Hasli* made of silver or chromium. They also get their hands and face tattooed. On festival days meat is eaten as a delicacy. Besides speaking Bhili dialect the Bhils in Maharashtra speak Marathi. The Bhili dialect shows a considerable influence of Marathi, Gujarati, Rajasthani, and Nimadi languages. Majority of the Bhils are engaged in agriculture and work as agricultural labourers and also forest labourers.

Every Bhil village has a Panchayat and the head is called *Vasavo*. This position is hereditary in nature. *Vasavi*, the wife of the head or Vasavo, is respected in the community. The honour of dressing the bride in new clothes and escorting her to the marriage Pandal is hers. The village priest is also a magician and a quack.

The Bhils are duly affected by the changing modern condition. Some houses have tiled roofs instead of thatched roofs. The introduction of schools in various places has raised the percentage of literacy which was 12.35% in 1981. Bhil Seva Mandal and Bharat Sevak Samaj have made considerable efforts to improve their socio-economic condition. The Bhils have been included in the list of Scheduled Tribes as a result of which there is an improvement in their condition.<sup>12</sup>

**Brahmin :** In Vedic period the term Brahmin was used to refer to a class of people who composed hymns in praise of the divine beings and sacred objects and chanted them on sacred occasions. Mainly devoted to the study and teaching of *Vedas* and performance of sacrifices Brahmins occasionally resorted to cultivation and trade, and also took to the duties of Kshatriya namely fighting and protecting the people. In the early days, *Varnas* were based on the pursuit of occupation and there were no restrictions on the inter-*Varna* marriages. According one view in 1000 A. D. birth became the main determinant of one's *Varna* and *Jati* and restrictions were imposed on the inter-*Varna* marriage and pursuit of occupation. Four branches of *Vedas* and corresponding four divisions among the Brahmins, namely Rigvedi, Yajurvedi, Samavedi and Atharvavedi, are based on the study of these branches that came into existence. Further, within the four *Vedas* several branches and sub-branches were developed giving rise to further sub-divisions among the Brahmins. Since the eleventh century A.D. two groups of Brahmins have been recognised, namely, Pancha Gaudas inhabiting to the north of the Vindhya mountain and Pancha Dravidas inhabiting to the south of the mountain.

According to the Census of 1931 the population of the Brahmins in Maharashtra was 7,81,448 which constituted 2.39 per cent of the total population. Maharashtra Brahmins have several sub-castes. The Census Report of the Bombay Province of 1911 lists fourteen sub-castes of the Maharashtra Brahmins which are as follows : Chitpavan, Deshastha, Devrukhe, Golak or Gowardhan, Jawal or khot, Kanva, Karhade, Kuwant or Kramavant, Maitrayani, Palshikar, Samavedi, Savvashe, Tirgul or Trigarta etc. Mrs. Irawati Karve has recorded a sub-caste namely Charak Brahmins around Nagpur, belonging to the Krishna Yajurved branch. However, these several sub-castes are broadly grouped into three main divisions namely Deshastha, Konkanastha and Karhade Brahmins. The Saraswat Brahmins of the Pancha-Gouda group is said to be the fourth branch. Unlike other Maharashtra Brahmins Saraswats traditionally eat fish and meat. Devarukhe and Kramvant Brahmins inhabit in Konkan but originally they were Deshasthas. They are the priests for the lower castes. The Kramvant Brahmins migrated to Kokan from Paithan in historic times.

In the religious life of the Brahmins *Sanskaras* or sacred rites occupy an important place. The *Dharmashastras* prescribe the following *Sanskaras* for the Brahmins : (1) *Garbhadhana* (ceremony to cause conception), (2) *Pumsavan* (ceremony to cause the birth of a male child), (3) *Simantonnayana* (Performed in the seventh month

of the pregnancy), (4) *Jatakarma* (performed at the time of birth), (5) *Namakarana* (Christianing), (6) *Annaprashana* (first feeding), (7) *Karnavedha* (boring the ear), (8) *Chaula Karma* (tonsure of the head), (9) *Upanayana* (thread ceremony), (10) *Samavartana* (completion of studentship), (11) *Vivaha* (marriage) and (12) *Antyesti* (the last rites). Besides these *Vedic Sanskaras*, some folk Sanskaras like *Pachvi* and *Satvai* are also performed by them. As a result of modernization today the importance of these Sanskaras is dwindling. However *Vivaha* and *Antyesti Sanskaras* continue to occupy important place and they are performed with due solemnity.

From ancient times Brahmins in Maharashtra were known for their wisdom, prudence and assiduity, simple and austere style of life. Some Brahmin families rose to eminence in State-craft and in the army of the native rulers, but by and large they were priests and account clerks. During the British rule the Brahmins switched over to English learning and entered various professional fields. They provided leadership to social reform movements in Maharashtra, and led the freedom movement especially in its earlier phase.

In spite of the common traits in respect of daily and casual *sanskaras*, the Brahmins show peculiarities with regard to their geographical origins, physical features, marriage and kinship practices, ritual practices, etc. A study of the socio-cultural diversity among major sub-castes of Maharashtra Brahmins is important in the making of Maharashtrian society and culture. With this view in mind an attempt is made below to present distinctive socio-culture features of the major sub-castes in Maharashtra.

**Kokanastha Brahmin :** In Maharashtra the name Konkanastha Brahmin is equated with the Chitpavan Brahmins. According to **Sahyadri Khand Puran** Chitpavans were created by Parashuram from fourteen corpses of shipwrecked foreigners, who were from Iran. They were purified by him and settled in Konkan region. According to another theory Aryans came down to Konkan from North India *via* Gujarat and settled there. According to yet another view the original place of residence of the Chitpavans was Ambajogai in Beed district of the Marathwada region. The foreign origin theory of the Konkanastha Brahmins has been discounted by B.S. Guha, an eminent anthropologist who was associated with the Census inquiry of 1931. According to him, before coming to Konkan, they were somewhere in North India. Their settlement at Chiplun probably gave them the name Chitpavan. A region from Malvan to Bombay is their original homeland. The Chitpavan-Brahmins began to call themselves Konkanastha since 1715 A.D. During the days of Chatrapati Shivaji, they started migrating to the Deccan Plateau

and in the days of the Peshwa rule, they began to settle there in large number. Compared with Deccan they are found in less number in Marathwada and East Vidarbha.

In the days of the Peshwas, the Chitpavans attained prominence. The Peshwas, who were the descendents of Balaji Vishwanath Bhat from Shrivardhan in Raigad district, who entered the services of the Marathas in 1689 and became the first Peshwa of Chhatrapati Shahu in 1713, on the basis of his ability, extended the Maratha rule to different parts of India. The Chitpavans alongwith the Peshwas became well-known as Konkanastha Brahmins and attained eminence as sanskrit scholars, writers, lawyers, jurists, sardars and killedars traders, money-lenders, patriots and revolutionaries. In pre-Independence days many of them, were big land-lords or Khots.

There are two sub-groups among the Chitpavans, namely Rigvedi and Hiranyakeshi or Krishna Yajurvedi. Families with surnames like Paranjpe, Phadke, Kunte, Tilak, Barve, Kelkar etc. belong to the Rigvedi branch (Ashwalayana Sutra and Shakal branches), while those with surnames like Limaye, Bodas, Nene, Oke, Devdhar, Sathe, Khare etc. belong to Yajurvedi branch (Hiranyakeshi Taittiriya Shakha). Both the sub-groups intermarry with each other and the only difference between the two, pertains to minor variations in the performance of the *Sanskaras*. For example, the Rigvedis preach *Sanskaras* after the thread ceremony, but the Hiranyakeshis preach *Sanskaras* before the said ceremony. Both chant different Mantras as the *Batus* (boys) are blessed. The Chitpavans have fourteen *Gotras* and sixty original surnames which have now become numerous.

The Chitpavans are of medium height and are known for having light greenish brown eyes. They are fair coloured and are usually in well-to-do condition. In the old days the Chitpavana men used to put on a special styled turban, coat, dhoti, shoes and loose shoulder covering, while the women put on nine-yard saree and choli (blouse). Now, there appears a lot of change and the old fashioned apparel is rarely seen. In almost all ceremonial occasions, the men put on a pink or red or yellow silk cloth, called Mugta (Kad or Pitambar). At the Makara Sankrant, the newly married girls are presented with a black coloured saree, but with white spots (Chandrakala) by the girls parents.

The Chitpavana and other Brahmins are meticulous in serving the various items at the time of dining. As a routine they never serve simple rice and salt first. They serve lime and chatani to the left side of the plate or leaf and cooked vegetables to the right. Rice, dal and ghee are served in the middle. Ghee is not served before the

dal is served. A sweet dish made of wheat is considered to be very essential at the functions of first pregnancy, christianing (Barasa), ceremony before the marriage, thread ceremony and marriages. The plate of food to be offered to the deity does not contain salt. Before eating, a sort of offering (Chitrahuti) is made. If there are guests, others should not start eating until the host begins along with an offering of water. There is a tradition of cooking specific items of food at the time of marriage and death anniversary.

They observe *Gotra*, *Pravar* and *Sapinda* exogamy. Marriage with mother's brother's daughter is not permitted. Most of their family gods such as Vyadeshwar, Harihareshwar, Vyaghreshwar, Koleshwar, Someshwar etc. are in the Konkan region. Goddess Jogeshwari at Ambajogai is the family goddess of many Chitpavans. As Peshwas were the devotees of Lord Ganapati, the Chitpavans adopted the cult of Ganapati. Most of them worship Lord Parshuram. Worship of Mahalakshmi during Navaratri days is of special significance. An idol of Mahalakshmi is prepared of boiled flour and is decorated with ornaments and garments. On the eighth day of Navaratri festival a ritual of blowing a pitcher is observed. This ritual has to be performed by a newly married woman for the first five years of marriage. A ritual called *Bodan* is performed in all its details after an auspicious ceremony such as a marriage as an essential family rite.<sup>13</sup>

**Deshastha Brahmin:** Deshastha Brahmins are in a large number in Maharashtra and they are to be found all over the Deccan. There are two sub-groups among Deshastha Brahmins, namely Rigvedi and Yajurvedi. The Yajurvedis have further two sub-sections-Shukla Yajurvedi and Krishna Yajurvedi. Deshastha Rigvedi Brahmins are the most ancient sub-caste of Maharashtra and they are to be found in all the districts of the Deccan, Marathi speaking part of the former Nizam State and in Berar. Marriage alliance between Deshastha Rigvedi and Telugu and Karnataka Brahmins takes place quite frequently. Marriage with mother's brother's daughter is preferred and that with sister's daughter though rare is also permitted by custom. They have 52 *Gotras* named after Vedic Rishis. Some of the Gotra names are : Agastya, Angiras, Atri, Kapi, Bhrigu, Kashyap, Vasistha, Vishwamitra, etc. They belong to Shakal-Shakha and their ritual life is governed by *Ashwalayan Grihyasutra*. They have two sectarian divisions, namely Smarta and Vaishnav. The Worshipping of Ambabai and Khandoba as family gods is more common among them. Nrisinha is also the family god of some. Priest-hood and Kulkarni Vatan were their traditional occupations. Physically they are dark and of medium height. Deshastha Brahmins who migrated from the parts of Belgaum, Dharwad and Hubli to Maharashtra are fair in colour.

Like Rigvedi Brahmins, Shukla Yajurvedi Brahmins are spread all over the Deccan and their population is almost equal to that of the Rigvedi Brahmins. They are divided into several endogamous sub-castes based on territorial affinity and adhere to the teaching of a particular Vedic Rishi. There are two main branches of this caste in Maharashtra, namely Madhyandina and Kanva. The Kanvas appear to be the older immigrants as they have spread southwards beyond the river Krishna. They also practise cross-cousin marriage. Compared with the Kanvas, the Madhyandin Brahmins arrived late in Maharashtra and they are mainly found in Vidarbha and Marathwada. The Madhyandin Brahmins do not allow cross-cousin marriage, nor do they allow marriage with a person belonging to the *Gotra* of one's mother. These practices suggest their northern origin. It appears that they entered Maharashtra from Uttar Pradesh *via* Jabalpur and Berar, and settled along the banks of the river Godavari. They have 130 *Gotras*. Some Brahmin families have migrated from the Telugu speaking areas of Andhra Pradesh to the Chandrapur district of Maharashtra. This migration must have taken place atleast two hundred to three hundred years ago. They are Deshastha Rigvedi or Yajurvedi Brahmins and are recognized as Apastambha Brahmins. Some of the well-known surnames of these Brahmins are Hedgewar, Somalwar, Annamwar (they changed it to Aney), Pattalwar etc. They were scholars, professionals and farmers and have spread to other districts of Maharashtra. During the last hundred years or more they have matrimonial relationships with the Deshastha Brahmins.

**Karhade Brahmin** : The original home land of the Karhade Brahmins is a region near the west coast between Malwan and Sangameshwar. However there is another view that before settling in Konkan they were living in Karad in Satara district, which was earlier known as Karahatak. They migrated to Konkan from Karad and hence began to be known as Karhade Brahmins from the days of the Shilahar rule. Their major concentration is in south Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg districts. In the days of Peshwa rule several Karhada Brahmin families migrated to Sagar, Gwalior, Jhanshi and other seats of Maratha Power in Madhya Pradesh and also in Uttar Pradesh and settled there. Karhades belong to Rigvedi branch and are divided into twenty-four exogamous *Gotras*. They have such surnames as Moghe, Bhadkamkar, Padhye, Sarwate, Purohit, Gune, Gadre, Bhagwat etc. Mahalaxmi of Kolhapur is their family goddess. In historic times a large number of Karhade Brahmins held important positions in the administration of the native rulers, such as Sardesai, Sardeshpande, Desai, Sarpotdar, Potadar, Sabnis, Karkhanis etc.

**Devarukhe Brahmins :** Although this sub-caste is found in Konkan they were originally Deshasthas. They are the priests for lower castes. According to the renowned historian V. K. Rajwade the village Devrashtre which is situated at a distance of ten kilometers from Kundal a township located near Karad was the capital of Devarashtra Dynasty. Under the patronage of the King Kuber of this dynasty a community of the Brahmins living in the capital city of Devarashtra became known as Devarashtra or Devrukhe. When this kingdom was destroyed in the fifth century A.D., due to the absence of political patronage Devarukhe Brahmins migrated to Konkan and settled around Devarukh in Sangameshwar Taluka and also in the Southern region near Jaigad creek. Afterwards, they might have migrated to Raigad district and are found in large number around Karjat and Dahiwali. However, they consider Ratnagiri district as their original home land. They have such surnames as Aarekar, Karulkar, Kale, Mule, Aasavkar, Teredesai, Pimputkar, Bhole, Bhadsavle, Bhattekar, Kanade, Musale etc. Their *Gotras* are similar to those of Deshasthas. They have two sub-divisions namely, Rigvedi Ashwalayan and Yajurvedi Hirannyakeshi. Among the major deities worshipped by them are Tuljabhavani, Mahalaxmi of Kolhapur and Khandoba of Jejuri.<sup>14</sup> However, because of their stay in Konkan region, like Chitpavan Brahmins they worship Gauri in the form of small stones and prepare 'Modak' of boiled rice-flour for Ganapati.

**Kramavanta Brahmins :** Although Kramavanta Brahmins are mainly found in Konkan region, probably they are Deshasthas belonging to Ashwalayan Shakal-shakha of Rigvedi. Kramavanta Brahmins are the descendants of one of the four male members of Tillu family of Ambajogai in Beed district who had left their home land at the time of the famine of Durgadevi in A.D. 1396-1407, and had settled in Ashtagar in Konkan region for earning the livelihood. Because of his study of Vedas in a distinctive mode known as 'Kramanta' he received an honorific title of Kramavanta which subsequently was adopted as a caste name by his descendants. They enjoyed good deal of respect and honour, when they were the family priests of the Angre. On the occasion of the coronation ceremony of Shivaji Maharaj in 1674 Pandit Gagabhatta who was specially invited from Banaras for performing this ceremony had brought with him two Kramavanta Brahmin disciples namely Balkrishnabhatta and Raghunathbhatta. From Ashtagar three Kramavanta Brahmins, namely Raghunath, Vireshwar, and Janardan attended the coronation ceremony. In the royal court of Shivaji Maharaj a learned Vedic scholar Gopalbhatta Tillu occupied a seat of honour. He had priesthood rights of several villages besides Ashtagar. At that time

Kramavanta Brahmin families used to have marriage relationship with families of other sub-castes living in Ashtagar. Persons of this community migrated to Pune, Nashik, Tryambakeshwar, Vai, Satara, Ahmednagar, Khandesh, Indore, Ujjain, Gwalior, Prayag, Varanasi etc. in search of a livelihood.<sup>15</sup>

**Saraswat Brahmins** : This is one of the caste of 'Panchagauda' Brahmins found in Maharashtra. Their homeland is Goa. From Goa they migrated to various parts of Maharashtra due to religious persecution by Muslim rulers in the fourteenth century and by Portuguese rulers from 16th century. This process of migration continued during the Maratha, Peshwa and the British rules as well. Today, they are spread from Malwan in Konkan to south Kanara, as well as Goa and Mumbai. Experts differ in their views regarding the original homeland of this community, from where they came to Goa. According to one view, their original homeland was supposed to be a region in south Punjab along the banks of Saraswati and Saraswati Rishis their progenitor. According to another view the Gaudas of North India were the ancestors of Saraswats in Maharashtra, and they were settled by Parashuram in Goa which was known in ancient times as Gomanchal. According to Dr. Guha Saraswat Brahmins of Maharashtra show a good deal of resemblance with the Brahmins in Bengal in respect of their surnames and the deities like Shanta Durga whom they worship. According to some, Kashmir was their original home. In the opinion of some scholars Gauda was a name given to a region to the north of Kosal in ancient times, from where Saraswats appear to have come to their present home. Some scholars think that the words Gauda and Dravida mean north and south directions respectively and as such the Saraswats came from the north. In the past the Saraswats were also known as Shenvi. This name has been interpreted in three different ways. According to some they were originally spread over ninety-six villages hence the name Shenvi. According to another legend Parashuram had brought ninety-six families of the Saraswats in Gomanchal, hence they were called Shenvi. Still others maintain that the word Shenvi has been derived from Shanbhag, the village accountant, the occupation followed by many Saraswat Brahmins. The term Shenvi was also interpreted to mean a teacher or a learned man. The Gaud Saraswats traditionally eat fish and meat although adherents of certain sects are vegetarians.

There are more than six sub-castes among the Saraswats which are territorial in origin. They have sixteen *Gotras* which are exogamous in nature. The Saraswats observe the rules of *Gotra* and *Sapinda* exogamy, but marriage with mother's brother's daughter is

allowed. In the past sub-caste endogamy was observed but now a days this rule is not strictly followed. They have two sectarian divisions, namely, Smarta and Vaishnava. The Smartas regard goddess Shanta Durga at Kawle, Saptakoteshwar at Narwe and Mangesh at Priyol, as their family deities while the Vaishnavas regard Mahalasa, Ramnath and Kamakshi at Mhardol, Navadurga and Mahalaxmi at Bandoda and Devakikrishna at Moshel as their family deities. Both Smartas and Vaishnavas regard Nagesh at Nageshi as their common deity. The Saraswats observe all family rituals and traditions with religious devotion. Their daily and occasional rituals and also festivals and ceremonies are similar to those of other Brahmins. Among them the first pillar of a Pandal erected for marriage function is that of a mango tree, while the one for the thread ceremony is that of a fig tree. Their food habits are marked by a larger use of coconut and rice. Karhade Brahmins are their priests.

**Burud :** In Maharashtra the Burud community is engaged in the making of baskets, winnowing fans, bird's cages, cane chairs, sofas, ladders, childrens cradles, mats and various other articles from bamboo. As the origin of the traditional occupation of them is associated with Lord Shankar and his spouse Parvati, these two deities have become an object of faith for this community. Their population in Bombay Presidency was 11,745 in 1911 which became 7,826 in 1931. In Maharashtra they are found in Chandrapur, Yeotmal, Nagpur, Amravati, Wardha, and Gadchiroli districts and at the hilly regions of Sangola. The Buruds in Maharashtra are Hindus and speak Marathi, while those in Karnataka are called 'Medars' and are the followers of the religious preacher Basavaraj.

Marathi speaking Buruds are divided into several exogamous *Kula* or clan groups which are identical with surnames. Every *Kula* has a specific *Devak* or a totem. Some of their *Devaks* are as follows :— peacock feathers, cock, hog, Tarvad (*cassia auriculata*) Rui (*callotropis gigantean*), and khair (*acacia catechu*). *Devak* is taken into consideration at the time of marriage, and persons with the same *Devak* are not to marry. Marriage with mother's brother's daughter, and with wife's sister is allowed. When child marriage was in vogue the groom used to lift the bride and perform three rounds around the sacred fire at the time of Homa (sacrificial) ritual. The caste elders (Panch) used to collect a certain amount from both the bride and the groom at the time of marriage. This was known as 'Vida' system. Widow re-marriage known as 'Pat' can be performed on any day of the dark fortnight of a lunar month, at night time. On this occasion a priest and the widow are present. Married women

are not expected to attend this function. Among the Kannada speaking Buruds (Medars) priestly functions are performed by a married woman chosen by a Brahmin. The most important rite in such marriage is tying Mangalsutra around the neck of the bride. Divorce is also allowed among the Buruds. Worship of Khandoba, Jotiba, Bahiroba, Bhavani, Ram, Maruti and Vithoba assume importance in the religious life. Their priests are Deshastha Brahmins or Jangam (Lingayat). The dead are cremated or buried and a Jangam priest performs this ritual.

**Chambhar :** This community is known in Maharashtra by the name Chambhar or Charmakar. The caste name Chambhar is derived from the Sanskrit word Charmakar. According to 1911 Census, the population of this caste in Bombay Presidency was 3,06,478. Chambhars are declared as a Scheduled Caste in Maharashtra and they occupy fourth rank among the Scheduled Castes of Maharashtra on the basis of their numerical strength. They had a population of 8,65,500 persons in the Census year 1981 and 10,63,548 persons in 1991 Census. In Maharashtra this caste was treated as one of the twelve *Balutedar* castes, and they had their independent traditional occupation of making shoes and preparing various leather articles used in cultivation such as, water buckets, leather whips, leather belts used for yoking the bullocks. For this purpose they used leather of cows, bullocks, buffaloes, deer, sheep and goats. For supplying leather articles to farmers they were paid in the form of grain and other farm produce at the time of harvest and were given cooked food on festival occasions. In other Provinces this caste is known by such names as Chamar, Mochi, Machigar and Samgar.

There are several legends in vogue about the origin of this caste. The Chambhars believe that they are the descendants of Aralaya, the son of Shiva, who was also his great devotee. There are three sectarian divisions among the Chambhar community, namely, Harale Vaishnava, Rohidasi and Lingayat. Each sect has different objects of faith and the members of the respective sect trace their descent from such objects. Harale Vaishnava believe that the birth of their community took place from the memory of Haralayya, a member of the Chambhar community who was a disciple of Basaveshwar. Rohidasis are the followers of the great saint and religious reformer Rohidas who came to prominence towards the end of 14th century. Lingayat Chambhar wear Linga like a pendant around their neck and are the worshippers of god Mahadeo. Members of each sect consider themselves to be superior to those of other sects, and hence do not interdine and intermarry.

The caste is divided into endogamous sub-castes such as Chevali (Konkan), Rohidasi (found in Raigad district), Dabholi (Dabhol), Dohar (Wardha District), Ghati, Konkani, Ahir etc. Most of these sub-castes are territorial in nature. Each sub-caste is divided into several *Kulas* which are exogamous in nature. These *Kulas* are identified on the basis of *Kula* names or surnames. Persons having the same *Kula* name or surname do not marry each other. The Chambhars also observe *Devak* exogamy. Some of their *Devakas* are : neem, green grass, pachpalavi, banyan tree, Vasanel (creeper), peacock feather etc. Marriage with mother's brother's daughter is allowed but that with father's sister's daughter is not allowed. Widow re-marriage and divorce are allowed. The different sub-castes have different surnames such as Bhoir, Salvi, Gaikwad, Mahadik, Chandorkar, Rohekar, etc. Among Chevali Chambhars the surnames are Kadam, Chavan, Advilkar, Chikhalkar and among Dohar and Dabholi Chambhars, the surnames are Giradkar, Savarkar, Hande and Vijaykar. While majority of the Chambhars purchase tanned leather for preparing various leather articles, Rohidas Chambhars purchase hide from the Mahars and cure it themselves for preparing footweares and other leather articles.

Chambhars are generally fair and are of medium height. They are non- vegetarians. Their priests are Brahmins. The dead is cremated and Shradha is performed.

Marriage ceremony is performed according to Hindu custom. However, some variation is seen among the territorial sub-castes. Among the Chambhars in Wardha district, the main marriage ceremony consists of the bride and the bridegroom performing seven rounds around a pillar erected in the marriage Pandal. Among the Chambhars in Raigad district a paste made of milk of 'Asali' coconut, turmeric powder, and a fragrant herbal powder, is applied to the bride and the groom before *Haldi* ceremony. After the paste is applied both the bride and the groom observe ritual fast and are given to eat only cooked rice and Jaggery. Both are also not expected to sit with their backs touching the wall. At the time of applying the paste, head-garlands (Mundavali) of wheat and pieces of coconuts are tied to the bride and the groom. At the time of *Haldi* ceremony head-garlands of Rui flowers are tied.

The Chambhar worship all Hindu gods. Especially, at the time of epidemics they worship goddess Mari and Sheetala. Yogiraj Devjibaba, a hermit, is revered by them. He had his Monastery at Pune. They also participate in the Yatra festival held at Shingnapur in Satara District and also the one in the honour of Jyotiba held on the Jyotiba hill near Kolhapur.

In the past caste Panchayat played an important role at the time of marriage, mourning rituals on the tenth and the thirteenth day, and in handling and dealing with internal affairs of the community. There is a belief among Chambhars that by sprinkling the soiled red water from a vessel in which the hide is soaked ghosts and spirits are whisked away.

Those who cobble at the road side are called 'Gatai' workers. Chambhar women help their men in shoe-making and cobbling. They manage the selling of shoes or chappals. Some of them sell vegetables also. The community has benefitted to a considerable extent from the educational facilities provided to them by the Government and many individuals are occupying high-ranking positions, in administration and other walks of life.<sup>16</sup>

**Dhangar :** Dhangars are the traditional shepherds of Maharashtra. Besides, tending sheep they also keep goats and herds of cattle. They are found in great number in southern and central Maharashtra although they are spread in all parts of Maharashtra. According to 1911 Census their population was 2,71,720 in the Bombay Presidency.

The term Dhangar appears to have been derived from the Sanskrit word 'Dhenu' which means a cow, or the word 'Dhan', which means wealth. In Kannad language the word Dan means cattle and Dhangars are called Dangar. According to a legend about the origin of this caste, while ploughing fields the ant hills were damaged and sheep and goats started coming out of them and they in turn destroyed the standing crop of the farmers. The frightened farmers prayed god Mahadeo and urged him to protect them from this calamity. Whereupon god Mahadev created the first Dhangar to lookafter sheep and goats. As a result of this belief Dhangars worship the ant-hill on the Diwali day. The slogan "Har Har" which the Dhangars utter, appears to be connected with the name of Lord Mahadev.

Although Dhangars are the traditional shepherds of Maharashtra, some are found engaged in cattle trade, selling goat milk and weaving coarse woolen blankets. Those who have taken to agriculture, lead a settled life. They have knowledge of changing weather conditions and medicinal plants and herbs found in the jungle and as a result some of them are also found selling these medicinal herbs.

There are twenty-three sub-castes among Dhangars. Some of the sub-caste names are as follows: Ahir, Hande, Telwar, Hatkar, Shegar, Khutekar, Telangi, Tellari, Konkani Dhangar, Kanade, Varhade Dhangar, Zade, Zende, Kurmar, Mahure, Ladse, Sangar, Dhanwar etc. Khutekar Dhangars are found in all parts of Maharashtra, while

Hatkar Dhangars are found mainly in the former Nizam State, especially in Nanded and Parbhani districts and in Vidarbha. They are also known as Bargi Dhangars. The well-built and dark-complexioned Hatkar Dhangars were in the army of Shivaji Maharaj in large numbers; and were known for their bravery in the Maratha kingdom. 'Naik' and 'Rao' were the titles given to them. Hatkars were a dread to others and even Nizam was afraid of them. It is on the historical record that for restraining the Hatkars, Nizam had sought help of the British army. Malharrao Holkar, the ruler of Indore belonged to the Hatkar sub-caste. Traditionally Hatkar Dhangars refrained from shaving their face but now-a-days they do not adhere to this practice. According to 1931 Census, the population of Hatkar in Marathwada was 40,177. There is also a greater habitation of Bande and Khutekar Dhangars in the district of Parbhani. Bande Dhangars consider themselves to be of superior rank. Hatkakne Dhangars are found in greater number in Nanded District. Varadi (those from Varhad), and Kanore (those from Karnatak) Dhangars are more in number in Wardha District, especially in Arvi Taluka. Dange and Mondhe Dhangars are in greater number in Kolhapur District. Dange Dhangars are those who graze cattle in the hills of Sahyadri and also trade in them. Mendhe Dhangars maintain flock of sheep. They also sell goats and sheep as well as the wool. They pen their sheep on the farms for manuring them, for which purpose they move from village to village with their flock of sheep. For this work they are paid in grain and money by the owners of the farms. A large population of this community is found around Phaltan town in Satara district. Gawad Dhangars inhabit the hilly region of Javli and Patan. A large population of Dhangars is found in Solapur district also. The Dhangars in Pune district, say that they came from Satara district. Zade Dhangars are found in Bhandara District, while Ahir Dhangars who claim that they come from Chittaur are to be found in Khandesh. Dhangars living on the plains of Ahmednagar district are engaged in rearing horses. There are several legends about the origin of this community. However remanants of *Devaks* found among them, their dark complexion, their strong but thin built physiques indicate the existence of some elements of local population among them. Mhaske or Mhaskar Dhangars who keep buffaloes are found in Raigad district. Since they stay on the hill-tops in small settlements called Pada, they are also known as Dongri Dhangars.

The endogamous sub-castes among Dhangars are further divided into exogamous groups, comprising of people using the same surname. About fifteen such surnames have been recorded, and they are as follows : Hulke, Kale, Gaikwad, Kulmule, Solankar, Sarak, Patil,

Chavare, Bhaire, Dhere, Khandekar, Kharat, Khatal, Naiknavre, and Shendge, *Kulas* among Dhangars are based on *Devaks*. Sun-flower, Lotus and Pachpalvi are some of their *Devaks*. Marriage among Dhangars takes place within one's sub-caste and in a family having different surnames. Marriage with maternal uncle's daughter and father's sister's daughter is allowed. Marriage with a younger sister of the deceased wife is also customary. Dowry is taken from either side bride or groom. Divorce and widow re-marriage are permitted with the consent of the caste Panchayat. Most of the Dhangars lead a nomadic life throughout the year and return home during rainy season. Hence marriages are performed during rainy season till September. Before marriage ceremony, ritual known as 'Munjacha Dak' is performed at the hands of a potter. A Dinner is given at the end of the ritual. If a virgin dies, a special dinner known as 'Bhune dinner' is served to the virgin so as to ensure peace to the departed soul. Afterwards in order to propitiate god Khandoba a ritual singing and dancing known as 'Jagaran' is performed by a male and a female temple servants known as Waghya and Murali. After this haldi ceremony takes place and other marriage rituals follows. Besides the worship of such deities of the caste as Mahadev, Khandoba, Biroba and Randevi, Dhangars worship Vithoba, Maruti, Satwai, Janai and Mhasoba. A Large number of Dhangars from the State participate in the festival of Viroba at Vashi near Kolhapur held annually in March-April. They show a special reverence to Khandoba of Jejuri in Pune district and that the Arevadi in Sangli district. They claim that one of the wives of Khandoba belongs to their caste, and clay or stone figurines of sheep are offered to her. A heap of such figurines can be seen in the Khandoba temple at Jejuri. Dhangars in Wardha district worship god Baharam of Nachangaon near Pulgaon. They believe that he protects their flocks of sheep. On the last day of the month of Magha, Dheemar who is their priest, performs the worship of the gods. A religious ceremony known as "Gajo" is considered to be very important. In the months of Bhadrapad and Ashwin, the Dhangars sing songs in praise of god Vithoba and dance to the rhythm of the drums. At the time of the festival of their gods the Dhangars have a custom of sacrificing sheep. The dead is cremated or buried.

The Dhangars are hardy, hard-working and hospitable people. Their traditional male attire consists of Kudta, a loin-cloth with a triangular cover in the front, a turban, a thick stick in the hand, and a thick pair of Chappal. Some males wear a silver ring on the right hand finger, and in the upper side of the ear a golden ornament called 'Bali'. The females also wear many kinds of silver ornaments.

Although the Dhangars are mainly shepherds, in recent times they have taken to agriculture, money-lending and small trades. Previously they were included in the category of 'Other Backward Communities' but recently the Government of Maharashtra has included them in the category of Nomadic Tribes.

**Dhivar :** This community known in Maharashtra by various names, such as, Dhivar, Dhimar, or Bhoi had a population of 2,44,189 according to 1931 Census. Dhivars are mainly found in Vidarbha and Eastern Maharashtra. In Western Maharashtra this community is known by the name Bhoi. Besides the three names mentioned above this community is also known by such names as Palewar, Machchindra, Kahar and Malha. The meaning of the word Dhivar, which is a Sanskrit word, is 'fisherman'. The word Bhoi is south Indian in origin and is used to refer to palanquin bearers. It denotes caste as well as an occupation. As a result Mahars and Kahars who follow the occupation of Bhoi call themselves by the same name. In the treatise *Jativivek* Bhois are called *Paushtik* and they are supposed to have been originated from a Brahmin father and Parashar mother.

Dhivars catch fish in ponds, lakes and rivers. Similarly, some of them cultivate singara and water-melons and sell them as well. Some of them are engaged as palanquin bearers, holding torches, supplying water in leather water-bag, preparing and selling parched grain and rice, and working as cooks, and domestic servants. Women are engaged in selling fish. Dhivars in Ratnagiri district who are known as Raj Bhois are engaged only as palanquin-bearers. They do not catch fish and do not have commensal and conjugal relationship with other Bhois. Dhivars in Khandesh are engaged in fishing, carrying palanquins, parching grains, cultivating water-melons and cucumbers. Some are agricultural labourers, and some transport grain from one place to another. Their mother tongue is Marathi, and use Devnagari script for writing. The Bhois of Khandesh speak Ahirani dialect also.

Dhivars in Pune district have three sub-divisions namely, Bhoi, Warddhi, and Kadu, while those in Ahmednagar District have two sub-divisions, namely Maratha, and Mala or Mhala. In Nashik district Dhivars have two territorial sub-divisions namely, those living to the south of Chandod or Saptashringi hills. In Thane districts Dhivars have two sub-groups, namely, those fishing in saline water and those fishing in fresh water. The two sub-divisions do not inter-marry. In Ratnagiri district there are only Raj Bhois. Dhivars in Khandesh are divided into three sub-groups namely, Maharyarla Taraksha, and Dhimar or Dhivars. Out of these three sub-divisions Dhimars or Dhivars have come from Gujarat. But they resemble Maratha Bhois in all respects. There are five sub-divisions among Dhivars of Wardha district namely, Machchindra, Gadhav Bhoi, Bhanari, Zinga

and Dhivar. Some claim the descent from Machchindra, while others claim from Valmiki. Machhindra Bhois are the followers of Nath sect, while Bhanare Bhois who are also known as Bhadabhunje (parch grams). Gadhav Bhois carry sand and lime on the backs of donkeys. Muslim Bhois are known as Zinga Bhois. The life style of all Bhois in Maharashtra is similar to that of Marathas and Kunbis.

The Dhivar community *i.e.* divided into ten endogamous sub-castes, out of which names of nine sub-castes have been identified. Those are Bondhaiya, Bendore, Bhoi, Dhuria, Digore, Koet, Keri, Nadh, and Singadi. There are thirty exogamous divisions, identical with surnames, in this community. Many of the surnames are based on occupation and a place of residence as is evident from such surname as Singaria, Tumsare, Nagpurkar etc. Marriage with mother's brother's daughter is customary. Divorce and widow remarriage are permitted. The worshiping of the goddess Annapurna is prevalent among Dhivars. They also worship Dulhadeo and Narayandeo, the deities popular among the Gonds and the tribal communities of Madhya Pradesh. They rear pigs and also sacrifice them. These cultural practices prevalent among Dhivars especially in Vidarbha region reveal a similarity between Dhivars and Gonds, and those tribes of Madhya Pradesh which have similar customs and traditions. Maratha Bhois worship Mahadeo, Maruti, and Vithoba. Their family deities are Khandoba of Jejuri, the goddess Bhavani of Tuljapur, Bahiroba and Mhasoba. Their spiritual gurus are Gosavis of Kanphate sect. They believe in magic and witchcraft and invite Devarishi, the magician-priest to ward off ghosts. Khandeshi Bhois worship Morsai, Chavadmata, Mansai, Renuka as their Kuladevata. Gosavis are their spiritual preachers. Recently the Government of Maharashtra has included them in the category of Nomadic Tribes.

**Dhor :** This caste is one of the major Scheduled Castes of Maharashtra. As per 1911 Census ; the population of this Community in Bombay Presidency was 18,506, while in 1981 it became 68,509 and in 1991 it was increased up to 81,590 in Maharashtra. They are found in the Deccan in Maharashtra and in the region around Belgaum and Bijapur in Karnataka. Their traditional occupation is getting hide from the dead cattle and curing it. The Dhors have acquired their caste name from their occupational association with 'Dhor' which in Marathi means 'cattle'.

There are several legends which explain the origin of this caste. They became known as 'Dohor' as they stayed near the small pond (Doha) and practised their occupation of curing hide as per the dictates of Lord Shiva. The word 'Dohor' may be the corrupted to 'Dhor' which became their caste name. Even today they call

themselves 'Dohar' as the direct descendants of Lord Mahadeo. Those who accept the great sage Kakkayya as their racial prophet call themselves Shaiva Kakkayya, and adhere to the Lingayat Sect.

They were not treated as *Balutedars* in the traditional village super numerary claimants. They lived away from the village near a stream or a river and carried on their traditional occupation of curing hide. Chambhars claim that their social status is superior to that of Dhors. It takes about a month to cure hide according to the traditional method. In recent times, however, this work of tanning leather is being done in factories with greater efficiency. After independence, members of this community are found in greater number in cities like Pune, Kolhapur, Satara, Amravati, Ahmednagar, Phaltan, Karad, Solapur and Mumbai who have come here to get education, service, or to practise their occupation. Especially in the city of Phaltan, their traditional occupation is practised on a large scale.

The caste is divided into endogamous sub-castes which are as follows :

Budhelkari or Budhligar, Bundelkhandi, Hindustani, Kakkayya, Karnataki and khetraphedi. These sub-castes are further divided into exogamous sub-divisions identical with surnames. They have *Devak* system and some of their *Devaks* are : fig, Jambul, maryadvel parasha etc. The rule of devak exogamy is observed. Marriage with mother's brother's daughter and father's sister's daughter is permitted. Divorce and widow remarriage are allowed. The newly married couple is expected to visit their family god. A religious ritual called 'Gondhal' is performed at the night of the wedding day. Religious rituals are conducted by a Brahmin or a Jangam priest. They worship goddess Bhavani of Tuljapur and Kondhanpur, Janai and Khandoba of Jejuri, Mahadeo of Shingnapur and Vithoba of Pandharpur. They attend in large number. The Someshwar festival at Karanje in Baramati taluka, held on the last Monday of the month of Shravan. The dead is buried in the sitting position. When they return home from the burial ground they chew neem leaves. Mourning is observed for ten days. The first death anniversary (Varsha shraddha) is not performed, but they perform Mahal, a ritual in honour of the dead, in the dark fortnight of the month of Bhadrapad.

**Gond :** Among the forest tribes of India, Gonds are one of the well-known non-Aryan tribes. They are to be found in three States, namely Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. In Madhya Pradesh and now mainly in Chhatisghadh State, they are mainly to be found in the belt of broken hills and forest country, which forms the Satpuda plateau. This belt mainly comprises of

Chhindwada Baitul, Sheoni and Mandla Districts. Their second habitation is still wider and comprises of inaccessible mass of hill ranges extending south of Chhattisgarh plain and south-west down to Godavari, which includes Bastar, Chandrapur districts and some parts of Adilabad in Andhra Pradesh.

There are several views on the origin of the name of the tribe Gond. Major General Cunningham was of the opinion that the word Gond had an affinity with the name 'Gaud' given to a region comprising east Bihar and Bengal. In some inscriptions found in the vicinity of Narmada river near Jabalpur, reference is made to the Gaud kings. However, as pointed out by Smith the name Gaud was used to refer to Bengal region, and it was rarely used to refer to Madhya Pradesh. As such Cunningham's derivation of the word Gond is obsolete and unacceptable. According to Hislop the word Gond is derived from the word Kond or Khond which is the name of a tribe. It is more likely that the word Gond was brought into vogue by Telugu speaking people. The language spoken by Gonds belongs to the Dravidian family of languages to which Tamil, Telugu and Kannada languages belong. This linguistic affinity has led some scholars to believe that Gonds might have migrated from South India, which was their original homeland to Madhya Pradesh. Crossing the river, Godavari they might have entered Chandrapur region. From here they might have crossed the river Indravati and spread in a region lying to the south of Chhattisgarh and hilly region to the east, and subsequently went to Satpuda region crossing the river Vainganga. It is believed that this migration might have taken place in the twelfth century. The Gond kings ruled over Chandrapur for centuries. At the time, they came into contact with the Telugu speaking people and these might have acquired the title 'Gond'. There are many legends that speak of the origin of the Gonds ; but most of them are baseless.

The Gonds form the largest of all the Scheduled Tribes in India. (This specific Tribe is spread in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. In 1931, the population of Gonds in Vidarbha had been 3,65,596. According to 1981 Census the Gonds population in Maharashtra was 11,62,735.) Although they had their kingdom in Vidarbha they could not withstand the might of the Moghul and the Maratha rulers. Their political decline might have led the Gonds to find shelter in the forest. In spite of these political vicissitudes the imprint of the Gond rule over Vidarbha, which forms a part of Gondavana, is clearly seen. The Gond queen Durgavati constructed the famous Madan Mahal near Jabalpur. Large walls, lakes and several stone-idols found in their former capitals stand testimony to historic glory.

Gonds are dark complexioned, sturdy and of medium built. They have rounded face and flat, broad nose. The Gond tribe comprises of several sub-tribes. According to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Order (Amendment Act) 1976, the tribes included along with the Gonds are as follows :—Gond or Rajgond, Arakh, Arakha, Agaria, Asur, Bado-Maria, Bada-Maria, Bhatola, Bhimma, Bhuta, Koilabhuta, Kailabhuty, Bhar, Bisanhorm Maria, Chhota Maria, Dandami Maria, Dhuru, Dhurala, Dhoba, Dhulia, Dorla, Gaiki, Gatta, Gatti, Gaita, Gond Gowari, Hill Maria, Kandara Kalanga, Khatola, Koitar, Koya, Khirwar, Kucha Maria, Kuchaki Maria, Madia, Maria, Mana, Mannewar, Moghya, Mudia, Muria, Nagarchi, Naikpod, Nagvanshi, Ojha, Raj, Sonzari Zareka, Thatia, Thotya, Vade Maria. Arakh are found in Gadchiroli and Chandrapur districts. Bada Maria are found in the inaccessible hilly and forest region of Gadchiroli district. Mana are found in Chandrapur, Gadchiroli and Bhandara Districts. Mannewar are found in Chandrapur, Amravati, Nagpur and Bhandara Districts. Maria or Madia are found in Etapalli Tahsil of Gadchiroli District. Rajgonds have accommodated in Wardha, Nagpur, Amravati, and Sironcha Tahsil in Gadchiroli District. They confine themselves to in and around forests. Several Raj Gonds are living in the cities and as a consequence they have imbibed the ways of behaviour and mannerism of the upper caste Hindus. The most predominant sub-tribes among Gonds in Vidarbha are Raj-Gond, Maria/Madia Gond, Dhurve Gond and Khatola or Khatulwar Gond.

There are several sub-groups among the Gonds based on occupations, such as Agaria (iron workers), Ojha (soothsayers) and Koilabhuti (dancers). These sub-groups might have come in to being from intermarriages of the Gonds with persons belonging to lower castes.

The Gonds call themselves Koitoor or Kui and show resemblance with Khonds and Kolams. However the Hindus in the neighbourhood call this community by the name Gond. The Gonds mainly speak Gondi, a dialect belonging to the Dravidian language family. In addition they also speak one or two languages used in the neighbourhood, namely Marathi, Hindi and Telugu, or a language which is a mixture of all these.

Various Gond tribes are divided into groups called 'Saga' on the basis of a number of deities worshipped, and these groups are further divided in to phratries they called 'Kul'. They worship three to seven deities. Marriage between 'Sagas' from the same clan, that is worshipping the same number of gods is not allowed. Clan names are used as surnames. Some of the surname are Dhurve, Maraskole, Narote, Hichami etc. Gonds also have surnames after the names of

animals and trees. Some examples are Tekam (teak tree), Markam (Mango tree), Purkam (Punkin), Gedam (Wood), Irpate (Mahua tree), Madavi (tree), Kodape (horse), Netam or Naitam (dog), Atram (dog), Masram (nose) etc. Phratries and Clans differ from sub-group to sub-group.

Marriage takes place only between persons belonging to specific sub-groups. The practice of cross-cousin marriage is prevalent among them. Marriage by service is also in practice. Widow remarriage is allowed. The widower can remarry with the wife's younger sister. System of bride price still prevails in the tribe. The Madia Gonds have a unique institution 'Ghotul' or youth dormitory. This is a meeting place for young boys and girls. They select their life partners in these meetings. Besides this, Ghotul's also perform an important function of transmitting socio-cultural tradition of the tribe from one generation to another. The youths in Gadchiroli Madia mix together at the evenings and have 'Rela' dance. At night they return to their homes.

Animal and devak worship is prevalent among Gonds. Although they are animists they worship Lord Mahadeo and goddess Kali. They also worship their tribal deities namely, Janko, Manko, Lingo, Lango, Jango, Rahud Madyal, Kalysur, Bhimal, Dondera, Sipiselma, Buralpen, Persapen, Duwalpen, Nishanpen, Satik etc. and also their family gods namely Hira Jyoti, Koresungal, Nagdev and Narayandeo. Their pilgrim places include Kotapardoli, Dhanegaon, Patal, Deurkasa, Koyalikachal, Bhaisagadh, Dhaga, and Bhimgadh.

Persapen is the principal deity of Gonds. They worship Him in the form of a nail or an iron chain. These nails which are prepared only by Madias are kept safe in a bamboo pipe. They believe that the universe is created by Persapen by his will. The goddess Jangoraitad pervades the entire life of Gonds. They also worship Nagdeo and Narayandeo. In the month of June they kill a cobra and offer its head and tail to Nagdeo. This is supposed to give them protection from poisonous creatures and objects. They worship Bhimalpen, their rain-god for ensuring rain. Gonds believe in magic, witchcraft, ghosts and spirits. The sick are taken to a so-called magician. When an epidemic arises the Gonds' priest, called 'Bhumak' counsels the 'village confinement' rite. Another Gond priest Katola is expected to be expert in enchantment and quack practice. The Gonds are superstitious, pregnant women keep themselves away from elephants and horses. They also believe in life after death. Dussara is celebrated by the Gonds and specially by the Madia Gond from the Gadchiroli district. They also celebrate *Diwali* and *Holi*. They celebrate 'Pola' which is also called 'Konanda' and adore oxen.

Liquor and Toddy occupies an important place in their life. Their daily meal consists of rice and ambil. They have their tribe Panchayat which maintains control over the conduct of its members, and those found guilty of violating the tribal customs or indulging in immoral act are excommunicated. However, after undergoing the punishment such persons are exonerated.

Gond women are sturdy and wear anklets of silver or bell-metal, bangles of lacquer or inferior metal, and necklace of beads. They wear Sari above the knees with a fold on the shoulder. They didn't wear a Bodice or Choli. Tattooing is common among them and there is a belief among them that it goes to heaven alongwith the departing soul. In recent time females have started using modern apparels and cosmetics. The well-to-do females wear costly ornaments in addition to their traditional ornaments.

For their living, Gonds are engaged in hunting, gathering plants and food, cultivating on hill-slopes, agricultural labour etc. Now-a-days Gond youths are attracted towards education but because of poverty the extent of education is less.<sup>17</sup>

**Gosavi :** The Caste known by such names as Gosain, Gusain and Goswami, that are derived from Sanskrit word ' Goswamin ', is found all over Maharashtra. Gosavi means one who abandons the desires of the world and the body. Their sub-castes are :— Giri Gosavi, Saraswati, Parbat, Sagar, Bharati, Gosavi, Bava, Bairagi, Tirth Ashram, Aranya Dharbhari, Sanyasi, Nathpanthi Gosavi, and Ban or Van. This community of its origin from Kapil Rishi. They have their caste Panchayat. Besides their division into two broad sectarian groups, namely Shaiv and Vaishnav, they are further divided into twelve and a half sub-sects. The Gosavis of Maharashtra claim that the State of Gujarat was their original home land. This community along with its sub-castes is included in the list of Nomadic Tribes in Maharashtra.

**Gowari :** During pre-Independence period this community was recognised as Forest Tribe, Aboriginal Tribe and Backward Tribe in Central Provinces and Berar. The Gowaris are found in Bhandara, Gondia, Nagpur, Yeotmal, Washim, Wardha, Amravati, Gadchiroli and Chandrapur Districts of Vidarbha which were previously part of the C. P. and Berar. According to 1911 Census, population of this tribe was 1,50,000 in C.P. and Berar. In 1931 the population of Gowari (Hindu and Tribal religions) was 1,28,215 in Vidarbha. (*see* Appendices 1 and 3). The community is divided into several exogamous totemistic clans. Clan names are used as surname. They are as follows :—Shendre, Chaudhary, Neware, Sahare, Chachane,

Raut, Kohale, Ambedare, Waghade, Sonwane, Gajbe, Wagare, Chamlate, Mokashi, Padile, Botare, Yesansure, Nagose, Khekre, Kalsarpe, Mogre, Bhonde, Phunne, Sarvare, Mankar, Bhojar, Bhimate, Baglate, etc. They do not have Gotras and Devaks. Marriage within one's clan is prohibited. Marriage between a boy and a girl whose maternal uncles belong to the same clan is not allowed. This custom is called 'observing the bond of milk'. Levirate is allowed, some clans are related to each other on the ground that clan-mothers were sisters. Some clans do not permit intermarriage between their members, saying that they are *Dudh-Bhais* or foster-brothers, born from the same mother. Thus the Chachane, Kohale, Sonwane and Waghare clans cannot intermarry. Marriage with mother's brother's daughter is allowed. At the time of marriage the groom pays to the bride a bride-price of twelve and half rupees and some grain. Before the wedding day a ritual known as 'Devadevi' is performed and either a goat, a fowl or a hog is sacrificed in order to propitiate gods. Its blood is sprinkled and the guests feast on the meat. On the same night the Bhois play 'Dahaka'. On this occasion songs in praise of the forefathers are sung to the tune of music. A ritual called 'Pan Ujawane' is performed to perpetuate the memory of a family member died in the same year. A silver or a brass leaf is got prepared from a goldsmith which is kept on the shrine. They do not observe many Hindu marriage rituals including Saptapadi. After marriage a ceremony of sprinkling 'Gulal' (red powder) takes place. This powder is also applied to the new red sari called 'Dhendha'. At that time the groom takes the bride on his lap. Other five couples also join them. After this a bath is given to them in the Pandal. The bride-groom carries the bride in wet clothes near the shrine and salutes the deity. After this members of the bride's party bid her farewell and sing farewell songs. After reaching home the groom's mother washes the feet of the bride and the groom, performs *Aarati* and throws rice balls to the two sides. The newly married couple come to the shrine and worship the ancestors. The groom's mother is not supposed to be present when the marriage ceremony takes place. On that day she observes fast. When the marriage party comes home she breaks her fast after ceremonially seeing the face of her daughter-in-law. The groom with a bow and an arrow shoots a deer made of flour. In some places the groom starts shooting arrows right from his home upto a pond or a river. The spot where the arrow strikes is worshipped by the bride by sprinkling a few grains of rice and performing salutation. The newly married couple is again given a bath and the ceremony of eating 'Ambil' with the kins, takes place. After the marriage ceremony is over the bride returns to her parental home and is brought back to her in-law's home after a month in the bright fortnight for wearing green bangles. A woman should show respect for her husband's relatives.

If a person is childless his property is inherited by his sister's son. According to Russel, this and other customs. might be the relics of mother-right among them.

Gowaris are animists. They worship their ancestors as well as Meghanath or Khode Khodvan, Waghadeo, Narayandeo, Bhivasan, Dhal, Dulhadeo and other tribal gods. They celebrate some Hindu festivals. On the day of *Laxmi Poojan* they worship the Dhal at the Diwali, Mahua twig is brought by herds men to the home in the morning and worshipped. A bell from the harness belt tied around the neck of a cow is tied to this twig and the people dance throughout the night. This ritual is performed by the chief cowherdsman. On the occasion of Diwali they take cows of the villages in procession to the accompaniment of music. A spirit of the childless person know as *Dhal* is worshipped by the family members on the occasion of Diwali, and is taken out in procession. A fowl is sacrificed on the occasion of this festival.

Gowaris adore cow. They decorate her with colourful garlands of peacock feathers. The village Patil and owners of a large herd of cattle offer a gift of clothes to the cowherdsman. The cowherdsman in new clothes worship the cow and give them sweet meat. On the day of 'Bali Pratipada' the Gowaris take one cow from each herd and take them to Maruti temple and perform five circumambulations following a cowherdsman.

On the day of 'Pitrumoksha Amavasya' they worship the departed ancestors. On the day of *Akhadi* which is the full moon day in the month of Ashadh a worship of a folk deity Sivarya is performed and a fowl is sacrificed. This deity is supposed to ensure safety of the cattle by not allowing them to cross the village boundary and bringing the stray cattle to the right path. In the bright fortnight of the month of Magh the family goddess (Devmai) is worshipped. Some families worship seven deities, while other worship six deities as their family deities. Similarly after every three years a ritual known as *Tijan* is performed.

The dead are buried. A cotton blanket used by the deceased is burned at the site of the burial. On returning from the funeral they go and drink at the liquor-shop and offer some meat to his spirit, placing it outside the house. The members of the community wait until a crow comes and pecks at the food. After the crow touches the offering they believe that the deceased has enjoyed it, and begin to eat themselves. If no crow comes before night the food may be given to a cow, and the party can then begin to eat. When the next wedding is held in the family the deceased is brought down from the skies and enshrined among the deified ancestors. This ritual is called "Utaran" conducted by a *Bhagat*.

In recent times members of this community are engaged in agriculture, agricultural and forest labour and as herdsmen. Gowaris speak Marathi. Their daily meal consists of jowar roti, chatni and ambil. Flowers of mahua tree are consumed as food. By tradition Gowaris are non-vegetarians. The traditional dress of the males consists of dhoti worn upto knees, a shirt called 'Bandi', a turban, a coarse blanket on the shoulder, a metal ring on the left wrist and a *Tendu* stick in the hand. The stick is worshipped ceremonially. Women in the forest region wear saris in a Gondi style. Previously they were not wearing bodice which they do now-a-days. Considerable change has come about in their dress in recent times. Tattooing on the right hand below the elbow and on the forehead is common among the females, while the males restrict it to the forehead.

In villages caste panchayat of the Gowaris is still in existence. The hereditary headman of the caste panchayat is called 'Shendya.' The panchayat excommunicates those who indulge in immoral behaviour. Such a person is allowed to return back to the tribal fold after payment of a fine.<sup>18</sup>

**Gurav :** Gurav are known in Maharashtra as temple priests of Lord Mahadeo and his several incarnations. *Shiva Purana* traces the origin of the Gurav community to the mythical Dadhichi Rishi. They claim that originally they were Brahmins but due to negligence shown by the founder of this community in the worship of Shiva, Lord Mahadeo cursed them and removed them from upper Varna. The Population of this community according to the Census of 1931 was 10,513 in western Maharashtra.

The community is divided into five endogamous sub-castes, which are as follows : Shiva Gurav or Nagri, Kadu Gurav or Junnari, Hugar, Jeer or Malgar, Lingayat Gurav and Konkani Gurav or Bhavik. There are also territorial sub-groups among them such as Varade (from Varhad), Zade (forest dwellers), Dakshane (living in the south) and Ahir. Shaiva and Nilkantha Gurav wear sacred thread, while Lingayat Gurav wear Lings around the neck. It appears that the two groups, Nagari and Junnari came into existence during 15th and 17th centuries when Ahmednagar and Bijapur kingdoms (Junnar) were separate powers in the land and the genesis of these groups is an instance of the influence of political boundaries on caste fission.

Generally there are one or two households of the Guravs in every village. For performing duties of the temple priest Gurav's were given gift land grant known as 'Guravki' to ensure their services in a hereditary manner. Gurav is treated as one of the twelve *Balutedars* in the rural establishment, and accordingly he is paid in grain at the time of harvest. Cash offering to the temple deity is collected by them. They play music in the temple and also at the

time of marriage ceremony on *Shahanai* and drums, called as *Choughada*. Those specialists are known as Ghadashis. They also blow trumpet. Also some Guravs prepare leaf cups and plates, decorative frames of paper called 'Bashing' for the bride and the groom, and diadems. They were recruited in the Maratha Army, because of their skill in blowing trumpet (*Tutari*).

The Guravs have exogamous groups identical with their surnames and marriage between persons with the same surname is not allowed. They claim themselves as belonging to Sankhian *Gotra*. Marriage with mother's brother's daughter is permitted. They are vegetarians and permit divorce and widow remarriage. The dead is cremated.

**Halba :** There are several stories and legends prevalent about the origin of the Halbas. Russell and Hiralal have recorded a number of these legends. G.K. Gilder cited by Russell and Hiralal says that word is derived from an old Kannada word *Halbar or Halbaru* meaning old ones or ancients or primitive inhabitants'. They are found mostly in Sakoli, of Bhandara district, Deori and Gondia Taluka of Gondia District and some parts of Gadchiroli and Chandrapur Districts. Besides Maharashtra, Halbas are found in Raipur, Bastar and Kaker region of Madhya Pradesh. In 1891 the highest population of Halbas was (47,273) found in Raipur District. During pre-Independence period Halbas were recognised as Forest Tribe, Aboriginal Tribe and Backward Tribe in C.P. and Berar. Halba or Halbi has been declared as a Scheduled Tribe under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Order of 1950. The population of Halbas in the districts of Vidarbha is shown below :—

District	1891	1911	1921	1931
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Wardha .. ..	129	734	1,038	1,227
Nagpur .. ..	71	683	409	523
Chanda .. ..	7,199	2,419	2,604	3,280
Bhandara .. ..	18,425	9,837	18,240	19,233
Amraoti .. ..	..	2,201	2,000	2,321
Akola .. ..	..	403	468	482
Buldhana .. ..	..	24	26	20
Yeotmal .. ..	..	976	890	1,067
Total Vidarbha ..	25,824	17,277	25,675	28,153

In the above cited Census Reports the religion of Halbas has been recorded as Hindu. In ancient times, Halbas were found in the

military services of the Ratanpur State. Afterwards they occupied a comparatively honourable position and they became landholders in the Bastar State. They earned land grants from the Gond Kings for their military services. They also received special favours during the Gond rule. Two regional groups i.e. "Chhattisgarhia" and "Bastariya" are found among Halbas. The Tribe is divided into two endogamous sub-divisions, *viz.*, 'Puraitit' and 'Suraitit'. These groups are divided into several exogamous *Kulas*. Eminent linguist Griearson observed that the Halba dialect is a queer mixture of Orriya, Chhattisagadhi, and Marathi languages. Regional variations are found in the Halba dialect. In Bhandara District this dialect is known as Halbi, which is closer to Marathi. They are non-vegetarian and rice is the main food.

The rule of *Kula* exogamy is observed at the time of marriage. Halba can marry his mother's brother's daughter, but not the daughter of his paternal or maternal aunt. Halbas in Bhandara and Gondia districts accept daughters from other sub-castes in marriage, but they do not give their daughters to others in marriage. Exchange of daughters in marriage between two families is allowed. Widow remarriage and divorce are allowed. Generally the dead bodies are cremated, but the poor bury them. Halbas are Hindus and they worship tribal as well as Hindu deities. These include Bhivsen, Thakurdeo, Danteshwari, Dulhadeo, Hanuman, Durgadevi etc. Each village has a tribal Panchayat traditionally headed by a 'Mukhiya' or 'Kurshya'. In some villages his office is found hereditary. He is generally chosen from the *Kula* of *Kotbar* or Naik. The Panchayat's decision in social and tribal disputes is final. Formerly, many Halbas were engaged in preparing and selling parched rice, which they continue to do so even today. They are found mainly as agriculturists, farm and forest labourers. As per 1961 and 1971 Census the populations of this Community was 5,430 and 7,205 respectively. But as many as 2,42,819 persons were registered as Halbas in 1981. As per the 1991 census the population of Halbas was 2,78,378.

**Katkari:** This tribal community known as Katkari or Kathodi lives in the mountain ranges of Sahyadri in Western Maharashtra. According to 1981 Census population of this community was 1,74,602 and in 1991 the population was 2,02,203. The name Katkari is derived from the occupation of this community of preparing catechu (Katha), the thickened juice of Khair tree. The name Kathodi has the same meaning. According to V.K. Rajwade, the well-known historian, the name Katwadi (Kathodi) is a corruption of the word 'Krittipattin' (one who uses leather). According to him Katkaris might have been living on the hills of Sahyadri from B.C. 5000-6000 years and they

could be the autochthons of Maharashtra. Katkaris trace their origin from the army of monkeys of Lord Ram. They were originally part of Bhil Tribe. The major concentration of this tribe is to be found in Raigad, Thane and Pune Districts. The tribe is divided into four endogamous sub-groups, namely, Dhor Katkari, Dhor Kathodi, Son Katkari and Son Kathodi, and they do not intermarry or interdine with each other. Out of these, Son Katkaris regard themselves to be of superior status. They are mainly found in Raigad and Ratnagiri Districts. Dhor Katkaris are found mainly in Thane and Nashik Districts. All these sub groups have been included in the Scheduled Tribe.

Katkaris are dark complexioned, sturdy and agile. They have a habit of bending their knees while walking. Till the old age, they are found to have black hair. They eat field rats, squirrels, monkeys, peacocks, fish, roots, Nachni, Vari and Harik roti. They are very fond of liquor which occupies an important place in religious rituals. For their living they are mainly dependent on farm labour.

The community is divided into several exogamous clans numbering about 93. Marriage within one's clan is prohibited. Clan names are also used as surnames. Their surnames are formed after the names of trees, occupations, and animals, or are similar to those of Kunbi, Maratha or other minority communities. They don't have distinctive surnames as aborigines. Marriage with mother's brother's daughter is allowed, but not with father's sister's daughter or mother's sister's daughter. Widow remarriage and divorce are allowed. Divorce is given only with the consent of the caste panchayat. Although both cremation and burial of the dead are prevalent, people give preference to cremation. If the dead body is buried, along with it a bow and an arrow, a sickle, a clay pipe, and similar objects are also buried. Infants and persons dying of small pox are invariably buried. Katkaris are Hindus, and the worshiping of Khandoba, Bhairav, Bhavani and Kansari is very popular among them. They also worship Dongar Deo (mountain-God), Marimata and Gramdeo (Local/Village God). Waghdeo is their chief deity. They believe in ghosts and spirits, and worship Vetral, Jarimari, Cheda and Mavlya in order to avoid the infliction of spirits. Ancestral spirits are greatly respected and on *Sarvapitri Amavasya* day food specially prepared for such occasion is offered to them. Although Katkaris have their own dialect, Marathi is as good as their mother tongue. *Tumbdi* music and dance are their means of entertainments.<sup>19</sup>

**Khatri :** A community recognised by the name Khatri or Kshatri is found in Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Karnatak. According to 1911 Census of the Bombay Presidency, their population was 99,583.

Khattris are mainly found in Baroach, Surat, and Ahmedabad cities of Gujarat, and in Mumbai and some other cities in Western Maharashtra. They consider themselves to be Brahma-Kshatriya. According to a legend the community descended from the King Ratansen of Solar lineage, who had sought refuge in the *Ashrama* of Dadhichi Rishi after fleeing from irascible Parashuram. They regard Sindh and Punjab as their original home from which they migrated to their present home in Gujarat in response to growing demand from Europe for their cloth in 16th and 17th centuries. Their traditional occupation is weaving saris and other clothes, and making golden and silver thread. In recent times Khattris have entered such professions as teaching, administrative services, medicine, law etc., besides their own traditional occupation. The well-known minister of Akbar, Todarmal was a Khatri. Guru Nanak, and Guru Govind the great Sikh Gurus were also Khattris.

Among the Khattris besides Brahma-Khatri there are two more sub-castes, namely Kapur Khatri and Khatri or Patkar Sale. Although these sub castes have similarity in name, their customs and social conventions are totally different from each other. All the three sub-castes are found in Hyderabad Deccan. Khattris in Maharashtra speak Marathi. They are found in Mumbai from eighteenth century onwards.

Khattris consider themselves to be high caste and wear sacred thread after going through the initiation ceremony. Widow remarriage and divorce are not allowed. An erring woman is driven out of the family and her caste. Practice of polygyny was prevalent among them. The practice of marrying one's mother's brother's daughter, and father's sister's daughter is not found among the Khattris. The community is vegetarian by tradition and adhere to Vaishnava sect. They worship the goddess Hinglaja in Sind province, now a part of Pakistan. Fair-complexioned, tall and good looking they show a resemblance with Khatri trading community of Punjab. However they do not have any thing to say about their migration to Maharashtra from Punjab *via* Gujarat.

**Kohli:** This community is found in Sakoli, Arjuni-Morgaon, Lakhandur, Mohadi, Tumsar, Bhandara talukas in Bhandara district and Sadak-Arjuni and Devari talukas in Gondia district; Chimur, Mul, Nagbhid talukas in Chandrapur district and Kurkheda taluka in Gadchiroli district. According to 1911 Census, population of this community was 26,000. It appears that this community has immigrated in Maharashtra from outside. There are two legends about their original home land. According to one legend when the Gond king of Chandrapur went to Benaras, he brought along with

him some persons of this community, who were the founders of this community in Maharashtra. As per the account of the people of this community living in Bhandara District, their first settlement was at Lanji in Balaghat. It is opined that the gardener-community called Kothri from the North and the Kohali community are one and the same. There is some recognizable influence of the northern cultural tradition on this community. The Kohalis in Chandrapur district, however, consider themselves to be immigrants from South India. This belief is supported by some anthropologists who say that Kohalis, and Kolis in Western Maharashtra could be the same, but this belief has no proof. Irawati Karve, however, on the basis of her observation of the mode of dress of the females of this community and the dialect spoken by the people, supports the possibility of migration of this community in Maharashtra from North India.

*The Bhandara district Gazetteer* published in 1908 makes mention of huge irrigation tanks built by the people of this community in Morgaon-Arjuni and Sakoli tahsils. Of these, two tanks, one at Navegaon, and the other at Seoni are worth mentioning. Along with the cultivation of sugarcane they also cultivate rice. Elsewhere, jaggery is prepared from sugarcane by employing hired labourers. However, Kohalis do this on small scale as cottage industry, and sell jaggery. In this work all members of the household, young and old, participate. As this occupation requires larger man-power the practice of polygyny was in existence in the early days. As the wife was an economic asset, her wrong doings were connived at or she was rarely punished. Widow remarriage is permitted. Divorce although allowed is rarely taken place. A widow is married to a sword as a symbol of the second husband who does not go through the marriage ceremony. Marriage with mother's brother's daughter is allowed. Kohalis celebrate their marriages collectively on an appropriate day. Marriage and such other rituals are attended by a Brahmin priest. Wooden replica of Rapi and Khurpa, the tools used by Chambhars are made on the occasion of marriage. On the second day of the marriage a barber and washerman uplift the bride and the groom, and sing songs and dance, while others sprinkle red powder upon the couple. The community does not have sub-castes, but has exogamous division into Kulas. The Kulas or clans are not based on *Devak*, a fact which is supported by the peculiar nature of their surnames. Some of their surnames are as follows: Hatwar, Mungusmare, Pustode, Lanjewar, Nakade, Mungmode, Khune, Kapgate, Kashiwar, Gahane, Gobade, Lanje, Borkar, Samrit, Shahare, Parshuramkar, Dongarwar, Gopale, Buddhe, Hatzade, etc. A person marrying outside the caste is ex-communicated. Kohalis are non-vegetarians, but drinking liquor is prohibited. The dead is

cremated. As a result of the spread of education some persons have entered into various employments.

**Kokna :** A tribal community known by such names as Kokna, Kokni, or Kukna, is concentrated in Paith, Surgana, Dindori, Kalwan and Baglan talukas of Nasik district; Nandurbar taluka of Nandubar district ; Navapur and Sakri talukas of Dhule district and Jawhar Taluka of Thane district. The Koknas are notified as a Scheduled Tribe in Maharashtra and also in Rajasthan, Gujarat and Karnataka States, and in the Union Territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli. It is believed that the tribe migrated from Konkan to its present destination during the famine of Durgadevi (1396-1407). According to 1981 Census, the population of the tribe in Maharashtra was 3,52,932. The Koknas are divided into a number of exogamous *Kulas*; viz. Bagul, Bhojar, Awari, Dhom, Gaviti, Khambayeet, Gavali, Gaikwad, Mahale, Raut, Thakre, Gangurde, Pawar, Surve, Chaudhari, Kadu etc. The Kula names are used as surnames as they do not have separate surnames. Kula exogamy is practised. Similarly marriage with father's brother's daughter; mother's sister's daughter; father's brother's daughter ; sister's daughter, and the widow of the elder brother is not allowed. They prefer to marry maternal uncle's daughter, and wife's younger sister. Widow re-marriage is allowed. *Dej* or bride-price is paid to the bride's father at the time of engagement either in full or in part, and the remaining part is paid on the day of marriage. 'Mothi Pen' is treated as a ceremony. *Mothi pen* is performed after the payment of the bride-price. Marriage takes place at the bride's house, generally in the evening on any auspicious day in the month of Magh fixed by the Brahmin priest. After marriage, the girl leaves her parental house and goes to stay in her husband's house when the partition of the household takes place. The eldest son inherits the family idols, as per the patrilineal system. Koknas do not observe any ceremony at the time of first pregnancy or childbirth.

Koknas live in different Padas (hamlets) situated near the fields along with the other castes and tribes so as to facilitate close supervision of farm work. A Kokna house is generally a large rectangular or square shaped single room structure on a simple mud foundation, or in a few cases on a stone platform, with a partition inside. Usually it has no verandah. The walls are made of Karvi reed plastered on both sides with cow-dung and mud. Houses with thatched or tiled roofs are also found. A house has two or three doors, but no windows. In the past Koknas used to speak their dialect Kokni which was mixture of Marathi, Gujarathi, Varli and Ahirani languages. But at present they speak Marathi. Koknas are

hard-working cultivators. They worship Kansari, Dongardeo, Mauli, Gaondey, Asara, Brahma, Veer, Supali, Hirva and Vaghadeo and celebrate Hindu festivals. Their tutelary deities include Khanderao, Goddess Saptashringi, Bhirangdeo, Mari-Aai, Hanuman, Ram, Krishna, Dhanai, Punai, Patya are also worshipped as per local tradition. A system of Mahalkari, Deshmukh, Patil and Karbhari was in existence among the Koknas but at present it has ceased to exist.

**Kolam :** This tribe belongs to the Dravidian groups of tribes, and is notified as Scheduled Tribe in Maharashtra. It is also classified as a primitive tribe. According to Hiralal, Kolams could have been the original inhabitants of the Kolambai hillocks in Nilgiri district. This tribe is known by such names as Kolam, Kotam, Kolma, Kolhma, Kolham, and Kolama. However the correct name of the tribe is Kolam or Kolavan. The word 'Kol' in *Sanskrit* means a hog. Kolams are very adept in hunting hogs and this might have given them their name Kolam. As per the Census of 1931 the population of Kolams (Hindu and Tribal religion) was 58,519 in Vidarbha and in 1981 the tribe had a population of 1,18,073 and in 1991 census it was increased upto 1,47,843 in Maharashtra. Kolams are found in large numbers in Amravati, Yeotmal, Wardha and Chandrapur districts of Vidarbha and Nanded, Beed and Parbhani districts of Marathwada. Among these districts Yeotmal has the highest concentration of Kolams. It is possible that their first home was in the four districts of Vidarbha from where they scattered elsewhere. The kolam locality is called "POD" and is usually away from the main stream population.

Kolams are dark complexioned, stoutly built, and in other respects resemble Andh and Kunbi living in the neighbourhood. They have considerable similarity with Gonds, though they do not intermarry. Gonds were the local chieftains and landlords while Kolams were their servants. Kolams speak in their Kolami dialect. According to well-known linguist Griearson Kolami is akin to Gondi and agrees in certain respects with Kannada, Tamil and Telugu. Dr. M.B. Emenu, Dr. Ketkar, and Dr. Irawati Karve have named their dialect as 'Kolami' after considerable research. Being the inhabitants of Maharashtra they speak Marathi or Hindi with others. In fact some Kolams are more at ease with Marathi than their own dialect. Their female songs are in Marathi, and the Kolams have Marathi clan names.

Hunting, agriculture and agricultural labour are the main occupations followed by Kolams. They are also engaged in preparing baskets and mats from Bamboo. Although they are meat eaters, they eat meat only of a hunted game, and not by purchasing it in the

market. As the god Hanuman is worshipped by them, they do not kill monkeys. They also do not kill domesticated animals like a dog and a cat and those who do it are ex-communicated.

There are no sub-castes among the Kolams. However the tribe is divided into four exogamous groups based on the worship of a number of totemic deities namely, Chardeve, Pachdeve, Sahadeve and Satdeve. Marriage in the same *Kula* is prohibited. The surnames among the Kolams are the following :

Anam, Asola, Arjal, Bodhe, Bhole, Chandekar, Ghumte, Junghare, Atram, Ardhune, Aswale, Kasar, Kapre, Kinare, Kirit, Kumbre, Kumbhekar, Kondekar, Komti, Kolhe, Khadse, Gujaram, Gunjte, Ghasade, Ghatekar, Ghumte, Jambhe, Chandekar, Zedge, Zole, Tekam, Debare, Dhobare, Talware, Tadam, Dadhe, Dabhe, Dabhekar, Devgade, Devatkar, Dhote, Patole, Naikwade, Pads, Bode, Bade, Borkar, Bhivaikar, Bhivankar, Bhorade, Bhole, Bholekar, Madavi, Marathe, Masram, Mangurle, Madni, Maregaom, Munjale, Mundhekar, More, Yedse, Raut, Rajur, Rajurkar, Ramgade, Rampure, Lungse, Lonkar, Lavhane, Wade, Warajhkar, Wadhode, Shinde, Shible, Sakrapure, Sapode, Sivankar, Sukli, Soramble, and Hivari. The boys are married at the age of 17 to 19 years and girls at 12 to 14 years. Marriage with mother's brother's daughter is permitted but not with father's sister's daughter, and mother's sister's daughter. A marriage form known as "Gharghushi" is in vogue among Kolams. Marriage by elopment was once permitted by Kolams but now-a-days it is not practised. However, in the form of a symbolic ritual this is practised even today. Their tribal priest known as "Vetalak" officiates at the time of marriage. For performing marriage ceremony, Saturdays and Wednesdays are regarded as auspicious, while Mondays are regarded as inauspicious. Widow remarriage is allowed but she has to marry a widower. Levirate is not allowed. A widower is also not allowed to marry his wife's sister. Divorce is allowed.

Kolams are the firm believers in their tribal deities. The Names of these deities are as follows :

Devi, Aaya, Bek, Karaymeray, Mankubai, Lalabai, Bhutaya, Waghaya, Bhowani, Savari, Bhimayyak, Sansuryak, Pardhyak, Jaytur, Chankhan, Kalasur, Churaghali (Matya), Dahit, Bahis, Sakoba, Mhasoba, Bhayarup, Meti Diyam, Diyam Satvan, Moram, Mahadeo and Maruti etc. The names of their festivals are as follows : *Phanmodi* (Varsha Pratipada), *Mohadombhari* (Akshay Trititeya), *Gaonbandhani* which means fortification of the village against evil forces and epidemics (some time in the months of Vaishaks and Jyeshtha),

*Matya* (during summer), *Chait* (full- moon day in Chaitra), Giving seeds to *Bhimayyak* (2 to 3 days before or after the beginning of the rains), 'Bath of *Bhimayyak*' (Vaishakh). Festival of Morama (at the time of the foundation of a new settlement, and every three years thereafter), 'Worship of Waghai' (full-moon day of Ashadh), 'Worship of Jaitur' (Last three days of Ashadh or after two or three days), *Phargul* and *Kashtaphedi*, *Nagpanchami*, *Phulzadni* or *Jhadperani* (Nagpanchami), Poka, (Pola), Atari (after Pola), *Akharpakh* (Pitramoksh Amavasya), Dassera, Divali, Muharam, *Metidiyam* (Winter), *Pettadiyam* (Paush) Worship of Mother (Magh), and Holi. The Ghusadi or Gosavi are their religious leaders or priests and the Ghusadi dance is very colourful and famous.

Hindu customs and traditions have made a great impact on the social life of Kolams. No festival is complete without a dance. In the programme called 'Itihas' the entire folk of Kolams is depicted through dance and songs. They have a good knowledge of medicinal plants. Male and female offenders are excommunicated by the Panchayat of the community. While accepting them back in to the tribal-fold, the male is made to dip his head in the river after which it is shaved by a barber. Even female offenders have to undergo the same procedure. The dead person is buried. Kolam villages are planned and are clean. On the land where the village is to be settled the tribal priest drives four wooden pegs in four directions, and all the houses are built in rows within the area. The roofs of the houses are thatched with straw. In the centre of the habitation area a village office or *Chawdi* is constructed. Naik, Mahajan, Karbhari and Ghatya are the four village officers elected by a typical method based on consensus by all adult persons from the Community on the Gudhi Padwa (Chaitra shuddha pratipada) day. Local problems and cases are settled by the Caste Panchayat. The whole community may also be called by the Naik for some problems. If the population outgrows the original area, the tribal priest ritually removes the pegs and pitches them away from the original spot.<sup>20</sup>

**Koli:** Occupationally and culturally divergent groups, subsumed under the name Koli in Maharashtra are divided into different groups, namely, Son-koli, Mahadeo Koli or Dongar Koli; Malhar Koli and Dhor Koli. Out of these, the Sonkolis are the fishermen found in the west coast in Konkan. The remaining sub-groups of Kolis are found in the hilly regions of Sahyadri and Satpuda mountains. Mahadeo Koli, Malhar Koli and Dhor Koli are declared as Scheduled Tribes in Maharashtra.

The Meaning of the word 'Kol' is a boat or a 'canoe'. It is possible that Kolis engaged in fishing, got their name from the 'boat'

which they used in fishing. In Sanskrit the word 'Kolla' is used to refer to this tribe and its meaning is given as petty warrior tribe living in the hills and jungles.

**Mahadeo Koli :** According to the Census of 1961, population of this tribe was 2,74,244 which rose to 7,87,448 in the year 1981.<sup>21</sup> As per the 1991 Census the population of this tribe was 9,99,321. In the Presidential Order, they are referred to as Koli Mahadeo or Dongar Koli. It is possible that the tribe has got its name from their devotion to Lord Mahadeo or from the name of their abode namely Mahadeo Hills. People of this community acknowledge that they belong to Koli tribe but treat themselves separate from Malhar Koli. The tribe is mainly concentrated in Nashik, Pune, Ahmednagar and Thane Districts. According to Mackintosh, their original home was the hills of Mahadeo and Balaghat from where they came to the present habitation. In historic times they adhered to the Lingayat Sect. At the time of marriage and death they used to invite Raval Gosavis for conducting the rituals. During Peshwa rule they embraced Hinduism.

The tribe is divided into several *Kula* groups, which are exogamous in nature. Marriage are not permitted within the same Kula. The number of such *Kulas* according Captain Mackintosh was Twenty Four, and Sub-Kulas were 218. Twelve families constitute a lineage. The lineages are called 'Gotribhau'. All these groups are exogamous in nature and marriage within such a group is prohibited. According to their custom the age at marriage for the boys was between 12 to 16 and for the girls between 5 to 10.

Now-a-days however marriage is arranged only when a girl comes of age. At the time of marriage, bride price, as well as clothes and grain are given. Marriage with mother's brother's daughter and with wife's sister is allowed, but not with father's sister's daughter and mother's sister's daughter. Widow remarriage and divorce are allowed. However, divorce is not encouraged. Marriage ceremony takes place in a Pandal at the residence of the bride. Headgears (Mundavali) of *Rui* or *Champak* are tied around the head of the bride and the groom. At the time of marriage the bride and the groom stand on leaf plates below the festoons facing each other. A ritual called 'Oti Bharane' is not performed in the case of a pregnant woman. The first delivery takes place at the residence of her husband. At the time of delivery a woman is made to sleep on the floor and not on the wooden cot. Cold water is poured on the newly born child immediately after its birth. This is called 'Opsavani'. Traditionally burial of the dead is practised, but now-a-days cremation is becoming common. At the time of mourning ritual heirs of the deceased and the members of his lineage are presented with white turbans by the near relatives. Tying a turban marks the end of the mourning period.

All Kolis worship Khandoba, Bhairoba, Ekvira, and Bhawani. However Varsubai is a special deity of Mahadeo Kolis who protects them from disease. They also worship Waghdeo, Maruti, Ram, Shiva, Krishna, Kalsubai, Jakubai, Satubai, Ranai and Kamalja. Mahadeo Kolis are credulous people and they have a strong faith in vows, charms and spells. Their religious practices are similar to those of Kunbis.

Mahadeo Kolis are dark complexioned, short statured, and sturdily built. Traditionally, men wear loin-cloths while females wear nine yard sari and bodice. They are mainly engaged in agriculture, animal husbandry, and agricultural labour. They are non-vegetarians and their daily meal, includes roti of Nagli or Sav and Vegetables. Drinking Liquor is not disapproved.

**Malhar Koli :** According to the Census of 1961, 1981 and 1991, the population of this tribe was 89,047, 1,77,368 and 206,741 persons respectively. This tribe is included in the list of the Scheduled Tribes. In rural areas the members of this community supply water to the villagers, and hence they are known as 'Panbhare Koli'. In this task they keep a roll of cloth or *Chumbal* on their head and then place water vessels on their heads. Hence the community is also known by the name 'Chumble Koli'. Some Kolis live along with Kunbis and hence are called 'Kunam Kolis'. In historic times Malhar Kolis used to guard the hill forts and also approach roads to hill forts. The hereditary Keepers of Sinhagad, Torna and Rajgad forts were the members of this community. Besides supplying water to households of farmers, they used to carry palanquins and do hunting. For supplying water they were paid *Baluta* by farmers. In the British regime, persons of this community were employed as household servants by the landlords in Thane District. As per 1961 Census, 61 percent of the people of the community were engaged in agriculture and 30 percent were working as agricultural labourers. They speak Marathi and call themselves Malhar Koli or Malhar Kunbi.

The tribe is divided into several exogamous *Kulas* and these *Kula* names are used as surnames. Some of their surnames are Jadhav, Lang, Kerav, Powar, Holar, and Wekhande. Marriage with mother's brother's daughter and with wife's sister are allowed. Marriage ceremony is conducted by a Brahmin priest or the tribal priest. Bride-Price is given by the groom. Widow remarriage and divorce are allowed.

They resemble Mahadeo Kolis in respect of their dialect, dress, customs, festivals and celebrations. They worship Waghya, Hivra, and Narayandeo which are the deities of the tribe. Waghya is the

protector of cattle. This deity is established at the outskirts of the village or in the open in the form of a picture or an idol. He is worshipped in the month of Kartik when the offering of sheep or fowl is made. The god Hivra protects the family. He is also supposed to provide protection from disease and accidents. A bunch of peacock feathers is worshipped in the month of Ashwin as a symbol of this deity. Offering of beans, cucumbers, etc. is made to this deity.

Narayandeo gives protection against sudden calamities and sufferings. A symbol of this deity in the form of a human figure drawn on a brass plate is kept with the seniormost head of the family. People of this tribe celebrate *Nagpanchami*, *Gauri*, *Diwali* and *Holi* with great enthusiasm. Dancing and singing is customary at the time of festivals. Resolution of disputes is done through the community Panchayat. Their daily meal consists of Rice, and Roti (bread) of rice flour.

**Dhor Koli :** The tribe known by various names as 'Koli Dhor' Tokre Koli, Kolcha or Kolgha Koli is one of the Scheduled Tribes of Maharashtra. The tribe had a population of 15,461 persons in 1961, which rose to 77,435 in 1981 and 1,17,091 in 1991. They are found in the Districts of Thane, Nashik, Dhule, Jalgaon, Kolhapur and Solapur. In physical appearance they are similar to other tribal communities in Maharashtra. They are of medium built, slim and dark complexioned. They speak Marathi. They are engaged in agriculture, agricultural labour, and ordinary labour, and in collecting forest produce, roots and fruits.

The tribe is divided into several exogamous *Kulas*, the names of which are used as surnames. Some of the surnames are as follows:- Ambekar, Arde, Barmane, Choudhary, Gaikwad, Gawit, Ghatal etc. Marriage within the same Kula is prohibited. Marriage with mother's brother's daughter, father's sister's daughter, and with the younger sister of the wife is conventional. Widow re-marriage and divorce are allowed by their custom. Cremation of the dead is in vogue. However young children and those died in epidemics are buried. Dhor Kolis are Hindus. Besides worshipping the tribal deities namely, Hivra, Himani and Kansari, they worship the main Hindu deities namely, Khanderao, Bhairav, Brahma and Bhavani. Diwali and Holi are their major festivals. Tattooing on the body is common.

**Son Koli :** According to the legend given in a religious work *Shiva Nibandh* from the sound 'So-Hum' (That You Are) of the Supreme.— Being a male child known by the names 'So-hum,' 'Soma' or Mayat was born. The son of the daughter of Mayat turned to violence, and as a result, Mayat directed him to seek living on fishing.

Accordingly he took to fishing, and as a result he and his descendants acquired the name Son or Son Koli. This community of fishermen is spread along the coastline in Konkan from Harne Port in Ratnagiri District to Arnala in Thane District. According to 1931 Census, the population of this community in Bombay Presidency was 22,891. This community dwelt in Raigad district. Under the rule of Angre in Konkan a tax known as *Joban Patti* was imposed on the females of this community for wearing *Choli* or *Bodice*. Only those women of this community who paid this tax were allowed to wear bodice. They were supposed to cover their breasts under the fold of a sari. As a result of this oppressive rule, Son Kolis from Alibag and Thal area migrated elsewhere. However, they kept on their identity by calling themselves Thalkar Sonkoli. Their main settlement was at Alibag. The main residence of their Chief Patil or head of the community was at Alibag. In the past besides fishing, members of this community were also employed in the army, as keepers of the forts, and as sailors on the navalship. They also used to export dried portion of shark-belly. Now-a-days, besides fishing, they sell fish, prepare fishing nets and fertilizers after drying small fish, and some have become farmers.

Son Kolis are dark-complexioned, heavily built, and have round face. They are expert sailors and are sturdy. Females have good features, attractive appearance, and sturdy built. Males are engaged in fishing, while females undertake such activities as grading and selling fish, and drying them. The dress of Son Kolis is also distinctive. Males wear a short coloured *Dhoti*, *Kudta* (shirt), and a coloured scarf round the neck or on the shoulder. Females wear a tight sari upto the knees. One fold of the sari is worn on the back from the right shoulder and brought forward from the left side tucking the tail-end. Ornaments of the females are very artistic but very heavy. They spend lavishly on marriage ceremony. Their daily meal consists of cooked rice, Roti (bread) of rice flour, and fish. They are hard-working, economically self-reliant, hospitable, and trustworthy. Widow remarriage and divorce are allowed. The dead is cremated except those who die of small-pox. Such persons are buried. They have Village Panchayat and a Group Panchayat which perform the task of administering justice.

Koli Songs and dances are very popular. They worship Khandoba of Jejuri and the goddess Ekvira of Karla as their principal deities. They organize grand celebrations on the full-moon day in the month of Magh, Narali Purnima and Navratri. On the day of Narali Purnima, they worship the sea by offering coconut, and only afterwards inaugurate their fishing activities.

**Koshti** : The weaver community known as Koshti in Marathi and Salewar in Telugu are mainly found in Nagpur, Bhandara, Gondia, Wardha, Chandrapur, and Amravati Districts of Vidarbha though their major concentration is to be found in Nagpur and adjoining areas. Districtwise population of Koshtis is shown in the table below :—

District	1872	1911	1921	1931
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Wardha . . . . .	5,784	7,227	6,401	7,487
Nagpur . . . . .	31,797	42,271	40,008	47,149
Chanda . . . . .	9,244	6,789	6,842	13,566
Bhandara . . . . .	17,580	24,110	14,909	18,752
Amraoti . . . . .	..	7,981	7,489	6,772
Akola . . . . .	..	1,783	2,075	1,956
Buldana . . . . .	..	719	1,265	535
Yeotmal . . . . .	..	3,344	3,018	3,038
Total Vidarbha . . . . .	64,405	94,224	82,007	99,255

In the Census reports of 1911, 1921 and 1931 they were enumerated as Hindus. Therefore, in the absence of separate information, the population of the Koshti Community is not authentically available. The Government of erstwhile C.P. and Berar did not treat them as a Tribal Community. Their name was not included in the list of Backward Tribes, eligible to receive educational facilities, published on 4th December 1941, and thereafter were not shown as Backward Tribe in the Local Government Act of 1948 of C.P. and Berar.

The Koshtis believed that they were the descendants of Markandeya Rishi who first undertook weaving of cloth from the lotus fibres for enabling gods to cover their nakedness. He was rewarded for this Act by offering him the daughter of Surya in marriage, and dowry comprising demon Bhavani and a Tiger. However, as the demon was disobedient to him, Markandeya killed him and prepared the first loom from his bones. The Koshtis believe that they have no fear from the tiger because of its sacred association with the caste, and hence they refrain from killing or hurting a tiger.<sup>22</sup> There are twelve and half sub-castes among the Koshtis. Prominent among them are Lad, Gadhewal, Deshkar, and Devang.<sup>23</sup> Jain Koshtis observe the Jain rituals. The Salewars have three main

divisions, viz; Sutsale, Padmasale and Sagunsale. The Koshtis married within their own sub-caste in the past, but now this rule is not strictly observed. Marriage in the same Kula is prohibited. They worship Hindu deities and celebrate Hindu festivals, especially Ganesh festival with considerable pomp. Ganesh is considered to be their chief deity. The Festival of Rakhashabandhan is also celebrated by them with enthusiasm. Some Koshtis belong to Lingayat Kabirpanthi, and Gurumukhi sects. Narayandeo, Balraj, and Ambegadya are their popular deities. The Gurumukh is also the disciples of Kolibaba alias Kolbaswami of Dhapewada near Kalmeshwar and worship a coconut at home. In the name of this Guru. They consider their tools and implements used in weaving as sacred; and hence worship them. A Brahman is their priest. They are non-vegeterians but Lad, Jain and Hatghar Koshtis are vegeterians. The Chief of the Koshti Panchayat is known as Mahajan or Shetye Mahajan.

**Korku :** This tribe belonging to the Munda and Kolarian group of tribes is found on both sides of Satpuda range concentrated in Melghat in Amravati district, as well as in Akola and Buldhana districts that is from Melghat to Mahadeo hills in the north Vidarbha. People of this tribe have a liking for isolated and peaceful life and hence they prefer the hilly and forest region for settlement. As per the Census of 1981, the population of this tribe in Maharashtra was 1,15,973 and in 1991 it was 141,202.

A legend explains the creation of this tribe as follows :

King Ravana prayed Lord Mahadeo to populate the hilly region of Vindhya and Satpuda. Whereupon Lord Mahadeo prepared two images from the red mud and infused life in them and named them Mula and Mulai who became the first ancestors of this tribe. As a result the Korkus of Melghat consider themselves to be the descendants of King Ravana. Some people hold that Korkus could be the descendants of a King belonging to the Kurma lineage of the *Mahabharat* period.

According to Russel the word for man in Korku dialect is Koru. Another view is that the word 'Kora' in Korku dialect means a way or a path and Korku means a way farer.<sup>24</sup> The word Korku also means a descent and virtuous person, the qualities manifested in the behaviour of these people.

The tribe is divided into three groups, which appear to be territorial in nature, namely Mavhasi (or Movasi), Ruma, and Bondoya. Each of these groups are further divided into thirty two exogamous groups. The first two groups are known as Raj-Korkus,

and persons of these groups are mainly land-lords. The Mahvasis claim themselves to be the descendants of Nag lineage. Their surnames are formed after trees, birds and animals etc. relevant to their clans. According to Russel a considerable similarity which one notices in the customs and conventions of Gonds and Korkus which was a result of their co-existence for centuries. However, Korkus of Maharashtra consider themselves to be of superior rank.

Korku have not progressed much because of their isolation. In the past, the tribe did not lead a settled life. Even when settled, living in a permanent house is a taboo and these people prefer living in huts. Korkus are engaged in agriculture, animal husbandary, forest labour, and gathering Tendu leaves, honey, roots and fruits. Now-a-days, they are not engaged in hunting as they used to be previously. The age at marriage for a boy is 15 to 20 years, and for a girl 12 to 17 years. Widow remarriage and divorce are allowed. Marriage ceremony usually begins around holi festival. Jujube has an important in marriage ceremony. The groom's father gives a gift (Dakshina), against the bride (Bride price).

Korkus are Hindus and practise idol worship. They worship various deities. Every village has specific female and a male deities which are treated as village deities. Muthuwa is a village deity common in all Korku villages and is worshipped before all other worships. Lord Shri Krishna is a favourite deity. Arjun and Bhim are also revered by them as deities. They further worship Ravana, Meghnad, Dongardeo or the hill-god, Mata, and a deity offering them protection from tigers and other wild animals. The Sun and Moon which are called 'Gomaj' in their dialect are worshipped by them as principal deities. They believe in magic and witch-craft. A song called 'Ghumnya sirinj' is sung to get possessed by the god. Their priest is called 'Bhumka', and a charmer is called 'Padyal'. The dead is buried.

The tribe has its own dialect which shows an affinity with the dialect of Kol tribe living in Chhota Nagpur. Influence of Urdu and Varhadi is seen on this dialect. Among themselves they talk in their Korku dialect, while with others they talk in Marathi or Hindi. It is from the Kherwarian group of languages.

An average Korku male wears a tattered turban and a loin-cloth. Keeping the head uncovered is considered to be ominous. Females

wear 'Lubu' which is a ten-yard coloured Sari and *Choli*. Formerly wearing bodice was not common among some females. They appreciate contrasting colours rather than matching colours while wearing Sari and bodice. Some women wear typical Korku sandals called 'Vayna' which are light and closed at the heel and normally they do not go out without sandals. They wear necklaces of cowrie, coral beads or coloured beads of glass, silver and brass ornaments and are fond of preparing garlands of flowers. Singing and dancing constitute their pastime activity. Males and females do not dance together and their dance styles are also different. Male dance is known as 'chusun' or 'Susun', while female dance is called 'Gaduli'. Korku dances have won first prizes in the Republic Day Celebrations held in the capital of India. Bhavai and Jeroti are important festivals. They also Celebrate *Holi* and *Dassera*. Their festival 'Bhave' which marks the beginning of a new year is celebrated on the new moon day of the month of Vaishakh. On the same day 'Ganamay', the children's festival is also celebrated.

**Mahar :** Mahars are found almost in every village in Maharashtra and it is rare to come across a village where a Mahar household does not exist. During pre-Independence days in Maharashtra, the Mahar were numerically the largest caste among those considered to be untouchable. According to 1911 Census, the population of Mahars in Bombay Province was 6,62,319 and in C.P. and Berar it was 11,64,383. In the state of Hyderabad, combined population of Mahars and Malas was 11,37,589. In 1931 their percentage in the total population of four regions of Maharashtra, namely, Konkan, Deccan, Vidarbha and Marathwada was 6.1, 7.6, 15.1 and 10.16 respectively. In 1971 population of the Mahars was 10,78,571 and their percentage in the total population of the Scheduled Castes was 35.65 percent. In 1981 the corresponding population was 16,48,269 and their percentage in the Scheduled caste population in Maharashtra was 36.79 percent. These figures reveal the numerical strength of the Mahar caste in Maharashtra. As per the 1991 Census the population (including Mahar, Mehra, Tarul, Dhegu Megu) of this caste was 51,20,355. During the British rule, as a result of industrialization Mahars migrated to big cities like Mumbai, Pune and Nagpur in large numbers. Similarly they went in large numbers to Bhandara and Gondia as 'Bidi' workers, and in Ahmednagar district as workers in sugar factories.

In the Census Report of 1911 of the Bombay Presidency 53 sub-castes among Mahars have been recorded. Kosare in his book on 'Dalit Movements in Vidarbha' mentions that there are twelve and half sub-castes of Mahars in Vidarbha region. Half of them include

all those people belonging to other sub-castes who were excommunicated for various of reasons. Some of such sub-castes are as follows : Barke, Ladwan, Bawne, Somavanshi, kosare, Ardhvan and Zade bawne etc. These sub-castes had their caste Panchayats.

The Mahars were a part of the *Baluta* system. Their main duty was to undertake various tasks covered by the term 'Gavki'. For this work they were paid out of farm produce at the time of harvest. In the Muslim and the Maratha rule the Mahars had received certain rights for serving the village people. They were entitled to receive offering of food at Holi, *Otipatti* or payment in grain made to a Mahar woman in the lap of her Sari for her work at the time of beating out ears of corns, payment known as 'Ran Sodawane' at the time of cutting the crop, 'Madhepatti' paid for disposing the dead cattle, 'fool-wear' payment for guarding the village gates, and payment for supplying fire-wood and cowdung cakes. In addition, the Mahars were entitled to receive *Mangli* for tying thread round the village on the new-moon day in the months of Aashadh and Kartik, rice put on the wooden seats used by the bride and the groom for sitting at the time of marriage, a payment called 'Lagin Takka' for erecting a marriage Pandal, and *Ruka Takka* a present given at the time of marriage. They were required to perform duties such as, acting as a guide to touring government officials, conveying their messages, keeping a watch on the boundaries of the fields so as to prevent encroachment, guarding the government treasury, village cleanliness etc. For performing these duties they were given a cash payment and land grant by the government. They had a reputation for being trustworthy, reliable and hard-working. Today they no longer enjoy the above mentioned rights. After Independence, caste and service gift-lands have been abolished by the government. Today in their source of livelihood are included labour, marginal farming, domestic service, playing instrumental music on festival occasions, government service etc. As a result of various concessions and facilities provided by the government there is considerable progress in their condition. However, even today in rural areas habitation of this community is found at the out skrits of the village. Their festivals are similar to those of Hindus. However after *Dhammachakra Pravartan*, that is mass conversion to Buddhism those who have embraced Buddhism, conduct their ritual life according to Buddhist system. These rites exhibit a supreme respect for, and devotion to Lord Gautam Buddha, and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedker. They eat meat and their food includes Roti of Jwar or Bajra, Dal and *Chutney*. They worship Bahiroba, Khandoba, Vithoba and such other deities, and keep plaques of their ancestors in the shrine. In several localities of the people of this caste, temples of

Nagoba, Satwai, Mariaai are found. Their priests are mostly from their caste. In the period of Saint Namdeo and Tukaram several Mahars embraced devotional Varkari Cult. A temple dedicated to great Saint Chokhamela is at Pandharpur.

The Mahars bear mixed physical features. The skin-colour varies from fair to dark. Because of their height and sturdy physique they were recruited in the military service. Similarly the Mahars living in different regions, show a good deal of physical similarity with other castes living in the same region and cannot generally be distinguished from other communities. Surnames and Kula names of Mahars are similar to those of Marathas and Kunbis. Persons having the same *Devak* do not marry. Marriage with mother's brother's daughter is conventional. Divorce and widow-remarriage are permitted. The dead are cremated or buried. With a view to removing injustice done to former untouchables Dr. B. R. alias Babasaheb Ambedkar embraced Buddhism on *Deekshabhoomi* at Nagpur on 14th October 1956 alongwith a large number of Mahars. These neo-Buddhist perform rites of passage, namely, birth, naming, marriage and death, according to Buddhist system. They also celebrate Buddha Jayanti and Ambedkar Jayanti. Government of India amended the Scheduled Castes Order in 1990, to avail the facilities of Scheduled Castes to the Buddhist.

**Mali :** The word Mali might have been derived from the Sanskrit word 'Malakar' which means one who makes garlands, and the Marathi word 'Mal' also means a garland. They are mainly found in Southern Maharashtra, and to some extent in Gujarat, Konkan, and Karnatak. Like Kunbi the Malis are traditional agriculturists in Maharashtra. They are known for gardening of various crops and irrigation. Agriculture and agricultural labour are the two main sources of their livelihood. Originally, they might have been Kunbis, who in course of time became differentiated from the rest due to their distinct agricultural technique. The term Mali is based on occupation and as such is also applied to those persons from other castes who follow this occupation. Muslim Malis in Maharashtra are called Bagwans. The caste is divided into some endogamous sub-groups as follows : Phul Mali, Halde, Bankar or Kas Mali, Kacha Mali, Kadu Mali, Bavane Mali, Adhaprabhu, Adhasheti, Jire Mali, Pade Mali, Unde Mali, and Lingayat Mali. Among these sub-castes Phul Malis are considered to be superior to others in social status. The majority of Malis belong to Phul Mali, Jire Mali, Kacha Mali, and Halde Mali sub-castes. There is a tendency among several Mali sub-castes to identify themselves as Phul Mali or Savta Mali. As per the Census of 1911 the population of the Mali caste in Bombay

Presidency was 3,02,205, which rose to 3,13,221 in 1931. Their percentage in the total population of different regions of Maharashtra in 1931 was as follows: Konkan 0.49, Deccan 1.64, Vidarbha 5.02, and Marathwada 2.14. The caste is divided into several exogamous groups marriage within which is prohibited. The custom of *Devak* exogamy is also observed. Marriage with mother's brother's daughter is customary. Widow remarriage and divorce are allowed. Their marriage rituals are similar to those of the Marathas. However after marriage when the bride and the groom return to the groom's house both are given a ritual bath. At the time, songs narrating importance of soil, flowers, and fruit trees are sung. These songs are called 'Davida', and they are sung to invoke blessings of nature on the couple. The dead are cremated. However, those adhering to Kabir and Mahanubhav sects carry their dead in sitting position in a cradle to the grave-yard where they are buried.

Their social customs are similar to those of Maratha-Kunbi caste. Their family deities are goddess Saptashringi at Vani, and Khandoba. Majority of the Malis are the followers of Varkari cult. In recent times Malis have been in the forefront in sugar industry and have attained economic prosperity. Saint Savata Mali, and Mahatma Jotiba Phule were the two great personalities belonging to this community.

**Mana :** Russel and Hiralal describe Mana as, "a Dravidian caste of cultivators and labourers belonging to the Chanda (Chandrapur) district, from which they have spread to Nagpur, Bhandara and Balaghat." In 1911 they numbered nearly 50,000 person, of whom 34,000 belonged to Chanda. To Russel and Hiralal, origin of the Caste is obscure. It is believed that they are one of the original inhabitants of Chanda and were in power before the Gonds entered Chanda.<sup>25</sup> In the Chanda settlement Report of 1869, Major Lucie Smith wrote, Tradition asserts that prior to the Gond conquest the Manas reigned over the country, having their strongholds at Surjagarh in Aheri and at Manikgarh in the Manikgarh hills, now in Hyderabad, and that after a troubled rule of two hundred years they fell before the Gonds. Many warlike traditions still linger among them, and doubtless in days gone by they did their duty as good soldiers, but they have long since hung up sword and shield and now rank among the cultivators of rice in Chanda.<sup>26</sup> Lucie Smith describes their appearance as of ..... "The Gond type, .... strongly and stoutly made, while in character they are hardy, industrious and truthful." While listing 'Aboriginals' of Chanda district Smith puts the Mana at No. 2 after the Gond and enumerates their population of 29,175.<sup>27</sup>

The two sub-castes of Manas are the Badwaik, Manas and the Khad Manas. Their social organization is based on the number of God-groups worshipped *viz.*, the 4-God, 5-God and 7-God and 9-God groups or phratries. These group have their symbol and a deity. These are exogamous groups and clans from the same God-group cannot inter-marry. Only marriages between different God groups are permissible. This system simulates that of Gonds. The system of bride-price prevails and a groom who is unable to pay bride-price has to render service at his father-in-laws house for a pre-settled period. He is called 'Dhaglya'

The Manas worship Narain Deo, Thakur Deo, Manikya Devi-which is their tutelary deity, Dongar Devi, Nagoba and Waghoba. Similarly each clan-God is worshipped by Mooth-Pooja (i.e. by taking a palmgrip of grain and placing it in number of heaps on the worship platform) In all 72 kulas have been enumerated so far among the Manas, each with its own Kuldevata.

The Mana celebrate Nagpanchmi, Akadi, Jambhul Aavas. Nagdivali and other Hindu festivals like Dussera, Diwali, Holi etc.

They bury as well as cremate the dead <sup>28</sup>.

**Mang:** This caste is found in all parts of Maharashtra and has been included in the category of the Scheduled Castes. On the basis of their population they rank second among the Scheduled Castes of Maharashtra. Their population in the Bombay Province in 1911 was 2,74,037. In 1971 their population in Maharashtra was 9,15,518 and their percentage in the total population of the Scheduled Castes was 30.25. In 1981 their population became 12,11,335 and in 1991 it was increased to 16,54,190. In rural areas the Mang is an important *Balutedar*.

Their traditional occupation is to make and sell ropes made of hemp. They make ropes of various sizes which are used for tying animals. Very thick ropes are used for pulling water-bucket from the well. They also make baskets, date brooms. Mang Garodi is considered to be one of the sub-castes of the Mang. People of this community are husbandsmen, engaged in rearing and shaving buffaloes, and trading in them. The Mangs are village musicians who play music on musical instruments at the time of marriage and on religious occasions. They are good Tamasha artists, a folk-play popular in rural Maharashtra. In the past, they also acted as village watchmen for which they received separate land-grants.

The Mang Caste is called Matang in Sanskrit literature. They believe that they are the descendants of Jamb Rishi. However, their physical features reveal their affinity with the tribal communities.

They were treated as untouchables in the past. The Mangs are also found in Karnataka and Gujarat besides Maharashtra, but no marriage takes place among them. The Mangs in Maharashtra are divided into twenty four endogamous groups, which are as follows :

Assal or Maratha Mang, Bele, Burud, Chapalsunde, Dabkar, Desur, Dhakalwar or Vajantri Mang, Dhor, Ghadshi, Holge or Holar, Jingar, Jirait, Kakar, Kokalwar, Manbhav, Mang Garudi, Tade, Mochi, Pareet, Pend, Shivate, Telangi, *Dhokarkhode*, and Zare. These groups do not intermarry.

All the above sub-castes are further divided into exogamous groups identified with the surnames. Marriage with mother's brother's daughter is permitted but not with father's sister's daughter or with mother's sister's daughter. At the time of marriage leather and ropes are kept in two baskets and the bride and the groom are seated in them facing each other. Divorce and widow remarriage are allowed. Widow remarriage known as ' Pat lawane ' is performed in the dark half of the lunar month according to *Gandharva* method. The system of child marriage which was prevalent among them in the past, has now disappeared. Their marriage is performed according to Hindu rites which are similar to those of Kunbis. The Jangam priest conducts the rituals. Besides worshipping *Mariaai* and *Yallama*, people of this caste worship, Bahiroba, Khandoba, Mhasoba, Ambabai, Kalubai and Vithoba also. They are Shaivas and worship god Mahadeo. They undertake pilgrimage to Alandi, Dehu, Kondhanpur, Shingnapur, Pandharpur and other holy places. Among the Mangs the dead is buried with the face down.

When the dying person's soul is about to depart, the heir dips the end of his turban into water and squeezes it into the mouth of the dying person, and then he gives vent to his sorrow in a loud shriek. It is believed that this shrieking would induce gods to open the door of heaven for the departing soul. On the thirteenth day, the heir goes to the cemetery, places thirteen leaf-cups filled with water at the place where the dead has been buried and on the same day the neighbours and others are offered a meal. The Mangs do not observe the death anniversary (Shradha). The people of this community are tall, sturdy and rustic. Mang women do not tuck their lower end of their sari to the back. They get their hands tattooed. Mangs usually eat bread made of Jawar, Chutney, Varan (of pulses). They have the common surnames such as — Admane, Bhise, Bhode, Paradhi, Jadhav, More, Divate etc.

**Maratha :** Maratha and Kunbi (who are the traditional peasants of Maharashtra) together constitute a major community from the point of view of their population. However, historically the maratha are known primarily as a warrior caste and being rich enjoyed a superior social status as compared to the Kunbis. According to 1931 Census the total population of this caste living in present Maharashtra was 77,12,030 and constituted 23.63 percent of the total population. These two caste groups are treated together as it is socially more realistic to treat them not as two separate castes but two sub-groups of a bigger caste-cluster.<sup>29</sup>

In the historical writings the term maratha is used not to denote any caste but the people of Maharashtra who speak Marathi. The term ' Maratha ' was first used in 100 B.C. in the stone inscription at Naneghat.

Dr. R. G. Bhandarkar and other scholars are of the view that the name Maharashtra could be traced to the original inhabitants of this land known as Maharatta, that is, Marathas. The etymology of the word Maharatta is given in two ways. According to one interpretation Maharatta means Marathi or great warriors. According to the other interpretation the word Maharashtra means the land of the great community of ' Ratta ', that is Marathas. These two interpretations bring out the central position of the Maratha caste in Maharashtra. Greater concentration of Marathas is found in Western Maharashtra comprising the Deccan and the Konkan regions. Marathas claim themselves to be Kshatriyas, but they also have institution of Devak prevalent among the primitive communities. Their surnames and social customs point to the intermingling of Rajputs heritages in this community. There are four divisions of the Maratha caste, called Surya, Soma, Brahma, and Shesh. It is believed that there are ninety six clans among the Marathas and each clan has a separate *Devak*. Some of these Devakas are as follows : Vasan Vel, Rui, Halkund, Suvarna, Kalamb, Morpis, Talawariche Pate, Panch Palvi, Shankh, Velu etc. Among the Marathas there are two divisions, viz., pure or Kshatriya Maratha, and ordinary Maratha. Those having marital relationship with princely families call themselves Assal or Kshatriya Maratha, and claim that they are entitled to perform all Vedic rites prescribed for the Kshatriya Varna. Ordinary Marathas actually till the land and show an affinity with Kunbi and Mali castes. There exists hypergamy between the ordinary Marathas and Kshatriya-Marathas. Marathas observe Devak exogamy and as a result people having the same Devak do not marry. Marriage with mother's brother's daughter is permitted but not with mother's sister's daughter, and father's sister's daughter. The ritual of *Saptapadi* is

performed at the time of marriage. The widow remarriage and divorce are not allowed among the Kshatriya Marathas. The worshipping of Shankar, Parvati, Khandoba, Rokdoba and Bhairav is popular.

The Marathas exhibit martial spirit and are proud of their lineage. Their traditional dress for the males includes a turban on the head, *Barabandi* or a shirt covering the upper portion of the body, Dhoti covering the portion from the waist below, and *Uparne* (bordered covering). The females used, to wear Sari and bodice of superior quality and observed *Purdah*. Now-a-days *Purdah* is not observed. Marathas belonging to ninety-six clans have such surnames as Chavan, Ghatge, Kadam, Mohite, Pawar, Nalawade etc. They have *Gotras* such as Agasti, Angiras, Atri, Kashyap, Vasistha etc. While their *Devkas* are various trees, birds, animals, and other objects. Their customs, conventions and marriage practices are to some extent similar to those of the Brahmins. In the past polygamy was practised by the big land-lords and money-lenders. However, this practice is now legally banned. The *blue-blood* Marathas do not approve of the widow remarriage even to-day. Marathas who worship Khandoba as their family god also perform *Virpooja* (worship of heroes) which is their distinctive cultural characteristic. This ritual is performed as a tribute to the memory of the valiant ancestors.

**Kunbi :** The word Kunbi, which might have been derived from the Sanskrit word 'Kutumbin' or 'Krishivala', meaning one who tills the land, is used to refer to peasant communities in various provinces. This word or a similar one is used in various provinces in India to refer to a group of people who pursue agriculture and animal husbandry and have their houses in a cluster. The main agriculturist castes are recognised by such occupational names as Kunbi in Gujarat, Kurmi in U.P. and Bihar, and Kunbi, Kulambi, Kulwadi in the Deccan. In this broad sense the word Kunbi is used to refer to various traditional peasant castes. The Kunbi caste in Maharashtra is divided into various territorial groups such as Maratha, Kokni, Khandeshi, and Gujar, which are further sub-divided into various sub-castes. The Konkan Kunbis have two sub-groups, namely,—(1) Dotale or Kale, and (2) Talher. Kale Kunbis are found in villages located near jungles in south Konkan, while Talheri Kunbis are found in Thane district. The Khandeshi Kunbis are divided into seven sub-groups, the names of which are as follows : Ghatola, Kumbhar, Madraj, Loni, Panjana, Tirole or Tirale and Vanjari. All these sub-castes dine with each other but do not inter-marry. Gujar Kunbi originally found in Khandesh, might have been a branch of the Gujarati Kunbi. They have within them seven

sub-groups, which are as follows : Anala, Dale, Dore, Gari, Kadwa, Khapra, Bad or Londari and Lewa or Rewa. Lewas who rank highest among them observe taboo against eating meat and drinking liquor. The family name Choudhari which is found among the Jats of Rajasthan and Bharatpur is found among many families of Lewa Kunbi.<sup>30</sup>

The Kunbi community in Vidarbha is divided into several endogamous divisions. Among them Zade Kunbis might have been the first to settle in the region. Tirole Kunbi constitute the majority. Dhanoje Kunbis are found in Chandrapur district, while Khaire and Zade Kunbis are found in Bhandara district.

The institution of *Devak* exists among the Kunbis. People having the same *Devak* do not marry. Widow remarriage and divorce are prevalent among various sub-castes but such instances are rare among the high ranking sub-castes. The practice of marrying maternal uncle's daughter is not in vogue among Khaire Kunbi sub-caste. During pre-Independence days and thereafter, progressive thinkers among the Maratha and Kunbi castes strived to bring about a unification between the two castes. As a result, the view that the Marathas and the Kunbis are not two separate castes but two different names of the same caste, is gaining ground and inter-marriages between the two groups have started taking place.

**Nhavi :** The word 'Nhavi' might have been derived from the Sanskrit word *Napit* which means a barber. According to a legend in vogue in Maharashtra about the origin of this caste, it is claimed that the caste originated from a cobra encircling the neck of the Lord Mahadeo, or from his navel. In different regions the community is known by different names. In Maharashtra they are known by the term 'Nhavi', and traditionally they perform such tasks as hair cutting, pairing nails, shaving, cleaning ears, performing minor surgery which includes opening boils and abscesses, and taking out blood from the affected part of the body by applying leeches. The female members of this community are skilled mid-wives. The community is known by the name Varik in Marathwada and Solapur region, and Mhali in Vidarbha region. According to the Census of 1911, the population of this community in Bombay Presidency was 1,08,683. In Gujarat this community is known by the name Hajam, in U.P. and M.P. by the name Nai, and are accorded superior social status. In Maharashtra Nhavi is treated as a *Balutedar* caste, and is accorded social status which is at par with that of the farming community.

The Nhavi community in Maharashtra, speaking Marathi language is divided into two territorial divisions which are as follows:— (1) Maratha or Deshi, and (2) Konkani. These two sub-castes do not marry each other, nor do they inter-dine with each other. Both these sub-castes are found in Thane district. The Maratha Nhavi sub-caste is further sub-divided into eight endogamous sub-divisions which are as follows : Gangateerkar or Godavari, Ghati, Junari, Kunbi, Khandeshi or Mashalji, Vaideshi, Vajantri and Yelmar. The Konkani Nhavis have two sub-divisions namely Shinde and Bande. In the past Vaideshi Nhavis were considered to be superior in social status, while Junari Nhavis who shaved Europeans and Muslim Jivgars were considered to be of inferior social status. From the Konkani Nhavis, Shindes who were considered to be illegitimate offspring, and Bandes living in southern part of Sindhudurg district and in Sawantwadi State who performed circumcision, were traditionally considered to be of inferior social status. Among the Khandeshi Nhavis, there are two sub-groups namely, Ahir and Tayade. Ahirs play on Shehanai, flute and drum, while Tayades carry petromax lamps in the marriage procession. In Kolhapur district Nhavis have three sub-divisions, namely, Lingayat, Mashal Nhavi and Maratha Nhavi. The Maratha Nhavis apply 'Tilak' or *Gandha* to their forehead, and invite Brahmin priest for performing religious rituals. Lingayat Nhavis apply sacred ash or *Bhasma*, and wear 'Linga' round the neck or on the arm. They invite Jangam priest for conducting religious rituals.

Their surnames, social institutions and religious traditions and customs are similar to those of the Kunbis. In some parts of Maharashtra among the high caste Maratha families, Nhavis are assigned the duty of serving water at dinner, while in Nashik and Khandesh they are employed as cooks. Cross-cousin marriage is allowed. Some sub-castes permit widow-remarriage, and divorce.

Among Konkani Nhavis, on the occasion of widow-remarriage the groom visits the house of the bride on the night before the day of the marriage along with Kasar, Mahar, and some widows, and presents to her Sari and blouse, ornaments, and three tassels of black silk. The bride and the groom sit on the same wooden seat and worship rice, cup of milk and an earthen pot filled with water kept on the plantain leaf. The Kasar puts bangles on the wrists of the bride, and one of the widows applies 'KumKum' on her forehead. After this a rite known as 'Shesh Vidhi' is performed. At that time, the groom keeps his turban on the knee and a widow applies 'Kumkum' and rice grains to the knee of the groom and fills the lap of the Sari of the bride with rice, coconut etc. At night, when the marriage

procession proceeds to the grooms's house, grain, fruits, coconut, rice etc. are kept at the door of the deceased husband of the bride from ancient times, the Nhavi have earned the reputation for being worldly-wise and possessing knowledge of the weak points of all the communities, as a result of the everyday contact they come across with them due to the nature of their occupation. As a result, in the past, they were of great help to others in arranging marriages. In the marriage ceremony Nhavis used to assist Brahmins. The Nhavi is one of the twelve *Balutedars*. They are found in doing such tasks as, carryig palanquins in Kolhapur district, holding torches in public functions in Marathwada, attending to the guests at the time of marriage ceremony, waiving fly-whisker, and spreading mats in Khandesh region, and making leaf-plates, distributing rice grains, betel leaves and nuts at the time of marriage, and offering water to the people before and after the marriage dinner in the marriages of the Maratha community in Nagpur region. Now-a-days, due to the spread of education, most of these practices are disappearing. However, even today, the Nhavi is invited for the first tonsure of the male child, and shaving of the sons on the occasion of mourning.

**Pardhan :** According to Russell and Hiralal the name Pardhan is of a Sanskrit origin and means a minister or an agent. During the middle ages the Gond Kings employed Pardhans as their ministers and bards. These bards maintained genealogies and narrated historical events to their masters, and thereby earned their livelihood. They are called minstrel of the Gonds.

According to 1931 Census the population of Pardhans was 1,22,554 in the erstwhile C. P. and Berar Province, out of which 63,743 were Hindus and 58,811 were tribal religion. In 1981 the population of Pardhan in Maharashtra State was 98,685 and in 1991 it was 120,836. The tribe is predominantly concentrated in the districts of Yeotmal, Chandrapur, Gadchiroli, Wardha, and Nagpur. Pathari and Saroti are the two sub-tribes of the Pardhan tribe. Like, Gonds the Pardhans are divided into several septs based on the number of deities worshipped. These septs are exogamous in nature. Surnames commonly found among these septs are shown below :

**Seven gods sept :** Pandharam (Pandhare), Madavi, Kulsange, Masram, Dhurve, Karnake, Kannake, Jumnaake, Jungnaake, Sayam and Purkam.

**Six gods sept :** Chidam, Siram, Pendam, Gedam, Pendor, Shrirame, Uike, Kulmethe, Maraphe, Atram, Kusaram, Parteki.

**Five gods sept :** Kinnake, Yete, Kumbhare, Surpam, Korche, and

**Four gods sept :** Poyam, Sidam, Madkam, Kove, Aade, Tekam, and Ghodam etc.

Marriages are permitted among the same 'Kul'. Marriage with father's sister's daughter, and mother's brother's daughter is allowed. Their wedding was performed in the bride groom's village but now-a-days it is performed in the bride's houses. The groom wears a blanket and carries a dagger in his hand. He ties the black bead necklace round the neck of the bride which is the sign of marriage.

The custom of bride-price was practised and its nature varies from place to place. A widower marrying a young girl has to pay a double bride-price. A widow is usually taken in marriage by her deceased husband's younger brother.

Pardhan celebrate the Ashadhi Ekadashi, Jivati, Povati, Nagpanchami, Diwali, Mahashivaratri, and Fag (Shimga) festivals. Bhim is the chief deity of the Pardhans. They are animists. Their social organisation, phrateries and clan system, deities and mythology are similar to that of Gonds. For certain Gond ceremonies, Pardhan is invited who sings lyrics on kingri and Bana. They are non-vegetarians and drink liquor. They usually eat Jawar bread, vegetables, chutney and ambil. They cremate or bury the dead. The son of the dead performs last rite. On the tenth day they collect the ashes of the dead. The Shraddha (Tributary to the dead) takes place after six months or a year. However, a ritual called 'Kunda' is done after a year.

**Paradhi :** The name Paradhi is derived from the word 'Paradh' which means hunting. The Paradhis have two main divisions, namely Gao Pardhi and Phase Paradhi. In addition, the tribe is divided into various sub-tribes, such as, Phansparadhi, Phase Paradhi, Chita Paradhi, Langoti Paradhi, Bahelia, Bahellia, Shikari, Advichincher, Takiya, Gujarati, Maratha, and Takankar (Takari). They have such clan names as Chavan, Pawar, Salunkhe, Gaikwad, More. According to 1931 Census, the population of the tribe (Rajparadhi and Phase Paradhi) was 5,395 in Bombay Presidency which became 95,115 in 1981, and 123,813 in 1991 in Maharashtra.

**Pareet :** The community known by the name Pareet or Dhobi is traditionally engaged in washing clothes. The word Dhobi might have been derived from the Sanskrit word *Dhava* which means washing. Since ancient times Pareet has been a part of *Baluta* system. In Bombay Presidency the population of this caste at the time of 1911 Census was 66,621. Pareets are found in all parts of Maharashtra. There are four sub-divisions within this caste namely, Maratha or Deshi Pareet, Konkani Pareet, Paradeshi Pareet and Kamathi Pareet. Inter-marriage and interdinning do not take place among these sub-castes. The community practises Devak exogamy,

and accordingly persons having the same Devak do not marry each other. Marriage with mother's brother's daughter is allowed. Similarly divorce and widow remarriage are allowed. The widow cannot remarry in the family of her late husband. Their religious practices, dress, and food habits are similar to those of Kunbis. The local Brahmins act as their priest.

**Powar :** The community known by various names as Powar, Pawar, Panwar, Puar, and Parmar Rajput is one of ancient clans of Agni lineage. In Wardha district they are known as Bhojar. The kings of Malwa from 9th to 12th Century belonged to this clan. The township of Dhar in Madhya Pradesh was their capital and even now all Pawars claim to have come from Dhar. There are several legends in vogue about the origin of this clan. Padmagupta Parimal, the court poet of the King Sindhu, narrates the history of this clan in his book 'Navasahasanka Charita.' As per the account given by him, the sage Vasishtha began the sacrifice on the Mount Abu for the emancipation of his bountiful cow Kamadhenu abducted by the royal sage Vishwamitra. She was emancipated by the hero born out of the sacrificial pit. For this accomplishment the sage Vasishtha gave him a title of Parmar, the destroyer of the enemy and also gave him a kingdom. Upendra is regarded as the first known person of this lineage. This legend is found in one of the records of Parmar dynasty after 1050 A. D. It appears from the deed of gift found at Harsol of the Parmar dynasty at the beginning of the tenth century A. D., that this dynasty arose from the Rashtrakut dynasty. Around 812 A. D. Rashtrakut king Govinda the third defeated Pratihar King Nagbhat and conquered Malwa region and gave this kingdom to Upendra of his dynasty.

After their defeat in 1190 A. D. at the hands of Shahabuddin Ghori the Powar of Dhar spread in different parts of North India, Central India, and Maharashtra. From Powars who entered the Deccan, the land-lord family of Shivaji Powar was the first to enter. His grandsons Sambhaji and Kaloji were commanders in Shivaji's army. In 1734 A. D. one Anandrao Powar was appointed as a Collector of the revenue of Marathas in Malwa and Gujarat. In the eighteenth century when Bhosales had consolidated their power in Nagpur several Powars had entered their army and participated in the campaign of Katak. For this service the Bhosales felicitated them by giving them gift of land in Vainganga Valley. Powars like Kohalis constructed tanks for irrigation in this region and irrigated their rice fields thus earning a reputation of being good farmers. The Powar community thus settled in the valley, entered into marital relationship with other communities in the valley by marrying their

women especially widows. Their surnames reveal mixed nature of this community. However, the Rajput features are clearly discernible in their straight nose, fair complexion, and light eyes. In spite of their co-existence with Marathi speaking population for centuries Powar speak their own dialect which resembles Bagheli or Purbi Hindi.

As women are an asset in the agricultural occupation widow remarriage is permitted in the community. A widow fetches a good bride-price. Divorce is permitted but rarely taken. The practice of marriage by service is prevalent in the community. There are no sub-castes within the community but exogamous divisions exist. They worship all Hindu gods but their main deity is Dulha Deo. A goat is sacrificed to Dulha Deo at the time of marriage, and after the birth of the first child. In recent times, due to the spread of education, many people of this community are found as teachers, lawyers, and employees in the administration.

**Prabhu-Chandraseniya Kayastha :** This community popularly known by the short name C. K. P., that is Chandraseniya Kayastha Prabhu, numbered 27,120 persons in Bombay Presidency in 1911. The People of this community consider themselves to be the descendants of the mythical Kshatriya King Chandrasen of Ayodhya. However according to scholars there is no historical evidence to support this claim. Another belief, prevalent in the community is that they are descendants of Chandrasen who was born in the lineage of Kartavirya Sahasrarjun belonging to Haihaya lineage of Somavansha who ruled over the Province of Ayodhya in ancient times. In the opinion of Keshav Sitaram *alias* Prabodhankar Thakre the founding members of this community left their home in Chinab valley in Kashmir and settled in the Kaya region, that is, Ayodhya Province. Because of their long stay in the region they acquired the name Chandraseniya Kayastha Prabhu. Thus through the corrupt usage they came to be known as Chandraseniya. Afterwards in the regime of Shilahar Kings they attained a position of power known by the designation Prabhu, and hence, their name Chandraseniya Kayastha Prabhu. Although the word Prabhu means possessing the highest power, its actual usage was in the context of positions in the administrative service according to their designation.

There is no unanimous view among scholars about the origin of this community. According to one legend Kayastha were originated from *Chitragupta* the son of Brahmadeo. The Sanskrit word Kaya means body. Since Chitragupta was supposed to have been born from the body of Brahmadeo he was known as Kayastha. Kayastha also means a writer or a scribe. It is believed that Chitragupta

maintains an account of the good and the evil deeds performed by the departed souls in their earlier life. The word Kayastha in the sense of a scribe occurs quite frequently in Sanskrit literature, copper plates, and inscriptions. Since ancient times in India, Kayastha had written inscriptions and ledgers. Arya Chanakya in the Sanskrit play *Mudra Rakshas* testifies to their good hand-writing. Some times the word was used to refer to merchant. The Kayasthas in Maharashtra have distinguished themselves not only by their good writing in the royal courts but also by their valour and devotion to the master. According to Vishwanath Kashinath Rajwade the word Kayastha means one who depends for his livelihood on Kaya which means wealth. Chandraseniya Kayastha Prabhus are Kshatriyas and are entitled to perform *Vedokta* rites, that is rites prescribed by the *Vedas*.

The C.K.P.s in Maharashtra might have been a branch of the Kayasthas in the North India, who migrated to Maharashtra in ancient times. They are mainly found in Thane and Raigad districts. According to Shridhar Vyankatesh Ketkar, the encyclopaedist, the Kayasthas entered Konkan region through the sea-route *via* Karachi and Gujarat and the river Sindhu. During the rule of the Shilahar in the tenth century Kayasthas from Gujarat and Malwa entered Konkan. The Shilahars gave them several positions in the revenue administration so as to supervise revenue accounts, settlements in the deserted areas, and maintenance of record of documents. In course of time, persons who performed these duties acquired the surname Deshmukh. In A.D. 1305 when Mandavgad in Malwa was conquered by Khilji, majority of the Kayasthas living there came to Mandva, Murud, Janjira, and Mandad in Konkan from Cambay by sea-route. They earned a good reputation by occupying high positions of responsibility in the Bahamani period, and in the rule of Shivaji, Peshwa, and the British. They exhibit writing proficiency, diplomacy, and warrior spirit. The well-known hero Bajiprabhu Deshpande, and the writer Balaji Aavji Chitnis are the cases in point. Several Kayasthas had *Shilotrivatan*. Now-a-days majority of them have taken to employment and belong to the middle class. Some in Mawal are engaged in farming, cultivating mostly gift-land. Most of their surnames are based on occupations, as indicated by surnames like Potnis, Pradhan, Karkhanis, Deshmukh, Deshpande, Shilotri, Shrotri, Kulkarni, and Phadnis.

The community has a sub-division known as Davne. They are from Daman, hence the surname Davne. The C.K.Ps Consider themselves to be superior to them, and in the past did not marry with them. Davnes have such surnames as Nachne, and Shringarpure.

Chandraseniya Kayastha Prabhu community is divided into twenty-five exogamous *Gotra* known after the names of ancient rishis. Marriage within the same *Gotra* is prohibited. Marriage with mother's brother's daughter is permitted. Divorce and widow remarriage are not customary. In respect of marriage rites, religious traditions, dress, and style of living, the community shows a good deal of resemblance with the Brahmins. Initiation ceremony is performed in the community. They exhibit epicurian taste in their appetite for food and eatables. Fish and mutton are prominently found in their diet. They exhibit their culinary skill in the preparation of such delicious as *Puranpoli*, *Karanji*, *Ninav*, *Khandavi*, *Sanjani* on the occasions of Holi, Diwali, Sankranti, Sheetala Saptami etc.

Kayasthas are mainly Shivaites. Goddess Ekvira at Karle is a family-goddess of many Kayastha families. Some families worship Ambabai, Renuka, Annapurna, Bhavani, Malhari Martand, Ganapati, Bahiri and Mahadeo. They show special veneration for the God Bapuji as the protector deity. After auspicious function a fowl is sacrificed to the family God. Majority of them bring Ganesh idol for worship at home on Ganesh Chaturthi. Worshipping of Gouri and *Ghatasthapana* (worship of pitcheres) on Navaratri are the major festivals of this community.<sup>31</sup>

**Prabhu Pathare :** This is a small community having a population of 3,293 in 1911, which rose to 4,656 in 1931. They are mainly found in the city of Mumbai . They are also known as Patane or Painthane Prabhu. There are two different versions about the place of their origin. According to one legend they came to Mumbai in A. D. 1300 from Mungi Paithan. According to another version they came to Mumbai from Gujarat. As per the account given in 'Bimbakhyan', the caste Puran of the Pathare Prabhu, the community came from Gujarat to Mumbai sea coast under the leadership of Bimba and settled down there displacing the local Varli and Koli chiefs. They are connected with Palashes, who are the Brahmins belonging to white or Gujarat *Yajurved* branch. Their names, articles of domestic use, turbans and footwears are of Gujarati style, and this fact support to their Gujarati origin.

In the opinion of P. B. Joshi, Pathares are the descendants of Pratihars of Kanouj and Rajasthan. After the defeat of the last king of the Pratihar dynasty in 1018 A. D. at the hands of Mohumad of Gazhani when he attacked Kanouj, the ancestors of Pratihar of Pathare Prabhu came to Paithan to seek royal patronage. Later, when they came to north Konkan along with Bheemdeo or Bhimbadeo they became known as Paithane or Paithankar Prabhu. The name Patane appears to be a corruption of Painthan.

According to a study the number of Pathare families entering Konkan from various places was as follows :- 28 from Paithan, 9 from Nagbaj, 13 from Chapner, 7 from Panhala, 7 from Cherner, 3 from Daulatabad and 2 from Anhilwad. These families became permanent settlers at Cheul, Eksar, Kondivate, Dahisar, Chembur, Goregaon, Sion, Paspauli, Chedavali, Kalyan, Kelve Mahim, and Thane. This means these families brought along with them language and customs from Gujarat, Rajasthan, and the Deccan to their present home-land.

Pathare Prabhu regard themselves as Kshatriyas, and this claim has been approved by the Shankaracharya of Shringeri. In the 28th Chapter (Adhyaya) of *Sahyadri Puran* there is a legend of sage Bhrigu cursing the first male ancestor of the Pathare Prabhus Rana Ashwapati when he had settled in Paithan, for insulting the sage to the effect that he would lose his kingdom. Whereupon the king prayed for his pardon. The sage mitigated his curse by pronouncing that he would attain a state of prosperity by following clerical profession. Scribes by profession, people of this community were holding important positions in the Government during the British rule and had a near monopoly as clerks. They also entered into the ranks of higher professions and commerce. The resident Pathares in Mumbai are well to do and owners of large plots of land.

In the past, the community observed a custom of sacrificing a goat to the family goddess in lieu of betrothal ceremony. After the singing of *Mangalashataka* (final wedding blessing) at the auspicious time or 'Muhurta' the father-in law used to tie a necklace of black-beeds round the neck of the bride. The community observes *Gotra* exogamy. Marriage with mother's brother's daughter is allowed. The males wear sacred thread. Pathare Prabhus are smart as and adhere to the religious dictates of the Shringeri Math. Their family goddess is Prabhavati or Prabhadevi.

**Sali :** This caste of traditional cotton and silk weaveres is known in Maharashtra by various names as Koshti, Sali, Devang, Hatkar, Bed, Vinkar, Nekar and Negar. This is a professional caste and includes within its fold several sub-castes. In 1911 the combined population of Koshtis and Salis in Bombay Presidency was 1,45,876. In 1931 the combined population of the groups identified as Koshti, Devang, Vinkar, Hatgar, Bed, Sali and Padmasali in Maharashtra was 2,49,315 persons. The Salis are found in all the four regions of Maharashtra namely, Konkan, Deccan, Marathwada and Vidarbha. The Sali caste in Maharashtra is divided into sub-castes which are as follows :- Ahir, Arsinga patal, Bangad, Deo, Devang, Maratha Sakul, Padmasali, Pattsali, Sagun or Samay Sali, Shubhra Sali, Sat Sali, etc Enthoven is of the view that the Sali caste is originated in

Karnataka or Andhra Pradesh. It come into being out of the blanket-weaving Hatkars. These sub-castes are further divided into exogamous groups identical with surnames. Persons with the same surname do not marry. The Marathi Sali sub-caste in Nashik district has not only exogamous units identical with surnames but also *Gotras* similar to Brahmins. Marriage with mother's brother's daughter, and father's sister's daughter, is customary but not with mother's sister's daughter. Divorce and widow remarriage are allowed however the condition is that a widow should not marry in her deceased husband's clan. Their family goddess Shakambhari is originally from Karnatak. Among the deities which are worshipped by this caste are Khandoba, Bhairoba, Jotiba, Narsoba, Bhavani, Jogai and Shakambhari. The dead are either cremated or burried. Shradha and Mahalaya the two rites of ancestral worship are also performed.

**Shimpi :** According to 1911 Census report of the Bombay Presidency, the population of this caste who practise tailoring as their traditional occupation was 56,455. In the past, dying was also done by the people of this caste alongwith tailoring. However, they gave up dying as this was considered to be below dignity, and now they are engaged only in tailoring as their traditional occupation. This caste is found in all parts of Maharastra. They consider themselves to be Kshatriya and regard well-known saint-poet Namdeo as the Founder of the caste, and call themselves Namdeo Shimpi.

The caste is divided into twelve endogamous sub-castes, which are as follows : Ahir, Bhavsar, Chatur, Konkani, Maratha, Naglik, Namdeo, Rangari, Pancham, Shetwal, Shrivak or Jain, and Ektake. The caste is further divided into several exogamous groups which are identical with surname. In some parts Shimpis have adopted the *Gotras*. Conventionally marriage with mother's brother's daughter is allowed, but not with mother's sister's daughter. Widow remarriage and divorce are permitted. The dead are cremated. Religious rites are conducted by the Brahmin priest. In other respects their socio-cultural traditions are similar to those of Maratha and Kunbis. They dine with these castes but do not marry them.

In recent times people of this caste are found engaged in such occupations as cloth merchants, agriculturists, agricultural labour, and clerks besides their own traditional occupation.

**Somavamshi Vadaval :** This small community found in the city of Mumbai and its northern region upto Vasai is not mentioned by Enthoven. They are mainly engaged in the cultivation of banana and beetle leaf plantations which are owned by them. Besides this

they also grow fruits and vegetables. They employ Warlis as plantation workers. Widow remarriage and divorce are not permitted. Marriage with mother's brother's daughter is allowed. Non-vegetarian diet is conventional although some people are strict vegetarians. They are also known as Panchkalshis. Their population in 1911 was 14,657.

**Sonar :** This caste is engaged in making ornaments from gold and silver and silverware of domestic use. The caste is known in Maharashtra as Sonar and they numbered 1,09,075 in 1911 in Bombay Presidency. Their population spread in Maharashtra, was 2,25, 120 according to 1931 Census Report. The caste is found in all parts of Maharashtra, they claim that they are the descendants of Vishwakarama and call themselves Panchal. They claim to be Brahmins.

The caste is divided into thirteen endogamous sub-castes and most of which are territorial in nature. The names of these sub-castes are: Ahirs or Khandeshi, Azara, Devangan, Daivadnya Brahmin or Panchal, Deshi or Maratha Sonar, Kadu, Kanade, Konkani or Daivadnya, Lad, Malvi, Paradeshi, Sad Shilavant, Vaishya or Jain Sonar. These sub-castes do not inter-marry with each other. The Konkani Sonar of Ratnagiri district have two sub-groups, namely Taksale and Agsale. During Maratha period Taksale minted coins and Agsale tested them.

Except these sub-castes which claimed to be Brahmins, other sub-castes were divided into exogamous groups identical with surnames. Those sub-castes claiming to be the Brahmins have *Gotras* and do not allow marriage within the same *Gotra*. The rule of Devak exogamy is observed by Ahir, Lad, Deshi, Malvi and Kadu sub-castes, who also permit widow remarriage. Except those claiming to be Brahmins, other sub-castes allow divorce. The sub-castes, Devang, Kanade and Vaishya are vegetarians while others are non-vegetarians.

**Sutar :** This caste is found in all parts of Maharashtra. As per the Census of 1911 of Bombay Province their population was 1,99,968. Their combined population, spread in different regions of Maharashtra (western Maharashtra and Marathawada) in 1931 was 1,59,481. Sutar is considered to be an important *Balutedar* in the rural area of Maharashtra. He makes and repairs bullock-carts, ploughs and other agricultural implements as a part of his traditional duties as a *Balutedar* for which he receives payment in grain at the time of harvest. In addition to this work he also makes various wooden articles of domestic use, and doors, windows, beams and other items required for construction a house for which he is given extra payment.

The Sutar community in Maharashtra call themselves Panchal and claim their origin from the divine architect Tvashtha. They also claim to be equal to Brahmins. The caste is divided into five endogamous groups, which are, Deshi, Konkani, Panchal, Arya Kshatri and Vidur or Kadu. These sub-castes are further divided into several exogamous *Kulas* or Clans. People with the same Kula do not inter-marry. Among Deshi Sutar, the surnames indicate exogamous Kulas. Besides this they have Gotras like Brahmins and marriage within the same *Gotra* is prohibited. Similarly marriage with a person having the same Devak is also prohibited. Cross-cousin marriage is conventional. In certain parts widow remarriage and divorce are permitted. Kokani Sutar in some parts of Ratnagiri are called Thavi or Vadve. They have a sub-groups known as Dhawad Sutar and are found around Dapoli Taluka. When Hindus were prosecuted by Portuguese, Kokani Sutar migrated to Solapur District and became known as Shiva Brahma Sutar. They have Still maintained conjugal and commensal relation with those in Goa and Ratnagiri regions. Village exogamy is observed by Konkani Sutar in Ratnagiri and Savantwadi regions. But the families with similar Devaks marry among themselves. The practice of widow remarriage and divorce is found only in some parts. Their Social customs are similar to those of the Marathas.

**Teli :** The word Teli is derived from the Sanskrit word *Tailik* or *Taila*. Although Telis are found in all parts of Maharashtra, their major concentration is in Nagpur region. The community engaged in extracting oil from oil-seeds such as ground nuts, sesamum, linseed, coconut, safola etc. had a population of 94,079 in 1911, in Bombay Presidency. It is their traditional occupation. In 1931 their population in Maharashtra, that is its four regions, Konkan, Deccan, Vidarbha, and Marathawada taken together, was 4,46,022. There are several legends about the origin of this caste. However, people of this caste believe that their caste came into existence from the planet Saturn. The community is divided into twelve and half sub-castes on the basis of differences in the occupational techniques and region. These sub-castes are as follows: (1) Pancham or Lingayat, (2) Kanade, (3) Lad, (4) Gujar, (5) Ayar, (6) Kadu, (7) Kandi, (8) Shanware, (9) Shukraware, (10) Rathod, (11) Pardeshi, (12) Tilwan, Somware or Maratha Teli, and Gandhi which is considered to be the half sub-caste. Of these twelve and a half sub-castes, Tilwan or Maratha Teli are the most numerous in Maharashtra. In Nagpur region especially in Wardha district Sav, Erande, Ghana, and Gulhane sub-divisions are found. The Ghan sub-division is further divided into two divisions, namely, Ek Bailey, and Don Bailey. The leader of the Caste Panchayat in Vidarbha, and Khandesh Telis are called Chowdhari, which suggests that they are immigrants from the north.

All the above mentioned sub-castes are endogamous in nature and marriage takes place within each endogamous group. These sub-castes are further divided into exogamous Kulas and marriage within the same *Kula* is prohibited. *Kula* names are also used as surnames. Every *Kula* has its Devak and the rule of Devak exogamy is observed. Some of their Devaks are iron bar, the stone, oil mill, leaves of Kalamb, Panch Palavi, Umbar, and Apta. Marriage with mother's brother's daughter, and father's sister's daughter is allowed. Similarly widow remarriage and divorce are allowed.

Marriage takes place according to Hindu rituals. Among the rituals observed by them are the following : Nhanora, Devadevi, Delmathan, Urbhet, Bhatk, Sagun-Ghagar, Usangi, Haradera etc. At the time of widow remarriage the bride dips her toe in the blood of goat in the household of the groom in order to propitiate the spirit of the first husband. When a virgin is to marry with a widower, the marriage is first celebrated with Krishna. In order to ward off the evil spirit from the new-born child a stick of a Temburni-tree is kept horizontally at the entrance of the house. Cremation and the burial of the dead are customary. Santaji, a saint born in this caste is highly respected by the people of this caste. They celebrate all the Hindu festivals.

Majority of the people of this caste have wheatish colour and medium built, and in their living style they resemble Kunbis. Although primarily vegetarians, non-vegeratrian food is not prohibited among them. A large number of Telis in Vidarbha have taken to agriculture.<sup>32</sup> Due to the spread of education many persons of this community have entered the government service.

**Thakur :** This tribal community living in the Sahyadri mountain ranges is to be found only in Maharashtra. In 1931 their population was 1,09,665 which became, 1,59,372 in 1961, 3,23,191 in 1981 and 400,583 in 1991. In the President's Order of 1950, they are designated as Thakur or Thakar, and are declared as a Scheduled Tribe. Their population is mainly concentrated in Thane, Raigad, Nashik, Pune, Ahmednagar and Dhule districts. They consider themselves to have Rajput origin and trace their descent from the Rajput fugitives from Gujarat during the rule of Mohamed Begda (1459-1511 A.D.). In the opinion of N. G. Chaphekar, an observer of this community, their original home probably was Nashik, in view of the fact that in their marriage songs, they entreat deities at Nashik, Trimbakeshwar, Borli, Talegaon, and Anjneri, places located in Nashik region. From the annual Yatra festival for held at Borli on the full-moon day of the month of Paush, it appears that Thakurs might have come to their present home from Borli via Thal pass. A copper plate found in a Thakur family at Igatpuri shows that a Chalukya king had

constructed a place called Belgram in Goparashtra, that is today's Nashik district, at the beginning of seventh century A. D., for enabling one Ballama Thakur to for worshipping Lord Kapileshwar. This legend gives support to Nashik which is the original home of Thakurs. However, these places are not found today in Nashik district. The community is divided into two endogamous groups called Ka-Thakur, and Ma-Thakur. 'Ka' stands for Kadu and 'Ma' for Maratha. According to Chaphekar Ka-Thakurs are the immigrants from Konkan, and Ma-Thakurs are from Mahaldesh. According to another interpretation 'Ma' means bigger or higher, and 'Ka' means smaller or lower. In the opinion of Chaphekar consonants 'Ma' and 'Ka' occur frequently in the speech of Thakur which might have created these divisions. The two groups namely 'Ka' and 'Ma' Thakur are further sub-divided into a number of exogamous Kulas. Following are some of the clan names among Ma-Thakurs : Avali, Bhasma, Bangara, Dholya, Darvade, Pardhi, Gire, Sutak etc. The clan names among Ka-Thakurs are, Bhogade, Dangate, Dhinge, Jungli, Jadhav, Bhore etc. Ma-Thakurs consider themselves to be socially superior to Ka-Thakurs.

The Hutment area of Thakurs is called Thakur-wadi. These 'Wadis' are located at a higher spots from the rest of the settlements. The headman of Thakurwadi is called Patil or Padekhot, and this , post is hereditary in nature. Thakur houses are built at some distance from each other. There are some special conventions related to the construction of a house among Thakurs. They begin to dig foundation for a house when it is dark and the polar star is visible, and the work is completed before sun-rise the next day when the planet Venus is visible. Thakurs believe that such a house remains free from calamities. Their houses are rectangular in shape, have only one pillar, and the walls of Karvi are plastered with dung. People of this community are engaged in agriculture, animal husbandry, collecting firewood and other forest produce. These are their traditional occupations. According to 1961 Census 70 percent people were agriculturists, and 23 percent were agricultural labourers. They mainly grow rice and nagli. Agricultural activity is not begun on Tuesday. Before sowing Ka-Thakurs sacrifice a fowl and nagli seeds smeared in the blood are sown. During the sowing season hair-cut and grinding grain are prohibited. Rice and nagli constitutes their staple food which is supplemented by fish, fowl, eggs, and mutton. Drinking liquor is customary, and is liked by the people.

The age at marriage for the girls is between 12 to 15, and for the boys between 20 to 25. Marriage within the same clan is prohibited. Marriage with mother's brother's daughter, and father's sister's

daughter is allowed but such a marriage is avoided if Kinship ties already exist between the two families. The father of the groom proposes first. If the proposal is accepted a meeting of the elders is convened in which they would be bride is given a rupee and a necklace of black beads. This ceremony is called 'Supari Phodne', that is cracking a betel nut. The practice of bride price is prevalent in the community. Those boys who are unable to pay the bride price are required to serve in the household of their in-laws. At the time of the chanting the *mangalashthas* the bride and the groom keep betel-leaves in their mouth and held each others hands. Persons attending the marriage ceremony held sticks over the heads of the bride and the groom. The string with which the headgears called *Bashinga* are tied round the head of the wedding pair is called *Mangalsutra*, and this is worn round the neck by the bride throughout the year. At the end of the year the string is taken out and cast in the flowing water.

Widow remarriage and divorce are prevalent in the community. Divorce is got with the permission of the caste council. Among the Ka-Thakurs divorce is granted only if both husband and wife give their consent to it. For conducting the marriage ceremony a Brahmin priest is invited among Ma-Thakurs, while among Ka-Thakurs a female priestess called 'Dhavalekarin' conducts the ceremony. Marriage is considered to be an indispensable rite, and the couple must marry before the marriage of their children in the event of their having them before marriage. On such an occasion the concerned couple has to give liquor and dinner to the caste council to get an approval for the marriage. The Thakurs do not observe ritual impurity at the time of child-birth.

Thakurs normally are of medium height, and have tawny skin-colour, curly hair, extended cheek-bones, thick lips and deep eyes. Males wear Bandi, the traditional shirt and loin-cloth. The well-to-do males wear silver chain round their waist, and golden Bali in their ears. Females wear tight Sari upto the knees, and a bodice. A necklace called *Gulesar* and toe-rings are a sign of a married women. Females of Ma-Thakur wear silver or golden ornaments, while those of Ka-Thakur wear copper or brass ornaments. Majority of females tattoo their cheeks, hands, and forehead.

Although Thakurs speak Marathi their style of pronunciation is different. They address in more singular terms than in honorific plurals. They are honest and trust-worthy. They possess a considerable knowledge about the medicinal herbs and animals. They hunt with a bow and an arrow. They are fond of dancing and especially on Holi, Gokulashtami, and Waghbaras, they dance in the early hours of the day to the beating of the drums.

Although Thakurs worship major Hindu deities, they show a special reverence to folk-deities such as Cheda, Hivra, Bhavani, Supli, Khandoba, Kanhoba, Waghya, Munja and Vetal. As a symbol of the ancestors they worship 'Veer'. Silver plaques of the deities are kept in the house. However they believe that before the gods Shankar and Hanuman these deities are listerless. They treat cow as a sacred animal. Since they worship Waghdeo or tiger-god they do not hunt a tiger. They believe in magic and witch-craft, ghosts and demons, and hence to ward off their evil influences they get magical cures done from their magician-priest (Bhagat). Decision of the caste council is respected by them. Normally the dead is buried, however, among the Ka-Thakurs cremation is undertaken according to the wish of the departed person.<sup>33</sup>

**Tvashta Kasar :** This community following the hereditary occupation of making brass, copper and bell metal vessels is known in Maharashtra as Tvashta Kasar or Tambat, while the caste which is engaged in selling these vessels and bangles is known as Bogar Kasar. Maratha and Deshkar sub-castes of this community do not make vessels but only sell them. Some members of this community make copper ornaments, and idols of bronze which are used as decorative articles. As per the Census of 1911 population of this community in Bombay Presidency was 25,913.

The name Kasar appears to have been derived from the Sanskrit word *Kasyakar*. The *Kalika Mahatmya* in *Padmapuran* contains a legend about the origin of this caste. Accordingly, they claim their descent from Tvahta, the son of Vishwakarma, and in former days they claimed to be Brahmins. Their mode of living and customs are similar to those of Brahmins. In Maharashtra they are found in Konkan and the Deccan, especially in cities like Mumbai, Pune, and Nashik they are found in large numbers. They have adopted Brahmanical Gotras and practise Gotra exogamy. Some of their Gotras are, Atri, Bhardwaj, Kashyap etc. In addition, like in other castes in Maharashtra they have Devak system and observe the rule of Devak exogamy, they perform initiation ceremony. Marriage with mother's brother's daughter is customary. Similarly, widow remarriage and divorce are allowed in the caste. The dead is cremated. In addition to their principal deity Mahakali they worship Bahiri, Ekvira, Mahalaxmi, and Khandoba. On the newmoon day in the month of Phalgun they observe Devi festival in which all community members participate. On the day of Pola they worship all their tools. Customarily, people of this caste eat-vegetarian food. In recent times, persons of this caste are found in various other professions besides their own traditional occupation, and many of them are well-to-do. Their women are normally fair, well-built, and attractive.

**Vadar :** This tribe which is included in the list of Denotified Tribes by the Government of Maharashtra, has the following sub-castes : Gadi Wadar, Jati Wadar, Mati Wadar, and Patharwat. They might have migrated to Maharashtra from Andhra Pradesh some ten to fifteen generations ago. Inter-dining is permitted but inter-marriage is prohibited between Mati Wadars and Jati Wadars. Their clan names are Dhotre, Jadhav, Gunjal, Pawar and Ransure. They use their clan names as surnames. According to the, Census of 1931, the population of this tribes was 1,09,518 in Bombay Presidency.

**Vani :** The traditional trading community in Maharashtra is called Vani. This word has been derived from the Sanskrit word *Vanik*, or *Vanijya*, There are four divisions among the Vanis, namely, Maratha, Gujarati, Marwadi and Lingayat. The community is also divided into two sectarian groups, namely, Hindu and Jain. Hindu Vanis are also Known as Meshri and Jain as Shrivak. As per the Census of 1911 the population of the community known by the name Vaniya or Vani was 1,62,899 in Bombay Presidency, which became 1,94,918 in 1931.

Maratha Vani are divided into eight sub-castes, namely Kudale, Sangameshwari, Kulum or Kunbi, Patne, Bavkule, Neve, Kathar and Kharote. These sub-castes do not marry or dine with each other. Kudale and Sangameshwari sub-castes are found in Ratnagiri and Sawantwadi regions. As a greater concentration of Kudale Vanis is found in Kudal and Bande are as, they are also known as Bandekar Vani. Kulum or Kunbi and Patne are found in the Deccan or Desh, Bavkule in Karnatak, while Neve, Kathar and Kharote are found in Khandesh. In Jalgaon district Humbad, Valanju or Ladshakhi Vanis are found.

Kudale Vani call themselves Arya Vaishya and have Brahmanical Gotras. Gotra exogamy is observed by them. However, they don't perform the initiation ceremony but wear sacred thread at the time of marriage without observing any ritual. Chitpavan or Karhade Brahmins act as their priest. Till 1850, Kudales and Marathas used to inter-dine with each other and occasionally marry in each other's families. Widow remarriage is not customary in this sub-caste. They are non-vegetarians. Among the Sangmeshwari Vanis Saptapadi rite, which is an important marriage rite, is not performed. An unmarried man is not permitted to marry a widow. In other respects, they show a similarity with Kudale Vanis. Patne Vanis are mainly found at Patan in Satara district, and their customs are similar to those of Kulum Vanis. Bavkules are found only in Karwar and they speak Konkani dialect. Lord Shivanath of Angadi, and the goddess Mhalsa of Mhardoli in Goa are their family deities. They are non-vegetarians and resemble Kudales in their customs and conventions.

The sub-caste of Kulum or Kunbi Vanis might have been formed of those individuals of Maratha-Kunbi caste-cluster who had taken to trading. Culturally, the two groups have a good deal of similarity.

Major concentration of Ladshakhi Vanis is found in Jalgaon district especially in such towns as Amalner, Erandol, Pachora, Jalgaon, Chalisgaon and Pimpalner. From their speech, names and costumes they appear to have come from Gujarat. They have seven Gotras and a hundred and eight Kulas. Their dialect is a mixture of Marathi and Ahirani with a large number of Gujarati words in it. They have two sub-divisions namely Visa and Dasa. Khedaval Brahmins are their priest. Non-vegetarian diet and liquor are prohibited among them. Widow remarriage and divorce are not permitted. Their customs are similar to those of Gujarati Vanis. They adhere to Vaishnava sect and worship Vyankatesh as the family god. They also keep a plaque of god Khanderaï in their family shrine and worship other Hindu deities. In the past their caste-council known as 'Shethia' used to settle community disputes.

The sub-caste Kathar is found at Jalgaon, Nashirabad and Yawal in Jalgaon district. Neve Vanis are found in Sawade Nasirabad and Raver in Jalgaon District and in Nasik District. Their customs are similar to those of Kathar Vanis. A large number of Lad Vanis are settled in Savada. Among Gujarati Vanis following sub-groups exist, namely, Porwal, Modh, Lad, Desaval, Sharola, Wayda, Nagar, Khedayat and Shrimali. They are mainly found in Jalgaon district, especially in Chopada Taluka. Gujarati Shrivak Vanis are found in large number in Gandhali township near Amalner. They are vegetarians and even avoid eating onion and garlic. Except Porwal and Shrimali who are the Jain Shrivaks, the remaining Gujarati Vanis are Vaishnavas. Majority of these Vaishnavas go to Dakor and Dwarka for the sacred Darshana (visiting sacred shrine) of Lord Ranchhod and Lord Krishna respectively. They have their caste council.

Among the Marwadi Vanis the main sub-groups are, Agarwal, Meshri, Thakur, Khandelwal and Oswal. During the British rule they came into Maharashtra from Marwar, Jaipur, Jodhpur and Udepur. Although their mother-tongue is Marwadi, they speak Gujarati and Marathi as well. Lord Giri and Lord Balaji are the Principal deities of the Hindu Marwadi Vanis. The Vanis belonging to Shrivak Jain Marwadi sub-group worship Lord Digambar Parshwanath, and have Jain Priest, while Vaishnav and Maheshwari Vanis have Goud Brahmin priest. While Vaishnav and Maheshwari Vanis have commensal and conjugal relations with each other, with Shrivak Vanis they have only commensal relationship. Agarwal

Marwadi Vanis consider them to be of superior rank to others. Jat Marwadis consider themselves to be Kshatriyas. They do not observe any taboo regarding eating non-vegetarian food.

Among the Lingayat Vanis, there are four sub-divisions, namely, Pancham, Dixivant, Chilivant and Melvant. These sub-divisions again have 15 groups. All sub-groups inter-dine with each other. Pancham, Dixivant and Chilivants have marriage relationship with each other. They speak Marathi and Kannad. Eating non-vegetarian food and drinking liquor is prohibited among them. They are the followers of Lingayat sect established by Basava in 1150 A. D. All Lingayat Vanis put on silver 'Linga' round the neck. Basaveshwar Nandi at Gulabrga is their principal deity. Some also worship god Khandoba. Their priest is called Jangam.

**Vanjari :** This community of traditional cultivators is to be found especially in Ahmednagar, Pune, Thane districts and Khandesh and also in Vidarbha and Marathwada regions. They reside in Beed District in large numbers. Their mode of living and clothes resemble those of Marathas and Kunbis. They worship Hindu gods as well as trees, and observe Vedic marriage rituals. Vanjaris speak Marathi.

**Varli :** Among the Scheduled Tribes of Maharashtra Varlis rank fourth in respect of their population. Their population at the time various Census show that the population was 1,90,237 in 1911; 2,43,980 in 1961; 2,93,931 in 1971; 3,61,273 in 1981 and 4,61,913 in 1991. Their percentage in the population of the Scheduled Tribes was, 10.18 in 1961, 9.95 in 1971, 6.26 in 1981 and 6.31 in 1991. It is opined that the Varlis might have been residing in Dharampur region of Maharashtra from very ancient times. Megasthenses in his travelogues, called the territory inhabited by Varlis as 'Varlat' and the tribe residing on its as 'Varlis'. According to some historians Jawhar Taluka was under the rule of the Varli chief. In this regard there is a well-known legend about Paupera Koli from the village Mukne and a Varli King. The word Varli means an uplander as they cultivate patches of land in the hilly region. They make land fit for cultivation by spreading brush-wood or Varal on it and burning it. Hence the name Varli, according to them. Varlis are mainly found in Thane and Nashik districts. Outside Maharashtra they are found in Surat district in Gujarat.

The Varlis in Maharashtra are divided into four sub-groups, namely, Murde, Davar, Nihire and Shuddha as per the account given in the Census Report of the Bombay Presidency of 1911. Murde and Davar Varlis are found in the north of Thane district while Nihire Varlis are found in Palghar, Jawhar and Wada regions. No interdining

and inter-marriage take place between Murdes and Davars. Varlis themselves recognise the existence of seven territorial sub-groups within their community, which are as follows : Dongar Varli, Ghat Varli, Pathar Varli, Malhar Varli, Kokani, Zanjare and Pawar Varli. Although these seven groups are not strictly endogamous, marriages between them are discouraged. These groups are further divided into endogamous clans or Kulas. Persons having the same Kula do not marry each other. Marriage with mother's brother's daughter is not allowed. Divorce and widow re-marriage are customary.

In the past majority of Varlis were landholders. Their method of cultivation was traditional. In course of time they lost their land to moneylenders and became tenant farmers and partners. For repaying debt they used to work as domestic servants in the householder of the moneylender. Now most of them have become stable at one place and undertake cultivation. They live in small groups in jungles and cultivate small patches of land after felling trees and making them arable and grow paddy, ragi, nachni and similar other crops. Some Varlis cut grassland forest wood, while others work as labourer at Charcoal Kiln, orchards and flower gardens. Their food mainly consists of rice, *Bhakri* (bread) of nagli, and blackgram (Udid) or Dal curry. Occasionally they eat fish, and on festival days *Pangya*, a special preparation from cucumber. They take non-vegetarian food but not beef.

Varlis have preserved their culture through their folk-songs and folk-tales which have survived for generations. Their folk-songs deal with every important event in life. A daughter is married when she comes of age. Marriage takes place in the months of Vaishakh, Magh and Phalgun. Either 'Modinga', a male priest, or Dhavaleri, a female tribal priestess perform marriage ceremony. At the time of 'Baghavani' of ceremonially observing of the would be bride the party consisting of males and females from the groom's side drink toddy brought with them. Afterwords, a decision to enter into marriage relationship is taken. This is known as 'Bolkarne'. After this decision normally the engagement is not broken. Payment of bride-price is customary. After the bride-price is paid the date of marriage is fixed. For marriage ceremony a Pandal of nine pillars is erected. At the time of erecting the first pillar some rice, red-powder (Kumkum), betel-nut and some coins are put in to the pit. In the centre of the marriage Pandal, a branch of fig tree is planted. On this occasion, the female priestess (Dhavleri) sings a song. When the marriage party goes to the house of the bride in the evening, the groom is made to sit at the outskirts of the village. At that night he is not expected to sleep. Twelve noon is considered to be an auspicious time for marriage.

The custom of having a son-in-law staying in the house of his father-in-law is prevalent among the Varlis. A house-holder having no male child keeps in his house-hold a marriageable youth for doing agricultural work to whom his eldest daughter is married later on. When poor youth is unable to meet marriage expenses, he pays a small amount to his father-in-law and brings his wife home and maintains his household. This practice is known as 'Kordyavar Anane'. Such a couple goes through the marriage ceremony on the occasion of the marriage of his relatives.

The Varlis worship their tribal deities, namely, Waghya, Hirva, Narayandeo and Himavir. Waghya is their village god. This deity is established by smearing red-lead to a block of wood or a stone on the boundary of the village or under a banian tree. After the harvest, the worshipping of Hirva is performed. A peacock plumage, a hunter with a gun, a warrior mounted on the horse, or a five-headed demon riding on a tiger are worshipped as a symbol of the god Hirva. They hold goddess Mahalaxmi near Dahanu in highest reverence and attend the festival held in her honour on the full-moon day of Chaitra. They are afraid of ghosts and spirits. Bhagat is their priest, astrologer, and a quack. Cremation of the dead is customary. While proceeding to the cremation ground, the dead body is taken round the first 'Apta' tree sighted on the way, three or five times. The widow of the deceased tears her 'Mangalsutra' at this spot called 'Visava' and returns home along with other ladies. Shradha ritual is performed for the dead.

An average Varli is dark-complexioned, sturdy, and has medium height. A normal male attire includes a *Kudta* and a loin-cloth. While going out, a waist-cloth dangling upto the knee is tied to the waist in a slanting style, and a turban is tied to the head. Several males wear an ear-ornament of small glass beads and a silver bracelet on the wrist. They also tuck marigold and lily flowers on the ears as they are very fond of flowers. The females wear Sari tight around the waist and coming upto the knees, and *Choli* (bodice) tied with a knot. After marriage females cover their shoulders with a fold of Sari. Their fondness for long hair induces them to wear artificial set of hair and tie them in a big bun. The Varlis are traditional believing in fate, credulous and innocent people.

During the last 150 years land-lords and money-lenders have exploited the Varlis to a great extent. A system of bonded labour prevailed among them in order to repay the debt incurred at the time of marriage, and on other occasions. Such servants used to work along with their wives in the house-holds and on the lands of land-lords. Recently this practice has been abolished by the Government liberating the bonded servants from debt-bondage, and rehabilitating them by giving them land in the forest.

### Racial Characteristics

From the Point of view of the physical characteristics, several castes in Maharashtra show a resemblance with those in the border states of Gujarat, Karnataka and Orissa. Taking cognizance of such castes will be of great importance for understanding the process of colonization of Maharashtra in historic time. The following castes from Gujarat need to be mentioned from this point of view. Audich Brahman, Nagar Brahman, Bhil and their various sub-tribes, Bhatia, Bhangi, Koli, Patidar Kunbi, Machhi Kharwa, a coastal community of salt, traders and also of sailors; Luhana and Oswal Jains which are the trading castes, Rabari, a pastoral caste, keeping herds of cows, buffaloes, goats and camels; Meher, the warrior caste of Gujarat and Kathiyawad ; Wagher, a semi-criminal tribe partly Hindu and partly Muslim; Miana, a semi-criminal, Nomadic Muslim community; and Rajput, the warrior and the ruling caste. In addition there are Sunni Bora, Memon and Khoja, all trading communities adhering to Mohamedanism; Bhadela, a sea-faring Muslim community; and Parsees.

From Orissa the following castes need to be considered : Agaria, Binzal, Bhatra, Bhima, Brahman (Arannyak and Samavedi), Dora, Gadaba, Gond, Gwala, Juang, Khond, Karan, Keut, Khadia, Khandayat, Koya, Kolta, Kumbhar, Meher, Munda, Pano or Pana, Porja, Savara, Bhangi and Oraon. Of these Bhatra, Khandayat, Kolta and Porja (Praj) are the agriculturist castes, Gwala is the caste of cowherds; Meher is the weaver caste; Kayastha, Kumbhar and Brahman are castes following their traditional occupation, and Bhangi and Pano are the Dalit castes. The rest are all tribal community.

From Karnatak various kinds of castes need to be considered. The following are the agriculturist castes : Gangadikar Vokkaliga, Gouda, Halakki Vokkal, Kunchitiga, Kodugu, Namdhari, Nandavara, Palegar, Kuda, Vokkaliga, Sadaru and Panchamsali who are partly agriculturist and agricultural labourers. Besides these, the shepherd castes Bette Kuruba, Jenukuruba, Kuruba and Unnikankan Kuruba, which is a blanket weaver sub-caste of the shepherded caste, are also included. From the castes following other occupations the trader caste of Banajiga or Shetty, the weaver caste Devang, the oil-presser caste Ganiga or Sajjan, the washer-man caste Agasa or Madiwal, Panchal Sonar or Vishvakarma, Bogar, the brass and the copper-smith; Gangemata the fishermen of the upland river, and Harkanta, the sea fisher-men, are included. The Brahmin have the sub-castes-Babbur Kamme, Rigvedi Brahmin, Hoyasala Karnatak, Havig and others are included. The Lingayat priest Jangam is also included.

From the group of castes considered to be the untouchables, Ager, Holer, Adikarnatak, the shoe-maker Samgar or Madiga are included. The lowly caste Mukri, Valmiki or Talwar who are village watchmen, and Sholega, are included.

Dr. Irawati Karve has made anthropometric study of the majority of the castes in Maharashtra described above, and has compared them with her study of the castes in Karnataka and Orissa, and also with the study of the castes and tribes in Gujarat by Dr. D. N. Majumdar and has brought to light the racial similarities among the castes and tribes of these four regions.

In this study, anthropometric measurements of the head and the nose are taken, and on the basis of this data, they are classified and compared. By measuring length and the breadth of the head, the cephalic index is obtained, and on this basis the head forms are classified into three types, namely, dolicocephalic, mesocephalic and brachycephalic. The cephalic indices, characteristic of these three types are : dolicocephalic: 77 ; mesocephalic : 77 to 82 and brachycephalic : 82. Extremely long headed persons with cephalic index less than 77, are called hyperdolicocephal, while the extremely broad headed persons with cephalic index more than 85 are called hyperbrachycephals. In a similar manner the shape of nose is classified into three types. The nasal index is given by a figure representing breadth in percentages of length. Nose shapes are classified into three types, which are as follows : (1) Leptorrhine, (narrow) nasal index between 55-70; (2) Mesorrhine (medium), nasal index between 70-85; and (3) Chamaerrhine (broad), nasal index between 85-100. In a similar manner the circumference of the head provides a rough indicator of the shape of head. Accordingly we have two types, (1) small head circumference, circumference ranging between 518 mm to 532 mm, and (2) Large head circumference, with 532 mm and above. Taking into consideration these three measurements in different combinations we get ten physical types in which we can classify various castes and communities. In chart No. 1 (PP.114) shows the classification of various castes and communities from the four linguistic regions into ten physical types.

From the information presented in the above chart we can highlight the salient features of the racial composition of the people in

Maharashtra. We will first consider the physical characteristics of the tribes in Maharashtra. Long head and broad nose are the characteristic features of the tribal communities in Maharashtra. In this respect the tribal communities in the Western Maharashtra show their difference from those in the Eastern Maharashtra. The shape of the head of the tribal communities in the Western Maharashtra is small compared with those in the Eastern Maharashtra. Probably tribal communities in the Western Maharashtra represent a Veddoid-Australoid element in the population, while the tribal communities in the Eastern Maharashtra represent Pre or Proto-Mongoloid element in the population. Although the tribes in Maharashtra as a group are distinct from the non-tribes in respect of their physical characteristics, a few-tribal communities among them resemble non-tribal ; while some non-tribal groups resemble the tribal. Similarly some persons from the upper castes so existence of some physical features of the primitives.

In the category of long headed people, an extremely large group of people with medium nose and medium-size head, are found in Orissa and the whole of Maharashtra. To this population if we add lower mesocephals, we have a larger group which can be termed as the indigenous population of the South. Higher mesocephals are found mostly in Karnataka, Gujarat and the coastal Maharashtra. This group in the population of Maharashtra appears to have come from the North-West part (Kathiawar and Sindh) *via* the West coast, and from there, might have migrated to Karnataka plateau, and to the South upto the Coorg. Probably this element in the population might have been the pastoral cattle breeders from West-Central Asia representing the Scythians (Shak).

The broad headed people are to be found in three linguistic groups, which suggest their migration at a time when the modern languages were not all formed and so speak, today languages which developed in their regions after their arrival.

In brief we can say that the majority of the people in Maharashtra belong to Australoid-Europoid racial stock.<sup>34</sup>

The blood group is another biological element which is inherited by the population and it throws more light on the racial composition

of the people. The blood-group 'O' is found in a greater measure in Maharashtra. Next to 'O', the blood-group 'B' is found, while the blood group 'A' is barely in 20 percent people. The blood-group 'A' in modern populations is found in Western European nations. The group 'A' is also found among some primitives like the aboriginies in Australia. Among the Indian people, those having 'B' blood group are more in number. And among the primitive communities in South India, there are more people having 'O' blood group. It is not possible to make any observations on the basis of the studies of the blood-groups regarding the racial composition of the people of Maharashtra in view of the inadequate data. On the whole we can say that from the point of view of the physical characteristics the population of Maharashtra takes mid-way position between the North and the South.

Culturally, there is a unity amidst diversity among various castes and tribes in Maharashtra. Those castes and communities which migrated to Maharashtra appear to have preserved their distinctive, cultural traditions. But while preserving their cultural identity they also seem to have assimilated religious and cultural traditions of the local community. In this context, reference may be made to such social institutions and practices, as the institution of Devak, practice of marrying maternal-uncle's daughter, and the worship of Hindu deities, Khandoba, Mahadeo and Devi. These traditions are to be found among the majority of the castes in Maharashtra. Adoption of Marathi language by various castes and communities is an important factor in bringing about their integration at the regional level.

As a result, although there is socio-cultural diversity among various castes there is unity among them at the regional level. In bringing about integration among various castes and communities at the regional level the role played by the Maratha-Kunbi caste cluster has been a historic one. The central and the crucial position which the Maratha-Kunbi caste-cluster is occupying in the rural social structure, the social and cultural traditions of this group are exerting great influence on the other castes and communities in the society in Maharashtra.<sup>35</sup>

**Chart No. 1**  
**Chart showing distribution of Caste and Tribes in four provinces according to physical types**

Physical Type (1)	Gujarat (2)	Orissa (3)	Karnatak (4)	Maharashtra (5)
<b>Group A : Dolicocephals (Cephalic Index :77)</b>				
Sub-group 1 : Medium nose (Nasal Index : 70—85) Small Head circumference (518—532).	Bhil, Bhangi and Others.	...	Valmiki, Mukri.	Bawane Mahar, Kohali, Khairi, Agri, Gond, Gowari, Mana, Dheevan, Warli.
Sub-group 2 : Broad Nose (Nasal Index :80+) Small Head circumference (518—532).	...	Oran	Jonu Kuruba, Bette Kuruba, Sholega, Mukri.	Bhil, Mahadeo Koli, Warli, Katkari, Halbi, Dheewar, Mana, Gond, Gowari.
Sub-group 3 : Broad Nose (Nasal Index :80+) Larger circumference of the head (532+).	...	Gadaba, Binzal, Koya, Bondo, Kharia, Northern Bhuia, Porja, Khond, Kulta, Khandayat, Kumbhar, Gond, Savara, Dora, Juang Bhatra.	Ager, Halakki Vokkal.	...
Sub-group 4 : Medium Nose (Nasal Index :70-85) Larger head circumference (532+).	Various groups.	Meher, Agaria, Karan, Arnyak, Brahman, Khond, Khandayat.	Nadvara, Bunt, Hallaki Vokkal.	Leva, Gujar, Powar, Karhade Brahman, Koli.

Chart No. 1—Contd.

Physical Type (1)	Gujarat (2)	Orissa (3)	Karnatak (4)	Maharashtra (5)
<b>Group B : Mesocephals (Cephalic Index) (70-79.4)</b>				
Sub-group 1 : Medium nose (Nasal Index : 70—85) Small Head circumference (518—532).	Koli.	Bhangi.	Agasa, Samagra, Hollar, Gangemata.	Charak Brahman, Ahir, Sonar, Shimpi, Chambhar, Khutekar Dhangar, Vanjari, Bari, Bhavsar, Banjara, Mang, Navi, Thakur, Tadavi, Bhil, Teli, Golayat.
Sub-group 2 : Medium to broad Nose (Nasal Index : 79.5-91) Small Head circumference (518—532).	...	Bhangi (sweeper)	Gangemata, Holar.	Sonar, Teli, Tadavi, Bhil, Machivi Bhil, Thakur, Korku, Andh, Chambhar.
Sub-group 3 : Medium to broad Nose (Nasal Index : 79.5-91) Small Head circumference (532+)	...	Keut, Bhuia, Pana or Pano.	Adi Karnatak.	Mahar, Koshti, Dhanoje.
Sub-group 4 : Medium nose (Nasal Index : 70-85) Large Head circumference (532+)	Machi Kharwa, Wagher, Kumbi, Patidar, Audich Brahman, Meher, Luhana, Rajput.	Samvedi Brahman, Gwala, Keut, Pano or Pana.	Harkantra, Hattikankan, Kurub, Kuda Vakkaliga, Bogar, Sali, Panchal Sonar, Rigvedi, Jangam, Babbur Kamme, Ganiga, Hoyasal, Banajiga, Namdhari, other Brahmans.	Bhavsar, Mali, Madhyandin Brahman, Maratha, Tilore, Somavanshi, Wadaval, Rigvedi Brahman, Dhangar, Hatkar, C. K. Prabhu, Chitpavans Brahman, Vaishya Vani, Tvastha. Kasar, Saraswat, Koshti, Mahar, Charak Yejurvedi.

Chart No. 1—Contd.

Physical Type (1)	Gujarat (2)	Orissa (3)	Karnatak (4)	Maharashtra (5)
<b>Group C :</b>				
<b>Higher Mesocephals</b>				
<b>(C. I. 79.4-82)</b>				
Sub-group 1 :	...	...	Palegar, Pattasali, Gauda.	Pareet, Sali, Gurav.
Medium nose (Nasal index : 70—85)				
Small Head circumference (518—532)				
Sub-group 2 :	Oswal Jain.	...	Gangadikar.	Burud, Bhandari, Son-koli.
Medium nose (Nasal index : 70-85)	Bhadela, Rabari. Miyana, Nagar		Kuruba Vokkaliga, Devang,	Daivadnya Sonar, Pathare Kshatriy, Khatri, Pathare Prabhu.
Small Head circumference (532+).	Brahman, Khoja, Menon, Sunni, Bora.		Kunchitiga, Sadaru, Kodugu, Havig Brahman.	

## **Population of Maharashtra 2001 : a note on spatial patterns\***

### **Introduction**

The state of Maharashtra had a population of 96,878,627 in the year 2001 with 50,400,596 males and 46,478,031 females returning a sex ratio of 922. It ranks second, next only to Uttar Pradesh, in population size. With a geographical area of 307,713 sq. km. it ranks third in that respect, next only to Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. About 42.40% of the population of the State resides in urban areas compared to national percentage of 27.78%. It is second in the level of urbanisation next only to Tamilnadu. In absolute terms, urban population has reached a level of 41.1 million. The Class I cities contribute 32.70 million, accounting for 79.71% of the total urban population. Thus, even today, urbanisation in the State is due to growth of large cities. Not all the cities have, grown equally fast and hence their contribution is uneven. Greater Mumbai is by far the most important city that has a significant contribution to make to the urban population of the State. With a population of 11.91 m. the City accounts for 29.05 % of the urban population of the State. Its relative share has, however, declined over years due to its saturation and consequent spill-over into the adjoining districts of Thane and Raigad.

The Census for the year 2001 has provided a variety of information, some at the level of a taluka, and the remaining at the level of a district. The information related to demography is available for sex composition including that for children, literacy, population belonging to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe categories for both rural and urban areas, and, also for both males and females. Various statistical indices have been worked out using these data. Area figures are available only for the rural segment and hence only rural density could be derived. No overall density could be worked out due to absence of area figures for urban centres. Data related to migration are available at district level that helped understanding patterns of in-migrants. Here, an attempt has been made to map out the spatial patterns using the available data. Maps help in understanding the distribution of various facets and save a lot of space otherwise used for verbal presentation. The maps also provide a visual impression and give a better appreciation of the patterns.

**Population Density :** Population density reflects on the potentiality of an area to support population. It is generally high in resource rich areas and low in resource poor areas. Unfortunately, data for areas of talukas were not available for the year 2001. The Census has, however, published village level area figures. These have been utilised to work out the area of rural segment of each taluka. The exercise has enabled derivation of density of rural population. The rural population density for the entire State has worked out to be nearly 195 (Table 1). Areas of high density of over 300 persons per hundred hectares are found to form linear belts along the Krishna and the upper Wainganga valleys (Fig. 1A). The

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\* This chapter has been contributed by Dr. V. S. Phadke and Dr. Dipti Mukherji

belt along the upper Godavari valley is not contiguous, being interspersed with a belt of moderate density of 200-300. The Bhima valley also has only moderate density.

Table 1

**Rural Density in Administrative Divisions of Maharashtra-2001**

Division/State	Rural Density (persons/hundred ha)
Konkan	213.29
Nashik	209.80
Pune	218.83
Aurangabad	181.06
Amaravati	169.17
Nagpur	177.88
Maharashtra	194.89

A belt of moderate density is also seen in the middle Godavari, Manjra and Terna valleys. All these are agriculturally rich areas that are extensively irrigated possessing a capacity to support large population. Inclusion of talukas on the northern border of Jalgaon, Dhule and Nandurbar in the moderate to high density categories may appear surprising but it must be noted that these areas also contribute to irrigated agriculture and have significantly changed during the last few decades. A belt of high density forming a rim around Greater Mumbai is partly due to spill-over of the City, although it is also rich agriculturally specialising in market gardening. Many people from these areas who migrated to Mumbai earlier in search of employment have invested their earnings in agriculture and some of them are even returning to their native place to enjoy peaceful retired life. The lowest rural density of less than 150 is a characteristic of tribal, hill, drought prone or non-irrigated tracts. Rest of the State possesses slightly below average density between 150-200 persons per hundred hectares. Such areas include extensive tracts in Marathwada. Many of these areas send population to nearby urban centres or even outside. Regionally, one finds a dichotomy between Marathwada and Vidarbha with density below 200, on the one hand, and the Western Maharashtra with a density over 200, on the other. This is a reflection on the levels of agricultural development in these segments.

**Level of Urbanisation :** The state stands second in the level of urbanisation (42.4%) next only to Tamilnadu. The spatial pattern is, however, highly uneven (Fig.1B). It is over 60% around major cities like Mumbai, Pune, Nagpur, Solapur and Kolhapur and the major nodes on transport lines connecting them. One finds a distance decay effect in that with increasing distance from the above mentioned cities, level of urbanisation decreases. Elsewhere, it is high only in industrialised cities, especially along transport connections. As one goes away from transport lines, the level of urbanisation is less than

even 20%. In many of such talukas, there is no urban centre at all. This is especially true of tribal, hill or drought prone areas. Areas of population exodus in central and south Konkan are also without urban nodes.

**Sex Ratio :** The sex ratio is often considered a measure of relative treatment meted out to females over males. It has been proved that sex ratio is over 1000 in a just society. But many a times this is not observed in reality. Very often, it is lower than this coveted figure and occasionally it is higher. It is considerably affected by migration and also influenced by discriminatory treatment meted out to girl child either before or after birth. The sex ratio for the State is 922 (Table 2) which is even lower than that for the country as a whole which stands at 933. Moreover, it has fallen by 12 points from its value of 934 in 1991. While continued migration to cities like Mumbai, Pune may partly account for this fall, other factors related to discriminatory treatment to females, particularly to female child and foetus, certainly play a role. The State is sharing this characteristic with certain other states of the country in the north and west, such as, Haryana, Punjab and Gujarat. If the ratio continues to fall, the State would face the problems arising out of unbalanced sex ratio, as are being experienced in the above-mentioned states.

Table 2  
**Sex Ratio in Administrative Divisions of Maharashtra - 2001**

Division/State	Sex Ratio		
	Total	Rural	Urban
Konkan	867.07	1028	820
Nashik	937.71	949	907
Pune	942.54	959	915
Aurangabad	939.07	942	920
Amaravati	940.16	943	936
Nagpur	954.99	966	940
<b>Maharashtra</b>	<b>922.17</b>	<b>959</b>	<b>874</b>

It is not uniform over the State, however. Central and South Konkan and adjoining parts of the plateau have a relatively high sex ratio of over 1000 (Fig. 2A). These are the areas from where people have traditionally moved out to Mumbai in search of a job. Since the migration involves mostly males, at least in the initial stages, females have been left behind to look after the house and farm. Naturally, the number of females exceeds that of males in these areas. For the same reasons, the sex ratio is lower in receiving areas around Mumbai, Pune, Nashik, Nagpur and other urban industrial areas. Here, males come in to bring down female number in comparison to males. Tribal areas in the northwest, north and east have a nearly balanced sex ratio. In other rural areas, the situation is not as bad as that around the metropolitan cities mentioned above, but the

number of females does not exceed that of males. The regional pattern suggests that the city of Mumbai has badly affected the sex ratio of the Konkan region (Table 2). Other cities like Pune, Nashik etc. are less powerful in this respect.

**Rural Sex Ratio :** The figure for rural sex ratio of the State stands at 959 (Table 2). The spatial pattern, however, is highly uneven. Economically developed areas, such as, those around the major cities of Mumbai, Pune, Nagpur, Solapur, Kolhapur, Nashik and Aurangabad as also those along the rail corridors connecting these centres show a relatively low sex ratio and this is suggestive of immigration which is a characteristic of such accessible areas; migration to urban areas being sex selective, lower sex ratio of these areas is easy to explain. As the distance from the cities increases, the sex ratio improves; some of these areas are also characterised by outmigration of males that raises the sex ratio. The highest values of rural sex ratio are seen in pockets of central and south Konkan, as in southern parts of Raigad, Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg districts, and adjoining parts of Desh, which are traditional suppliers of labour to Mumbai. The high sex ratio in the tribal areas of eastern Vidarbha as well as the hilly and dry areas of western Maharashtra is noteworthy. In tribal areas, females get a better treatment. In the latter areas it is suggestive of the lack of employment opportunities and male population exodus. On the whole, the pattern is a reflection on the relative level of development of the areas and the resulting opportunities locally available. Central and south Konkan and eastern Vidarbha even today stand out as labour suppliers to the neighbouring cities and enjoy high sex ratio (Table 2).

**Urban Sex Ratio :** Urban sex ratio is lower than the rural one for obvious reasons (Table 2). The sex ratio falls only around large cities like Mumbai, Pune, Nagpur or Kolhapur as their population comprises a large component of migrants which is still dominated by males. It shows a rise with increasing distance from the large cities. The modal value ranges between 925 and 950. Talukas containing hill stations like Mahabaleshwar, Chikaldara show low sex ratio despite their small size and so also those incorporating religious centres like Ambejogai and Nanded; such pilgrim centres attract traders and other service professionals which show selectiveness their migration. Surprisingly, talukas like Mahad, Surgana also show very low sex ratio, which is rather difficult to explain; it is perhaps due to commercial and administrative function of the lone urban centre in the respective talukas. On the regional scale, Konkan stands out for its low value and this is primarily due to migrant population settled in Mumbai agglomeration.

**Child Sex Ratio :** The census of 2001 for the first time provided an opportunity to study child population by publishing figures for population in the age group of 0-6. Child sex ratio is unaffected by migration and is expected to be nearly balanced, under normal

circumstances. It is surprising, however, that the CSR for the State is just 913 (Table 3). It is above average only in Konkan, Nagpur and Amaravati divisions which have also shown a higher literacy and female literacy. While in Aurangabad division low child sex ratio is associated with low literacy, in Nashik and Pune divisions there is combination of low child sex ratio and high literacy, though with low female literacy. Thus, while literacy should have played some positive role in determining child sex ratio through empowerment, low female literacy has prevented this role from becoming more effective. Moreover, other factors like inheritance of landed property show a tremendous negative influence. It appears that economic development and concomitant technological progress have brought in their wake the negative impact on social attitude with respect to female child. Craze for a male child and pre-natal selection of sex are primary causes of such distorted sex ratios among the children. In Nashik and Pune divisions, for example, there are agriculturally prosperous areas which are associated with lowest levels of child sex ratio (Fig. 2B); here, the figure is less than 875. As mentioned earlier, other areas form contiguous belts of high sex ratio (over 925). Even here, however, there is hardly a balance in the children of two sexes.

**Rural Child Sex Ratio:** Rural child sex ratio is slightly better than that for the entire child population (Table 3). Regionally, Konkan, Amaravati and Nagpur have high values compared to the other divisions. Pune division is the worst in this respect. When looked at spatially, there are two extensive pockets, viz. Konkan and Vidarbha, where the rural child sex ratio is over 950; these are peripheral, either physically or socially. Even urbanised areas of these regions have a slightly higher sex ratio. For the western Maharashtra plateau it is generally less than 925; this is suggestive of human intervention. On the whole the pattern for the rural child sex ratio is a replica of that for the entire child population, though one finds some dilution.

Table 3  
Sex Ratios in Administrative Divisions of Maharashtra - 2001

Division/State	Child Sex Ratio		
	Total	Rural	Urban
Konkan	930	961	914
Nashik	905	913	895
Pune	880	885	887
Aurangabad	909	921	905
Amaravati	927	938	919
Nagpur	948	966	932
<b>Maharashtra</b>	<b>913</b>	<b>923</b>	<b>908</b>

**Urban Child Sex Ratio:** Urban child sex ratio is lower than the rural counterpart (Table 3) and follows the same general pattern as that of the latter. The distribution is patchy, however, being focused

on individual urban centres and the routes connecting them. Moreover, some areas of Konkan and central Vidarbha, especially near cities, join the Maharashtra plateau in returning low sex ratio. These areas enjoy a high social status. This reflects on rather a misuse of information on medical technology. Surprisingly, large cities like Mumbai, Pune and Nagpur have fallen behind in this respect; it is primarily due to a greater heterogeneity in their population, which balances the different trends. Pune and Nasik divisions stand out by low values and this is suggestive of greater gender bias in these areas. However, it is happy to note that the figure for urban child sex ratio in Pune division is higher than that for the rural one for the reasons already mentioned.

**Literacy :** Literacy is one of the indicators of empowerment of population. There is usually a positive correlation between literacy and development. The State has a literacy rate of 66.03% when worked out for the entire population (Table 4). It improves considerably to 76.90% when child population is excluded. The spatial imbalance is apparent (Fig. 3A). Western parts of the State, including Konkan and Desh, but excluding the hilly and tribal areas of the Sahyadri, have a few pockets of high literacy (over 65%), especially around major urban centres. This is also the case with eastern parts of Khandesh and central and eastern Vidarbha. Tribal areas in Gadchiroli district and Melghat hills of Amaravati district have low literacy (below 50%). It is moderate (50-60%) in Marathwada and adjoining drought. Prone areas of western Maharashtra; one finds an improvement westward. The socio-economic as well as historical factors thus show a considerable influence on spread of literacy. Overall, while Konkan division stands out on account of its high literacy, Aurangabad division is at the opposite end. The other three divisions lie midway, being almost at the same level.

Table 4  
**Literacy in Administrative Divisions of Maharashtra - 2001**

Division/State	Child Sex Ratio		
	Total	Rural	Urban
Konkan	72.38	60.48	76.32
Nashik	61.96	57.84	72.42
Pune	66.84	62.59	73.91
Aurangabad	57.71	54.60	67.21
Amaravati	66.64	63.63	75,10
Nagpur	67.29	61.16	76.96 i
<b>Maharashtra</b>	<b>66.03</b>	<b>59.73</b>	<b>74.58 i</b>

**Rural Literacy :** Rural literacy figure is nearly seven points lower compared to that for the entire population (Table 4). The spatial pattern is nearly the same as that for the entire population and

reflects the fall mentioned above. The zones of high literacy have either shrunk or shifted to lower level. This is particularly so in the rim around Mumbai and in Marathwada. As in the case of literacy, Marathwada is at the lowest rung but Konkan fails to make the grade; the fall is by twelve points. This suggests that the literacy of this part is primarily due to urban centres which contain migrant population from the rural parts of the region. One thus finds a strong rural-urban contrast. The general pattern in rural literacy appears to be tribal pockets and Marathwada versus the rest of Maharashtra.

**Urban Literacy:** Urban literacy is nearly eight points higher compared to that for the entire population (Table 4). Nagpur and Konkan divisions are the torch bearers, but other regions, except Marathwada, are not falling behind significantly. But even here, one does not know the extent to which the improvement is due to population native to the region. The spatial pattern is more patchy for obvious reasons. While high intensity is seen in south Konkan and central Vidarbha, relatively greater contiguity is seen in Bhima valley.

**Female Literacy:** Female literacy is considered an index of empowerment of women and hence its higher value is equated with high level of development. Female literacy figure for the State is 57.62 which is about 9 percentage points lower than that for the literacy for the entire population (Table 5). Regionally, Konkan, Pune, Amaravati and Nagpur have relatively high figures than Nashik and Aurangabad divisions. Aurangabad division has not only the lowest literacy level, the difference between total and female literacy is also the highest; religion has played a significant role apart from the historical factor. Spatially, the pattern is a replica of that for the literacy (Fig. 3B). Areas of high female literacy are more emphatically brought out.

Table 5  
Literacy Status in Administrative Divisions of Maharashtra - 2001

Division/State	Female Literacy			Females Among the Literate	
	Total	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
Konkan	65.74	62.68	81.33	44.77	41.77
Nashik	53.12	57.27	76.79	40.28	43.28
Pune	58.61	61.64	77.92	41.57	43.87
Aurangabad	46.62	51.37	71.12	37.83	42.73
Amaravati	58.62	63.92	80.77	41.55	45.20
Nagpur	59.50	62.12	81.86	42.02	45.19
<b>Maharashtra</b>	<b>57.62</b>	<b>59.12</b>	<b>79.25</b>	<b>40.98</b>	<b>42.92</b>

**Female Literacy - Rural:** Female literacy rate in rural areas differentiates between core and peripheral areas in both physical and social terms. The areas associated with hills such as the Western

Ghats, the Satpudas and the hills of eastern Vidarbha have low literacy rate because of physical inaccessibility which poses problems in provision of educational facilities; limited job opportunities make even life difficult so that learning, especially by females, becomes a low priority. Some of these areas also have a lot of tribal component in their social fabric and this accounts for low female literacy levels in these areas. Other areas of western Maharashtra and Vidarbha show moderate literacy levels. Peaks are found only around Mumbai, Vengurla, Amaravati and Nagpur; the first two of these areas have been considerably exposed to missionary influence, especially the Portuguese while the last two are the traditionally known educational centres. Among the administrative regions, Marathwada stands the lowest (Table 5) and this is primarily the result of the historical factors, it being the territory administered by Nizam. Social composition is also responsible for the low literacy figure.

**Female Literacy - Urban :** Female literacy in urban areas follows the same basic pattern of distribution as that of the rural one. One, however, finds a greater contiguity and intensity suggesting greater awareness, better infrastructure and liberal attitude towards female education. In urban areas, education is also becoming increasingly necessary to make a living. Some policy decisions providing free education to girls up to H.S.C. have been better exploited in urban areas and these partly explain higher female literacy there. But apart from these, one should not forget the role played by social reformers in western Maharashtra and Vidarbha which has now been fructified; this is not seen in Marathwada division for the reasons already mentioned (Table 5).

**Females Among Literate :** Female literacy compares literate females with total females and expresses the literate segment in the female population. Female literates can also be compared to total literate population, including males and females, and this would give an idea as to where females stand vis-a-vis males in the literate group. Females constitute a little over two fifths of the literate population. There is a marginal difference in the rural and urban segments, with the latter having a higher value reflecting on the social attitude as well as access. An attempt has been made, here, to separately analyse the patterns of rural and urban female literates.

**Females Among Literate -Rural :** A belt of high proportion of literate females extends over the coastal areas of central and south Konkan with an offshoot over the hilly areas bordering the Krishna and Bhima basins; this is due to migration of literate males that

boosts the proportion of literate females. In the rest of western Maharashtra, excluding the hilly and tribal areas, as also eastern Khandesh and nearly the whole of Vidarbha, excluding tribal pockets in Gadchiroli, Chandrapur, Yavatmal and Amaravati districts, show a little above average pattern. Both these areas stand out because of the factors already discussed. It is noteworthy that these areas are associated with a well developed transport connection. Surprisingly, there are two small pockets, viz. talukas of Dahanu in the northern parts of Thane and Sironcha in southernmost parts of Gadchiroli, that show a relatively high level of literate females. In Dahanu, this is primarily the result of nearness to Mumbai, work of reformers like Anutai Wagh and also the missionary influence. In Gadchiroli, it is partly due to missionary influence and in part due to educated migrant population in the mining sector; relatively high sex ratio has worked towards high proportion of females among the literate. As elsewhere, Marathwada stands out conspicuously by its low levels (Table 5).

**Females Among Literate-Urban :** Females among the literate in urban areas form a similar pattern as that by rural females. The contiguity is broken by non-existence of urban areas in some talukas. Dahanu does not stand out as a high literacy pocket, probably because of migration from the adjoining rural areas to the local urban centres. The migrants are less literate in proportion compared to the local population and generally work as housemaids; of late one also finds a flow of male migrants to work in industries and this depresses the proportion of the female literates further. Surprisingly, large cities like Mumbai, Pune, Nagpur or Solapur show low proportion of female literates; this is the result of their lower sex ratio. While standing of Amaravati and Nagpur divisions is understandable (Table 5), the low level found in Konkan is the result of supremacy of Mumbai in determining the figure for the region.

**Scheduled Caste Population :** The State has a significant proportion of SC population. The overall proportion is 10.20% (Table 6) but it has a highly uneven distribution (Fig. 4 A). The highest concentration (over 12.5%) is seen in Marathwada and Vidarbha. In the former, there is an extensive pocket in the districts of Nanded, Latur and Osmanabad bordering Andhra Pradesh; its continuity is also seen in the district of Solapur. In the latter, there are three pockets focusing on Amaravati, Nagpur and Chandrapur. Besides, there are a few small isolated pockets in these two areas. While the lowest proportion (below 5%) is found in Konkan and tribal areas,

elsewhere it is moderate to low (5 - 12.5%). This is summarised in the table below and it is interesting to note that even the regions with high proportion show a considerable internal variation within.

Table 6

**Proportion of SC and ST Population  
in Administrative Divisions of Maharashtra - 2001**

Division/State	SC (%)	ST (%)
Konkan	4.19	6.37
Nashik	8.57	20.57
Pune	11.75	1.96
Aurangabad	14.33	3.89
Amaravati	12.79	11.36
Nagpur	15.58	15.73
<b>Maharashtra</b>	<b>10.20</b>	<b>8.45</b>

**Scheduled Tribe Population :** The State has a sizeable ST population of 8.45% (Table 6). It is mainly concentrated in northwestern and eastern sections (Fig. 4B). In the northwest, a continuous area stretches along the border covering northern parts of Thane district, western parts of Nashik and Dhule districts, and the entire Nandurbar district. The extensions of this belt are seen in Ahmadnagar, Raigad, Jalgaon and Amaravati districts. These areas form a part of either the Western Ghats or the Satpuda range in the northern part. The eastern belt focuses on the eastern hills and is a continuation of the tribal areas of Chhattisgarh. Gadchiroli, Bhandara, Chandrapur and Yavatmal are the major contributing districts. One finds decreasing proportion while going away from these tribal cores. Tribal population in the central and southern parts of the State is less than 2.5%. Thus, tribal population shows a central Indian influence in its spread.

**Migration :** Migration has remained a very important trait in population of any region. Initially, people have moved to overcome the harshness of the environment. Later, they started moving out in search of green pastures. While distance creates some frictional resistance, it is not the sole factor in determining the spatial pattern. Moreover, with improved transport and communication system people show a tendency to move over a considerable distance. The data on

migrants to State has been analysed in both temporal and spatial perspectives. The data have been processed using district as the unit of analysis, as taluka level data was not available.

**Pattern of Migrants and Their Source Areas:** There is a considerable spatial variation in the extent of-immigration (Fig. 5 A). While Thane and Satara districts record over 50% of their population comprising migrants, the lowest figure of below 35% is recorded by all the districts of Marathwada except Aurangabad, Gondiya district of Vidarbha as also Nandurbar and Solapur districts of western Maharashtra plateau; surprisingly, this is not the case with districts of South Konkan. The districts under the shadow of large cities like Mumbai, Pune and Nagpur show a higher rate (40 -50%) compared to other districts, where it is 35-40%. Surprisingly, the city district of Mumbai fails to show a high proportion of immigrants; this is also the case with Nagpur district. In the case of Mumbai this is primarily the result of the absence of intra-district migration; in Nagpur as well as Mumbai saturation is also responsible for such small proportion. This can be seen from the higher proportion of immigrants in Thane district. Even Satara shows a higher proportion than Pune, but the margin is very small.

Source areas of migrant population also show a significant spatial variation. For almost the entire State, over two fifths of the migrant population is from within the district. In predominantly agricultural areas of western Maharashtra, Marathwada and Vidarbha this proportion goes up to over three fifths. The migrant population in this case belongs primarily to agricultural labour category. This proportion progressively comes down as agriculture becomes less important relatively. This is indicated by low percentage for Nagpur and lowest for Thane. Mumbai City and Suburban districts do not record any intra-district migration as no internal divisions have been recognised for the purpose of recording data.

The pattern is almost reversed when inter-district migration is considered. All the districts predominating in non-agricultural activities get projected with high proportion. Even here, Mumbai Suburban district fails to come up to the expected position, but this is only relative as out of state sources contribute substantially to total migrants (Fig. 5B). The contribution of out of state sources was expected to intensify the pattern shown by inter-district sources. However, the picture is complicated as the factors other than non-agricultural employment play an important role in shaping this pattern. Access by transport lines, historical ties, location, whether at the core or periphery, all play an important role. Thus, a higher

proportion in the districts like Nandurbar, Gadchiroli or Sindhudurg could only be explained in terms of border location and historical ties. Low proportion in the heart of the State as also that in Satara district, could be explained in terms of their locations which do not have contiguity with bordering states. Despite this, it is true that as the distance of the source areas of migrants increases, the share of districts containing cities like Mumbai, Nagpur, Pune, Kolhapur or districts under their shadow significantly increases. One thus finds a positive relationship between the distance and the level of opportunity, on the one hand, and skill or education possessed by the migrants, on the other; these factors alone enable them to overcome the friction of distance.

**Pattern of Out of State Migrants :** Among different sources of migration, out of state source is more important qualitatively and hence this has been analysed in greater detail. Here, the problem arose because almost all the districts of the State received some migrants from every other state. It was, therefore, necessary to separate out more important states sending the migrants from those which were less important. The analysis could have been performed in different ways, but there was a need to separate out the influence of historical ties and border location from the development variable, including access. This was sought to be achieved by identifying the number of states contributing to out of State migrants to each district, employing Weaver's combination technique. Their location vis-a-vis the district concerned along with the historical ties, if any, was then analysed. The analysis reveals certain interesting results.

Six out of thirty five districts have predominance of only one source state in sending migrant population (Fig. 6). As only has been expected, districts lying on the border of the State show this feature. Moreover, the neighbouring state is sending these migrants substantiating the near neighbourhood effect in the process. Five of these lie along the border of Karnataka and this is primarily because the adjoining part of Karnataka formed a part of Bombay Province before state reorganisation in 1956. The same effect is shown by Amaravati which had connections with Madhya Pradesh of which it was a part till 1956; in fact, Amaravati is the traditional destination for the people from Sagar-Damoh plateau. The difference in the nature of boundary is also evident; hilly border in the north is less influential than valleys of the Bhima and the Krishna in the south.

The districts at the junction of two neighbouring states, show influence of both of them as exemplified by two state combinations. This is clearly seen, if one observes the districts at four different

corners of the state. Nandurbar and Dhule receive migrants from two states, viz. Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. It is interesting to note, however, that while Gujarat is more important than Madhya Pradesh to Nandurbar, it is the other way round for Dhule and here access plays a more important role. Bhandara and Gondiya draw migrants from Madhya Pradesh in the north and Chhattisgarh in the east in that order. Nature of population has played an important role in determining the relative strength. Historical contacts have influenced the order of importance of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka in contributing to migrants in bordering district of Nanded. This should have been borne out by Sindhudurg too, but Karnatak is sending more migrants to it than Goa which is closer to it in all the respects. Probably, the size and princely ties with Belgaum have played a more important role.

The districts slightly inward from the border, e.g. Ratnagiri or Satara, draw migrants from three different states which is quite explicable; this becomes quite difficult to appreciate in the case of the district of Gadchiroli. It is observed that the districts get slowly eliminated this way as the number of states in the combination increases, first from the southern part and then from the eastern part. Thus districts of the western Maharashtra are characterized by more diversified sources of migration, reflecting on greater opportunities present there.

In twenty eight out of thirty five districts, the first ranking state in terms of number of migrants is the neighbouring state; Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh dominate in this respect primarily because of the length of the border they share with Maharashtra. Karnataka is, however, more consistent in terms of higher proportion than the other states. The share of Gujarat and Chhattisgarh, the other bordering states, as the first ranking states in terms of the number of districts receiving such migrants is less than expected. In the case of the former, it is because of the developed nature of districts like Thane or Mumbai which attract more migrants from the labour rich state of Uttar Pradesh. Here again, Ahmadnagar and Jalna are rather the surprises; both of them have probably religious affiliations coming to their help.

Six districts do not have significant contribution from the second ranking state as the first ranking state itself sends overwhelming number of migrants, over 60%; all these, except Amaravati, are bordering Karnataka. In others, it is invariably the neighbouring state which could not rank first for some reason. Only in some districts like Pune, Aurangabad, Akola or Ratnagiri that Uttar Pradesh has scored over the neighbouring states. In neither of these districts the proportion exceeds 60%.

Six more districts do not have any third ranking state as the first and second ranking states send overwhelming number of migrants to make the proportion of the third too small to count. These are the corner districts seen earlier. In the rest it is either the bordering state or those which are opportunity poor, such as, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar or Rajasthan become important; migrants from the first two states predominate in industrially developed districts, such as, Nashik or Nagpur while those from Rajasthan become important in rather inaccessible districts, viz. Bid, Parbhani and Jalna. In neither of the districts the proportion of migrants exceeds 20%.

Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat continue to dominate as senders among the fourth ranking state. The other senders are Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. Although the spatial contiguity exists in the pattern, explanation is rather difficult. Moreover, district is too large a unit and inter-district variations are not ruled out. It is noteworthy, however, that these areas are a part of geographical core which do not have an overwhelming influence of any one of the bordering states. Moreover, none of these districts receives over 15% of the migrants.

None of the districts having a land border with other states, barring Thane and Nashik, appear to be receiving migrants from the fifth ranking state. Surprisingly, Mumbai Suburban district fails to stand in this group. Moreover, the contiguity shown so far has been broken by the districts of Buldana and Parabhani which are less developed. The districts, with contribution from the fifth state, are diversified in activities and, naturally, sources of migrants are also distant and diversified; Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Kerala are the major senders. None of the states contribute more than 10% migrants.

The districts with significant proportion of migrants from the sixth ranking states are almost all concentrated in the northwestern part of the state around Mumbai and Pune. The senders are all the neighbouring states, except Kerala. None of the districts receives more than 10% of the migrants from this source.

There are only three districts having migrants from the seventh ranking state; none of these are highly industrialised. The source regions are distant, viz. Bihar and Kerala. None of the districts receives more than 10% of the migrants from this source. Religious ties appear to have brought these migrants to these districts.

**Share of States in Out of State Migrants:** The state of Uttar Pradesh has the highest share among migrants to the State; this is obviously due to its rank in absolute population as also the lack of

enough employment opportunities. Neighbouring states of Gujarat and Kamataka follow, partly due to proximity and also, in part, due to historical ties. Distance plays an important role in the share of other states; this is clear from near absence of migrants from the northeast and north which are rather inaccessible spatially as well as socially. But this is not strictly so as can be seen from the small size from the nearby states like Chhattisgarh and Orissa vis-a-vis the states of Kerala and Tamilnadu. Role of information appears to play an important role in this respect.

The patterns of rural and urban migrants are nearly replica of the above pattern. While rural migrants are drawn primarily from less developed states, such as, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, urban migrants also come from the developed states like Gujarat, Karnataka, West Bengal, Kerala and Tamilnadu. An analysis of relative proportion of migrants from the states coming from rural and urban areas suggests that migrants of the former type come primarily drawn from either the neighbouring or less developed states but those of the latter category come from the distant or more developed states.

**Duration of Migrants from States :** Duration of stay of migrant population suggests that it is negatively related to distance but shows a positive correlation with development. Older residents have come from the neighbouring states and those from the south. Punjab is the only northern state sending over 55% of the migrants which are 10 or more years old. The next stream of migrants has come from the central and northeastern states of the peninsular India; Assam and Tripura are the only states outside the peninsula. All these are population surplus opportunity poor areas. It is only recently that one finds a higher proportion of migrants from the distant states like those of the northeast and the north; the proportion of migrants is, however, small.

The pattern for migrants from the rural areas matches that for the total migrants, with slight extensions during the older period and corresponding contraction during more recent period. However, urban migrants show a slight variation. The state of Andhra Pradesh, for example, is only a recent participant in sending migrants from the urban areas. Although historical ties have sent people to Marathwada region of Maharashtra, they were mainly agricultural labourers. Since the ruling elite during the princely statehood did not pay sufficient attention in developing skills or providing education, migrants from urban areas was very limited. It is only after state reorganisation that such efforts were made and this is reflected in the recent migration from the urban areas of that state.

**Closing Remarks :** The preceding paragraphs have helped understanding not only the spatial patterns of some demographic variables, but they have also highlighted some issues pertaining to demographic structure. Problem areas have been focused and some paradoxes have also been revealed. Such efforts should help the authorities to take appropriate measures to tackle at least some of these issues in a meaningful manner.

## FOOTNOTES

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9. During the reign of Sultans over Gujarat between 15th to 17th centuries many Bhils embraced Islam. In Khandesh they are known as Tadvi Bhils. Tadvi Bhils in Bhokardan taluka belong to the period of Aurangzeb (1658-1707) and they could be the progeny of Muslim soldiers and Bhil females.
10. **Criminal Classes in the Bombay Presidency**, Mumbai, 1908. In this Report Pawara and Dangchi tribes included in Hilly Bhil.
11. At this place Hanmant Naik became Martyr while fighting.
12. **Jalgaon District Gazetteer** (Marathi Edition), 1994, see pp. 203-209 for more information.
13. **Raigad District Gazetteer**, *op. cit.*
14. *Ibid.* pp. 220-21.
15. *Ibid.* pp. 221.
16. For more information see following district Gazetteers : **Kolhapur District Gazetteer** (Marathi Edition) 1989, pp. 166-167; **Wardha District Gazetteer**, (Marathi Edition), 1992, pp.155-156 ; **Raigad District Gazetteer**, *op. cit.*, pp. 244-346.
17. **Wardha District Gazetteer**, *op.cit.*, pp. 145-48.
18. *Ibid*, page 136-39, more information is given in this volume. On the base of survey. (The Adiwasi Gowari Samaj Sanghatna, Maharashtra organized a Morcha on the Assembly at Nagpur on the 23rd November, 1994, for their demands of restoration of the facilities of Scheduled Tribes. At T point in Nagpur, 114 Gowaris died in the stampede. State Government appointed a Dani Commission to investigate the reasons

of the stampede and built Gowari Shahid Smarak near zero mile at Nagpur in the memory of the martyrs. The Fly-over at Sitabardi is also named Adiwasi Govari Shahid Uddan Pool).

19. **Raigad District Gazetteer**, *op. cit.* pp. 237-40.
20. For More information see **Wardha District Gazetteer**, *op.cit.* pp. 140-44.
21. There is an increase in the population of Mahadeo Kolis on account of the inclusion of the Son Kolis in them as per 1981 Census.
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