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in India and in Australia while a Research
Scholar at the Australian National University

Paul Richard Kauffman

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Paul R. Kauffman

ABSTRACT

In this thesis the problems of cultural incorporation, and how and why the concepts bhakti (devotees) and sarkar (government, authority), and the status groups bhagat (devotees) and sarkari naukar (government officials) have developed among Bhils in the Dungarpur District of southern Rajasthan, are investigated. Relevant theoretical literature is considered, and historical sources and data gathered whilst living in four Dungarpur villages between 1979 and 1981 are analyzed. Historically, Bhils were separated and distinguished, but not isolated, from other societies. Military defeat by British-led forces in the nineteenth century impressed the Bhils with the power of government, and encouraged some Bhils to work for government. Popular devotional (bhakti) movements developed among Bhils as an alternative path to status at the end of the nineteenth century, as the Bhils turned to settled agriculture. The external economy has now extensively penetrated Bhil villages. Government is benevolent and particularly benefits those Bhils who are government officials. Other Bhils proudly identify as landowners, although many also have to undertake labouring work. Status groups - bhagat and government officials - are constructed around families, and are often more likely to be found in particular clans in a village. The status groups give particular prominence to the concepts bhakti and government. Bhagat and government-employed Bhils

are masterful men, and brokers of other-worldly and mundane status or rank for other Bhils. Delight in song, a traditional feature of Bhils' culture, chiefly concerns the problematical, the anomalous, and those who have achieved status. Classifications of time and space reflecting bhakti, government and 'tribal' patterns are variously used by all Bhils. Practices of bhakti and institutions of government have significant implications for status. The practice of bhakti and government involves exchanges of food and money which define status. All Bhils share a consciousness of bhakti defined by consumption of pure substances, and consciousness of government, because of the pervasiveness of government institutions and because modern technology is associated with government. Only bhagat and government officials derive significant benefits from this common consciousness of Bhils. The local manifestations of bhakti and government might be realized by any Bhil, but they are effectively realized by those few, who mediate between Bhil and non-Bhil society. The premises and assumptions of bhakti and government do not provide a basis for uniting Bhil interests in opposition to the interests of other Indians. The status of bhagat and of government officials derives ultimately from outside Bhil tradition but it is effective within that tradition. The relationship between bhagat and Bhil officials, and other Bhils, is homologous to the relationship between other Indians and all Bhils. Successful Bhils are to varying degrees bicultural, and their allegiance to one set of cultural values at any time depends in part upon context.

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PREFACE

Transcriptions of Indian words follow the conventions established in Monier-Williams Sanskrit-English Dictionary, unless the words occur in a quoted text, except that diacritics are only used for Wagadi oral texts. The transcriptions of Wagadi words is informed by Bhil speakers' transcriptions of Wagadi, which is normally an unwritten language, in devanagari script. As in A.L. Basham's The Wonder that was India, geographical locations are not marked by diacritics, e.g. there is discussion about the word pal, and about Pal Galandar. Names of organizations are not marked by diacritics. Names of villages in the text are real, so that historical and economic information may be verified. Names of individuals in the four villages studied in detail are fictionalized, to protect personal privacy. 'RFD' is an abbreviation for Records of the Foreign Department, held in the National Archives of India.

They say numerous and all sorts of tribes are settled throughout India, and from the earliest times had a different origin from the Indians, and seem to be Aboriginal in every way.

Megasthenes (Diodorus II.38.22)

Τὴν δὲ ὅλην Ἰνδικὴν οὖσαν ὑπερμεγέθη λέγεται κατοικεῖν ἔθνη πολλὰ καὶ παντοδαπά, καὶ τούτων μηδὲν ἔχειν τὴν ἐξ ἀρχῆς γένεσιν ἑπὶ τὸν ἄλλον, ἀλλὰ πάντα δοκεῖν ὑπάρχειν αὐτόχθονα.

I. INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER ONE : THE PROBLEM

1.1. The problem

'A sociological explanation is finished when one has seen what it is that people believe and think, and who are the people who believe and think it.'

Marcel Mauss (See FN 1)

My interest in the Bhils followed study of Indian history and languages, and research among Australian Aborigines on the problem of cultural continuity and change. What happens culturally when an indigenous minority is encapsulated or surrounded by a society radically different from its own? Only during the last 200 years have indigenous groups in Australia lived with other groups possessing a culture very different from their own. But India provides the opportunity for studying a situation where hunters and gatherers and shifting agriculturalists have lived for millennia in proximity to elaborate centres of urban civilization. India provides opportunities for studying in detail societies formerly based on shifting agriculture, or on hunting and gathering; their historical relationships with complex urban civilizations and the

1. Quoted in L. Dumont Religion, Politics and History in India: Collected Papers in Indian Sociology, Mouton, Paris, 1970, p. 8.

consequences of the relationship for such societies. The thesis is a study in cultural incorporation, which is the phenomenon whereby a smaller society adopts some aspects of the culture of a larger surrounding society or reorders part of its culture in conscious or unconscious imitation of the surrounding society. For instance the study of creole languages in Australia and Melanesia has revealed tendencies to use English or foreign words arranged according to the rules of indigenous grammars. In north India, Indo-european languages are related to European languages in grammar and much of their vocabulary, but they borrow retroflex consonants and lexical items from proto-Australoid or Dravidian languages. The term 'cultural incorporation' is used in this thesis to describe both these contrary tendencies. As communications improve and the powers of central governments increase, processes of cultural incorporation are likely to develop further in the future. Bhils provide a good case study of cultural incorporation because there are historical references to Bhils extending over long periods, so one can study cultural incorporation in historical perspective.

Bhils have traditionally been known as one of the largest tribal groups in India. Historical references to Bhils or Bhillas of central India extend from the seventh century A.D. to the present. There are inscriptions recording grants of land to non Bhils in southern Rajasthan from the seventh century, and literary references to Bhillas from about this time. A thirteenth century inscription in the region of Dungarpur in south-west Rajasthan refers to a 'Bhila' called Nadhal, as a witness to a grant of land to a Brahmin.

'Bhil' may be cognate with the Tamil word vilvar=bowman(See FN 1) Bhils, or 'Bhillas' presumably once spoke Dravidian language(s), but they now speak Bhili or Wagadi, an Indo-European language related to rural Gujarati.

The precise topic for studying cultural incorporation was suggested by the Bhils themselves. During my early fieldwork encounters in southern Rajasthan in November 1979 two Bhil concerns were apparent. One was asked about whether one was a bhagat, which in the local context meant vegetarian teetotaler, or a sansari, which in the local Bhil context meant a meat-eater and drinker of alcohol. One was also asked if one had secured government employment, which for most Bhils is only possible as a teacher or petty official. Bhils consider these concerns relevant to all people including myself. These two questions were at least as important as establishing a kinship relationship in Australian Aboriginal society, where all people and even certain natural phenomena can be designated by a kinship term.

Bhils who were bhagat, or employed by government, had established standing in a changed world. They considered themselves more masterful and significant than other Bhils, and their status was acknowledged in various ways by all Bhils. Subsequent fieldwork during the following two years established that there is wide interest among many Bhils in devotion (bhakti) and government (sarkar). Many Bhils now identify

1. Caldwell Dravidian Grammar, quoted by L. D. Barnett in E.J. Rapson, ed., The Cambridge History of India, S. Chand and Co., New Delhi, 1962, p. 539.

with the alternative and non-exclusive status groups (See FN 1): devotees (bhagat) or government officials (sarkari naukar). The problem addressed in the thesis is to explain how and why all Bhils are influenced in various ways by devotion and government, and why some Bhils consider devotion and government are of major importance.

I chose to work in the Dungarpur District in south-west Rajasthan because there were no modern ethnographic studies published on Bhils in Dungarpur, while there were various reports and theses available on Bhils in other districts, which could therefore provide general comparative information.

Bhil concern with whether other Bhils are bhagat (vegetarian), or government officials, is now widespread. These two apparently unrelated questions were once foreign to Bhils. An examination of the development and selective adoption of notions of bhakti (devotion) and sarkar (authority, government) by Bhils provides an opportunity to test various theories of cultural change in India, which are discussed in Chapter 1.2. It is first necessary to examine the empirical evidence. A search of historical literature suggests the

1. cf. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds, From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1974, pp. 186-7, 405-6.

genesis of the ideas among the Bhils. Government service assumed importance in nineteenth century India. The British established Bhil Corps throughout central India in the middle of the nineteenth century. The Mewar Bhil Corps established in 1840 at Kherwara, on the border of Gujarat, and Dungarpur and Udaipur in Rajputana, was important in suppressing military opposition by Bhils towards the British and Rajput rulers in Dungarpur. Contemporary British accounts also noted the economic importance of the wages paid to the Bhils in the Corps.

Ideas of bhakti among Bhils are also old. British writers noted a distinction between pure (i.e. vegetarian) and impure Bhils living in eastern Rajasthan at the beginning of the nineteenth century. There are accounts of bhakti movements among Bhils in southern Rajasthan from the latter half of the nineteenth century. It is possible that both the concepts of bhakti and sarkar have been known by Bhils from ancient times, and may gain credence among Bhils at particular historical moments. The available evidence is discussed in Chapters Three and Four.

The question of whether interest of Bhils in bhakti and sarkar is ultimately related to economic structures is considered. For this purpose the changing economy of Scheduled Tribes in Dungarpur, and the economic differences between Bhils and other Indians, and between Bhils themselves, is discussed in Chapter Five.

Chapter Six investigates how the status groups of bhagat and government employees relate to fundamental institutions of Bhil society, such as family structure and marriage, and to other social relations. A critical question investigated in this thesis is the effect of bhakti, and of ideas associated with sarkar (authority/government), in practice. How do they affect behaviour? Is their importance generated by social organization, the real world of social relationships, in contrast to the ideal world of social structure? (See FN 1) This question is considered in Chapter Six, and it is established that the vegetarian devotee (bhagat) and government employee (sarkari naukari) are ideal types. They are conceptualizations of subjective meaning attributed to a hypothetical actor. In reality a combination or transition is more common than pure types. (See FN 2) No individual Bhil is a simple representation of one ideal type.

The ideal types are important to Bhils. Myths often create heroes. The heroes of the myths of bhakti and government have assumed visible form and walk about on earth among the

-
1. cf. R. Firth Essays on Social Organization and Values, Athlone, London, 1964, p. 45.
 2. M. Weber Basic Concepts in Sociology, Peter Owen, London, 1962, p. 29.

Bhils. Some Bhils have achieved an economic foothold outside the village through government employment. The government official (sarkari naukar) represents government (sarkar) in the village. He is clearly identified and carries the most prestige. A Bhil government official is employed in government service as a forester, clerk or school teacher. He is wealthier than his fellows. His income almost invariably does not allow him to live outside the village but does provide a supplement, of critical importance, to his agricultural subsistence. He owns a wrist-watch, and if a male, western-style clothes, and perhaps a bicycle or transistor. He is richer and better fed than other Bhils, and is addressed and referred to, among other Bhils, by the suffix -sahab added to his first name. The government servant is more likely than other Bhils to identify with modern India. The style associated with the appurtenances of modernity, such as western-styled clothes, the bicycle, which is endowed with erotic properties in Bhil songs, and the transistor, has associations with pleasure, which is an important concept in traditional Bhil culture. The young Bhil who has gained government employment and the style and panache of modern Bhil youth perhaps have some similarity to the style of the hero, whose clan's fame, and whose own fame, resounded in his village.

Rural based Bhils oriented to Hindu values and beliefs are more likely to be bhagat. Bhagat is minimally defined as a person who does not consume meat or alcohol. The ontological meaning refers to the religious experience of conversion to beliefs and practices which form part of the greater Hindu tradition. Bhil women define 'bhagat' as a vegetarian who does not drink

alcohol. Bhil men usually recognize there is a metaphysical aspect to any definition. They describe a bhagat leader as 'bhagat king'. (bhagat maharaj), but generally Bhils in western Dungarpur define a bhagat by his avoidance of meat and alcohol, and anyone known to consume meat or alcohol is not considered a bhagat. Sobriety and vegetarianism define, in the simplest terms, the devotion (bhakti) of devotees (bhagat). Bhagat are outward looking, and many have occupational aspirations of government employment for themselves or their children.

There is a recessive ideal type. The sansari (literally 'the worldly person') eats meat and drinks alcohol, and identifies with an imminent world of pleasure. The forest (janqli) Bhils who may occasionally work as migrant urban labourers are more likely to be sansari than bhagat. The distinction between vegetarian (bhagat) and non-vegetarian (sansari) is important, but not absolute. Over the last fifteen years the forests of southern Rajasthan have largely disappeared. The increase in the number of vegetarians (bhagat) to some extent has coincided with the decrease in the availability of game from the forests. Meat is expensive, and most Bhils can only afford to consume it at major festivals. Mahudi, fermented by Bhils from the fruit of the mahuda tree (bassia latifolia), is more readily available, and is therefore more likely to be an issue in deciding a person's vegetarian (bhagat) or non-vegetarian (sansari) status. Often this status is a matter of dispute by others, because people eat or drink in secret.

Although there are now some government servants and bhagat in most Bhil villages in Dungarpur, their numbers are small. Like aristocracy in a feudal society, or the haute bourgeoisie in a capitalist society, bhagat Bhils and Bhils employed by government are a statistical minority. But like the aristocracy or the haute bourgeoisie in their respective ages, their political and economic power, and their effects on the consciousness of the majority of Bhils, are disproportionate to their numbers.

Song is significant in Bhil culture, and Bhil songs are particularly concerned with the problematical aspects of their culture, and with innovations. Songs also celebrate Bhil big men of the past, whose fame resounded in their clan and village. The achieved status of the bhagat and of the Bhil government official is consistent with an ancient pattern of masterful men among the Bhils. They manage, better than others, challenging, problematical and innovatory aspects of contemporary culture, just as Bhil songs reflect attempts to achieve such mastery in the past. (Chapter Seven).

Concerns associated with bhakti and government to some extent affect the world view of all Bhils, including their organization of time and space. There are different ways of thinking about time and space. The lifestyles of bhagat and government officials are somewhat different from other Bhils. Bhagat and government officials are consequently more likely to have mastery of all of the various ways of conceptualizing time and space known to the Bhils. This aspect is discussed in Chapter Eight.

Implications of Bhil fascination with devotion (bhakti) and awe of government/authority (sarkar) are explored further in Chapters Nine to Twelve. For Bhils, food and money articulate important statements about similarity and difference between humans. For this reason Bhils use food and money to articulate and develop notions of devotion (bhakti) and government (sarkar).

Chapter Twelve concludes that bhakti and sarkar are important to Bhils among other reasons because they address the problem of hierarchy, or religiously sanctioned inequality. They serve as metaphors for the relationship between Bhils and non Bhils. In summary it is suggested that through association with sarkar, best achieved by gaining government employment, Bhils gain secular status and resources. Other-worldly status is gained by adherence to pure practices, vegetarianism and avoidance of alcohol. The influence of Bhils who are bhagat or government servants, or both, and the interest and respect of all Bhils in the two permanent status groups, suggest that bhakti and sarkar are predominant values in contemporary Bhil society, in a similar sense to Dumont's thesis that the Brahmin and Kshatriya are predominant institutions in classical Indian society. The power of sarkar is supported by a modern nation state, however, and is not sanctioned by religious tradition. There are other important qualifications to these two predominant institutions of the Bhils, and to the analogy of predominance of institutions

as in Dumont's model. The thesis documents the manner in which the dominance of bhakti and sarkar among the Bhils has evolved historically. The notions may have been present among Bhils for many hundreds of years, and have gained or decreased in importance in particular historical periods. Traditional Bhil notions of big men, of a dominant clan in a village, and a dominant man in that clan, are documented in older songs and in hero-stones. Bhakti and sarkar are associated with criteria of dominance different from this traditional form. But the pattern of exclusiveness and achieved status is consistent with the past.

Among the Bhils, predominant institutions are described by local political interactions, by individual choices, which are at least partly culturally conditioned, by groups creating ties and boundaries, by demonstrations of beliefs. Bhakti and sarkar have economic consequences and conditions. They affect access to material resources and political advantage. They affect behaviour and articulate relationships. They form part of an ideological system. They are particularly useful and meaningful for two status groups who have emerged as cultural brokers for the Bhils' exchanges with modern Indian society. They are the Bhils who are bhagat, and Bhils employed by government. It is because of their biculturalism, their mastery of nontraditional beliefs and practices in the context of Bhil villages, that bhagat and government officials are now dominant within those villages. The successful Bhil bhagat and government officials have skills and connections outside the village which provide mastery within it.

1.2 Theoretical perspectives

What happens culturally when a small minority is surrounded by a different society has been studied by various scholars, and some of their hypotheses and theories seem particularly helpful in understanding cultural incorporation among the Bhils. Cultural incorporation is defined as the process whereby a minority society adopts some aspects of the culture of a more numerous or significant surrounding society, or reorders part of its culture in conscious or unconscious imitation of the surrounding society.

The most famous explanation of cultural incorporation in India has been developed over many years by M.N. Srinivas. (See FN 1) He uses the term 'Sanskritization' to describe the practice whereby groups imitate aspects of the behaviour of higher status castes. Max Weber had previously described the behaviour by the term 'Hinduization'. (See FN 2) Their idea has often been followed by historians and others wishing to describe social mobility within a cultural and political context which is assumed

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1. M.N.Srinivas Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1952, p. 219; Social Change in Modern India, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1966, pp. 6-11.
 2. M. Weber The Religion of India: The Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism, (translated by H.H. Gerth and D. Martindale), The Free Press, London, 1958, p.141.

to be static. (See FN 1) By imitating the norms of higher castes, groups could improve the status of their newly defined caste. The term 'Sanskritization' does not describe, or explain, why other groups claim higher, or non-subordinate, status but do not adopt Sanskritic modes of thought or behaviour. A major example is the category 'tribal'. Srinivas describes tendencies observable in Indian societies in transition under the cluster titles 'modernization' and 'Sanskritization'. He does not discuss class, but notes that more advanced communities tend to modernize, less advanced to Sanskritize. He does not explain why this is so.

Some Bhils have adopted some ideological markers, notably vegetarianism and avoidance of alcohol, which are qualifications for a high rank in the caste system. But Bhils are also acutely aware of the differences, in speech, walking, behaviour, dress, knowledge of songs and dances, between Bhils and those who designate themselves as higher castes. They also bitterly dispute the superordinate status of groups such as Brahmins, who claim higher status for reasons of purity. They are more likely to acknowledge the higher status of Rajput castes. Rajputs were the traditional rulers of Rajasthan. Srinivas notes that 'the lack of clarity of caste hierarchy is not accidental but an essential feature of the system, inasmuch as it makes for the

1. For instance Thapar has noted that subscribers to new religious movements became separate castes located in an hierarchical order of castes.[R. Thapar Ancient Indian Social History: Some Interpretations, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1978, p. 146.]

mobility of individual castes. (See FN 1) Because there was no rank ordering agreed by all, some castes could claim their status was high, particularly if their economic circumstances had changed.

Srinivas discussed the notion of the dominant caste in 1959: 'Numerical strength, economic and political power, ritual status, and Western education and occupations are the most important elements of dominance ... when a caste enjoys all or most of the elements of dominance, it may be said to have decisive dominance.' (See FN 2) Srinivas' dominant caste therefore did not demonstrate dominance only through ritual status. Nor did the dominant caste reflect a simple class relationship. Many writers have noted that the emergence of class consciousness in India has been diffused or segmented by caste, regional, religious or sex loyalties. (See FN 3) It remained to be explained why and how Sanskritic or 'pure' practices were important for dominance in India.

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1. M.N. Srinivas Caste in modern India, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1962, p. 198.
 2. M.N. Srinivas 'The Dominant Caste in Rampura', American Anthropologist, vol. 61, 1959, p. 15.
 3. K. Ram reviews the literature on the formation of a working class in urban India and concludes that because of its persistent agrarian links the Indian urban proletariat fits as uneasily with the tenets of orthodox Marxism as it does with modernisation theory. [K. Ram 'The Indian working class and the peasantry: A review of current evidence on interlinks between the two classes', Human Futures, Winter 1981, pp. 184-185.]

Srinivas' work on dominant castes, and other scholarly studies, were used by Low to develop a thesis about rich or dominant peasants. He argued that in India aristocratic landlords have been superseded by dominant peasants, who as a group obfuscate class lines, as they are lumped culturally with the poor dominated peasants who are their neighbours, and with whom they are related in various ways. Political opposition by a potential working class is diffused because rich peasants share the same culture, assumptions, lifestyle and aspirations as poor ones. (See FN 1) Individually, of course, the dominant peasants in western Dungarpur, with their mud houses, and secondhand bicycles, are poor rivals to the Dungarpur Maharaval, with his palaces, and elephant stables, now unused. As a group, however, rich or middle peasants can be politically significant in southern Rajasthan, and according to Low, throughout post-independence India.

F.G. Bailey has undertaken studies of social interaction in eastern India. He has studied both the groups generally considered castes and tribes and has discussed differences between 'caste' and 'tribe' in India. His most lucid and concise discussion of this topic is contained in a 1960 article. (See FN 2) Bailey considers that the distinction between tribes

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1. D.A. Low 'Peasants and Political Power: Asia, Africa, the Pacific'. Australian National University Lectures, mimeo, 1980.
 2. F.G. Bailey '"Tribe" and "Caste" in India', Contributions to Indian Sociology, vol. 5, 1961, pp. 8-19.

and castes, though not absolute, has to do with land. Tribals have direct access to land, held through a clan, and are not economically specialized. In caste society, on the other hand, the rights of any one caste to land or its produce are achieved through dependence or interdependence with other castes. Caste society is therefore segmentary and economically specialized. Bailey appears to be influenced by Durkheim's concepts of organic solidarity in complex societies and mechanical solidarity in non-literate societies. He proposes that diversity of occupation is the distinguishing feature of caste societies.

Bailey's ethnography, however, correlates poorly with the theory as simply stated in his 1960 article. Only 70 per cent of the Kond tribal hamlet in Orissa which Bailey studies is Kond. Most of the rest are Pan/Boad outcastes working as field labourers on Kond land. Tradition prescribes no loyalty to other Pans, but loyalty to a Kond master, who avoids commensality with Pans. Conversely, in the caste village Bailey studied, there is a large group of Kond potters, who are culturally almost completely Oriya. Bailey in fact identifies three structures for the tribal Konds: namely with fellow Konds, with dependents e.g. Pan outcastes, and with Oriya, higher caste Hindus. Kond tribals often choose between the three structures to find whatever relationship is most advantageous at a particular time. The co-existence of different structures is ancient. Oriyas had established colonies on Kond land for over 300 years. Bailey's description of Kond society choosing between alternative

structures therefore conflicts with the simple prescription of economic organization defining the difference between caste and tribal societies. Bailey has influenced Sinha's identification of settled agriculture and Navlakha's identification of political integration as the critical factor dividing tribes from castes.

Bailey's theoretical emphasis on land was, however, to provide an important indicator, at the village level, of the likelihood of Bhils becoming bhagat (vegetarian). The evidence is discussed in Chapter 5.2. Briefly, when land was short, more people in a village were likely to be bhagat. The only Bhil villages, of nine surveyed, where there were no bhagat, had the most land per household, and were in Banswara.

There would seem to be some support for the hypothesis that as land becomes scarcer, Bhils have less scope for economic independence, and are more likely to adopt a culture of vegetarianism and sobriety which is more acceptable to the Indian caste societies with which they increasingly have to interact.

Perhaps Bailey's most important achievement was to demonstrate that culture is not to be separated from politics, understood in its widest sense. In his first book, Caste and the Economic Frontier, Bailey proposes that the formidable corpus of formal and informal rules for interactions between castes and outcastes

arises from interlocking economic organization. (See FN 1) In his study of a hamlet which is 70 per cent Kond, Bailey identified three structures for Konds - with fellow 'tribal' Konds, with dependent Pan 'outcastes', and with 'caste' Oriyas. He argued that Konds often choose between the three structures to find whatever relationship is most advantageous at a particular time. (See FN 2)

In Strategems and Spoils Bailey proposes that an encapsulation model shows how villages which are for geographical or other reasons on the margins of state systems, become incorporated as the state expands the scope and functions of its administration. (See FN 3) Once these villages are affected by more than a small number of external contacts, then 'the situation of encapsulation has given way to integration.' He suggests that encapsulation is the preliminary stage in the general incorporation of autonomous or semi-autonomous localities into the state. In the same text Bailey states that the successful Kond politician must be able to

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1. F.G. Bailey Caste and the Economic Frontier: A Village in Highland Orissa, University Press, Manchester, 1957, cf. p. 216.
 2. F.G. Bailey Tribe, Caste and Nation: A Study of political activity and political change in highland Orissa, University Press, Manchester, 1960, cf. p. 197.
 3. F.G. Bailey Strategems and Spoils, Schocken, New York, 1969, pp. 144-185.

manipulate at least four different sets of political rules: tribal when dealing with other Konds, caste when dealing with Oriyas, bureaucratic when dealing with government officials and democratic when dealing with the state level. (See FN 1)

All Bhils are also faced, on some occasions, with the necessity or choice of operating within, or acknowledging rules developed in, a village context, as well as bhagat beliefs and practices, and beliefs and practices consistent with the modern Indian nation. Every act may have political implications. For instance at marriage negotiations a man may claim that he is bhagat. He is thereby making a statement about his transcendent state of being, his potential wealth, his present status, his aspirations for government employment. Successful Bhils may operate within different sets of rules. The bhagat and government official acknowledge different rules and have partial understanding of the different worldviews which generate the rules. This dual comprehension places them in a powerful position compared to other Bhils.

In 1962 Lévi-Strauss noted from the literature that some of the names of Bhil clans refer to fabricated articles, such as a dagger (katar) or an ax (karadi). He argued that Indian tribes form part of a continuum between simple societies, which gain solidarity through an exchange of women, and complex

1. Ibid, p. 146

societies, which gain solidarity by exchanging services. (See FN 1) The observation was almost contemporary with Bailey's studies. Both Bailey's and Lévi-Strauss's studies could be seen as restating or elaborating, in a subtle fashion, Durkheim's distinction between organic solidarity in complex societies, and mechanical solidarity in non-literate societies.

L. Dumont, like F.G. Bailey, has undertaken empirical investigations and addressed larger theoretical issues. Dumont has published on north and south Indian societies, and on Indian cultural values. He also has extensive Indological knowledge. He makes almost no reference to tribal societies. (See FN 2)

Dumont's central concern is with ideology, which he defines as 'the totality of ideas and values or representations common to a society or current in a given group and including science or rationality, or truth, or philosophy.' (See FN 3) He also suggests that 'the unity of a social system corresponds to the predominance in it of certain institutions which it is the duty of the sociologist to determine, not only as present by the side of others, but as giving its character to the social whole.' (See FN 4).

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1. C. Lévi-Strauss The Savage Mind, (*La pensée sauvage*, first edition 1962), Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1974, pp. 117-129.
 2. L. Dumont Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications, Paladin, London, 1972, pp. 58, 369.
 3. L. Dumont From Mandeville to Marx: The Genesis and Triumph of Economic Ideology, University of Chicago Press, London, 1977, pp. 16-22.
 4. *Ibid.*, p. 162.

Dumont argues that central to Indian society are the notions of secular power, embodied in the Kshatriya warrior caste, and status, derived from religious purity, and embodied in the Brahmins. Furthermore, he argues that these two concepts were mutually interdependent, and that religiously sanctioned hierarchy allows a higher unit to encompass a lower. Although Dumont does not discuss Indian tribal groups, Dumont's ideas of predominant institutions and hierarchy may be particularly useful in the analysis of Bhil society. A study of the Bhils of southern Rajasthan suggests that the government-employed Bhil and the bhaqat Bhil are ideal types, and predominant in a manner which is analogous to the predominance of the Kshatriya and Brahmin in caste society. The relationships between the concepts of government/authority (sarkar) and devotion (bhakti), and Bhil society in four villages in western Dungarpur, are investigated in the thesis. Bhils claim higher status or rank than other Bhils through bhakti, because of their purity, which is particularly demonstrated by consumption of pure substances. They are inclined to maintain small modest temples in Bhil villages. Similarly Brahmins proclaim pure practices and maintain temples outside Bhil villages. Bhils who obtain government service are most likely to invest in land, or in an irrigation pump. They have greater scope for employing other Bhils. Analogously to the Kshatriya, they are the royalty of a village, although the income of dominant Bhil peasants derives in the first instance from the modern nation state.

During the 1970s much was written about ethnicity, in the United States, and in France much was written about neo-Marxism. Both paradigms could have some relevance to an explanation of cultural change among the Bhils. Some scholars have used neo-Marxist theories to explain Indian society. Claude Meillassoux, for instance, proposes that economic exploitation, or superexploitation (surexploitation), is important in sustaining the cultural diversity of tribal societies in India and Africa. Such societies may therefore continue indefinitely. (See FN 1)

Meillassoux noted in 1972 that capitalism uses populations from agricultural communities when convenient to the metropolis, for the reproduction of labour-power in the modern wage-labour economy. The agricultural communities, maintained as reserves of cheap labour, are being both undermined and perpetuated at the same time, undergoing a prolonged crisis and not a smooth transition to capitalism. (See FN2) He developed the argument further in 1979. In each period of history there are both the remnants of previous modes of production and the seeds of those to come, the former and latter contradicting the dominant mode

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1. C. Meillassoux Femmes, greniers et capitaux, Francois Maspero, Paris, 1979. cf. B.R. Chauhan 'Towards Understanding Rural-Urban Interactions - An International Exercise', Emerging Sociology, vol. 2, 1980, pp.1-7.
 2. C. Meillassoux 'From reproduction to production', Economy and Society, vol. 1, no.1, 1972, pp. 93-105.

of production: 'the precapitalist societies are not so much different from capitalism as the reverse of it.' (See FN 1) He argues that capitalism preserves domestic or tribal economics which are semi-self-sufficient, and which do not require transfers of unemployment, sickness and old-age pensions from metropolitan capitalism, but yet provide a reserve labour force for the metropolis. (See FN 2)

Much of Meillassoux's theory does not apply to India. Some aspects may be relevant. The economic system of the societies Meillassoux discusses is based on production for consumption, and its 'dynamic', partly assisted by modern medicine, is to move towards population growth rather than accumulation of surplus products. The cultural implications for the 'tribal' societies marked by a domestic mode of production include an accumulation of leisure time (surplus energy) resulting in agricultural feasts, and production of goods for consumption, such as bride-wealth goods, rather than investments which further increase production. Festivals which originated before the impact of capitalism are indirectly perpetuated despite it. Meillassoux's thesis could be used to explain the importance of Holi. Holi is the major festival of the Bhils. It masks important contradictions between rich employer Bhils and poor Bhil labourers, between the status of women when subject to

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1. C. Meillassoux Femmes, greniers et capitaux, pp. 11, 17
'ces sociétés precapitalistes ne seraient différentes du capitalisme que parce qu'elles en sont l'envers'.
 2. Ibid, pp. 149, 175.

the regime of virilocal marriage and when in their brothers' village for the duration of the festival, and between populations living permanently in the villages and expatriate villagers labouring in Ahmedabad but returning home at Holi. While Meillassoux may have much to say about the potential survival of societies called 'tribal' he has less to say about the culture and ideology of the societies themselves.

Meillassoux notes the importance of dominant castes, or 'royalty', at the village level, who are predominant owners of land, and therefore employers of others. (See FN 1) The rich or middle peasants of western Dungarpur, with their gold jewellery, bicycles, radios, and wrist-watches, share only to a limited extent the same culture of other Bhils.

The political significance of rich or middle peasants in a village is great when they are of the same caste as less privileged villagers, and it is particularly great when their symbols of status are perceived as obtainable by all at some future time. Djurfeldt and Lindberg observed the importance of a few rich (employer) Harijan peasants among the Paraiyan, a Scheduled Caste of Tamil Nadu. As they belonged to the caste they occasionally employed, exploitation was an intra-caste affair. Conversely, members of different castes (jati) became equal in some contexts, as employers.

1. C. Meillassoux 'Y a-t-il des castes aux Indes' Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie, vol. 54, Part I, 1973, pp. 5-19.

Djurfeldt and Lindberg also identify a new ideology of 'caste emancipation' among the Paraiyan. The two Marxist scholars, however, observe that 'class consciousness is secondary, and subordinated to jati (caste).(See FN 1) They note that most people considered that the Harijans have progressed since Independence, but that their particular family had gone backwards. Djurfeldt and Lindberg explain this contradiction by the prominence given to a teleology of caste emancipation. The teleology is institutionalized by popular assumptions and government measures, but the object of the teleology is never achieved. (See FN 2) If a Harijan wants higher education, he can most easily obtain it by affirming his Harijan identity. Because there are a few rich (employer) Harijan peasants, exploitation has also become an intra-caste affair, and members of different jati (castes) become equal in some contexts. There is an appearance of progress for some. Moksha (liberation) is promised to the poor not in their next life, but in the future, which never comes. Djurfeldt and Lindberg's theory of caste emancipation in part explains the interest in education among the Bhils. It promises wealth that will come in the lifetime of educated sons, who are assisted in securing government employment by the system of reserving positions for members of Scheduled Castes and Tribes.

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- 1 G. Djurfeldt and S. Lindberg Behind Poverty: The Social Formation in a Tamil Village, Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies, Lund, 1975, p. 251.
 2. Ibid, p. 253.

A final perspective on cultural change among the Bhils might be gained from drawing on some of the extensive literature on ethnicity. Perhaps the Bhils of western Dungarpur, rather than forming part of the tribe: caste paradigm, are simply an ethnic group. Barnett has argued that in south India caste is no longer part of a religious system. Castes have become separate units, based on notions of ancestral blood and territory, who compete with each other, like ethnic groups. Hence there may be commensality with a wider range of people, but marriage remains endogamous to the caste. Blood- and territory-based endogamous groups, Barnett argues, are replacing hierarchically sanctioned, and occupationally oriented, endogamous castes. (See FN 1). Other scholars have noted that ethnicity tends to be associated with modern nation states. Ironically ethnic groups within nation states see themselves as named entities having a persistent historical discreteness irrespective of present circumstances. They are 'races' in the folk sense of the term. (See FN 2).

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1. S.A. Barnett 'Approaches to Changes in Caste Ideology in South India', B. Stein, ed., Essays on South India, Asian Studies Program, University of Hawaii, Honolulu, 1975, pp. 158-72.
 2. G. Benjamin 'Prehistory and Ethnology in Southeast Asia: Some New Ideas' Department of Sociology: University of Singapore, mimeo, 1974, p.26. Lehman has argued that ethnicity is to be explained structurally rather than historically. It is one group's articulation of its relevant difference from groups which surround it contemporaneously. [F.K. Lehman 'Who are the Karen, and if so, why?', in C. F. Keyes, ed., Ethnic Adaptation and Identity, ISHI, Philadelphia, 1979.]

The ethnicity perspective, however, appears to have only limited relevance for understanding of Bhils of western Dungarpur. Firstly, there is limited commensality between Bhils and non Bhils. Secondly, Bhils do see themselves as part of a hierarchy. Certainly they place themselves above Muslims, who often tend to be traders or money-lenders, and above cobblers (camar), and do not compete with their work. Bhils have little sense of history, or of their history as an ethnic group. Bhils in Dungarpur and Banswara never attempted to establish a Bhil state. In contemporary times they rarely identify as Bhils, but rather as 'Adivasi', or Aboriginal inhabitants of India. As members of a Scheduled Tribe they are entitled to special government considerations. In other contexts such as the village Bhils may identify as 'bhagat'. In the village or town Bhils, who have usually obtained government employment by virtue of benefit under government reservations, identify as government employees (sarkari sahab).

The two status groups aspire to cut across both caste and 'ethnic' divisions. The thesis also presents evidence to establish that although forest people in western Dungarpur have been called 'Bhils' by others, the people themselves have more complex identities - as members of a family, clan, village, as Adivasi, bhagat, or government official.

In investigating how and why the concepts of government and bhakti are important for Bhils in southern Rajasthan, general

considerations about the relationship between society and culture have been approached by a detailed study of a particular subject. E. P. Thompson proposes that when the individual mind comes into conflict with one of the key 'strategic' assumptions of an ideology, it is subjected to severe social and psychological pressures. He suggests that the dialogue between social being and social consciousness is a question more usefully resolved by historical and cultural analysis than by theoretical pronouncements. (See FN 1). It is this course which is adopted in the study.

An investigation of cultural incorporation among Bhils identifies bhakti (devotion) and sarkar (government/authority) as predominant institutions among contemporary Bhils. These two institutions give their character to the social whole. Contemporary Bhil society comprises many other values and institutions, just as any capitalist or feudal society comprises many diverse groups. The study concludes that bhakti and sarkar are among the dominant values of Bhil society. Dominance is practically defined by wealth, power, ritual status and Western education. The bhagat (devotee) and government servant may be considered as ideal types, embodying the values of bhakti and sarkar.

1. E. P. Thompson The Poverty of Theory, Merlin Press, London, 1978, pp. 26, 201.

Yet the thesis describes the Bhils and their political identities as complex and diverse, and this diversity provides some Bhils with an efficient means of establishing their dominance in particular situations within Bhil villages.

Srinivas's thesis of Sanskritization does not appear to apply to Bhils in southwest Rajasthan. Bhils are not emulating Brahmins or Sanskritic practices. The concepts developed around the institutions of bhakti and sarkar do address major concerns of the surrounding Indian society, specifically ritual status or rank through purity, and secular status gained by other means. The institutions have political significance. They indicate some Bhils' superiority to others. The institutions' predominance is not only a cultural ideal. It has economic implications. The institutions develop at certain historical periods. They are realized in social interactions. They address key assumptions and beliefs of contemporary Bhil society. They explain, motivate, organize, inspire and regulate the Bhils' place in the world.

In the analysis which follows, information on political, economic and cultural phenomena have been investigated over a broad historical period, to demonstrate the number and empirical range of facts which are drawn together in a coherent way. The theoretical conclusions of the thesis are therefore based on documented empirical evidence, and make certain empirical claims. Much of the literature on Indian anthropology assumes significant differences between 'tribal' and 'caste' societies. Bhils have been considered a tribal society.

In contemporary southern Rajasthan, Bhils are familiar with the term jati (caste), and consider themselves to belong to the Bhil or Adivasi (Aboriginal) caste. In Dungarpur Bhils consider they belong to the 'Adivasi' caste. In Banswara, where Bhils are a higher proportion of the total population, Bhils are more likely to say they belong to the Bhil caste. In theory any Bhil could marry any other Bhil, as they are of the same 'jati'. Government publications describe the Bhils as a tribe (janjati). This thesis, in the course of investigating the Bhils' culture, assumes no simple difference between caste and tribe, and uses the term 'caste' (jati), to refer to Bhils, when quoting the use Bhils themselves make of the term.

1.3 Research methods

Historical research and standard procedures of social anthropology were used to investigate the problem of cultural incorporation and the other questions raised above. Before fieldwork was undertaken I read the Sanskrit and Prakrit sources on the Bhillas of central India, and wrote a paper on the exchange of food and women. I then read the ethnographies on Bhils in other districts of India and the historical sources available in Australia. A paper I wrote from the literature suggested a correlation between changes in Bhil bride-price and the relative scarcity of labour.

Because my principal interest was in the Bhil way of looking at the world, in its historical and social contexts, my first goal in Dungarpur was to learn the Bhils' language, village (gamv) Wagadi, which is related to rural Gujarati. My karma (destiny) was to meet Dr J. C. Sharma, Reader in Linguistics at the Central Institute of Indian Languages in Mysore, who was undertaking research for a grammar on Bhil language in Dungarpur. He generously spent much time with me over the following three months. I was introduced to Pal Galandar in western Dungarpur by H. C. Roat, a Bhil Lecturer in Geography at Dungarpur College. Galandar was his wife's village. I also discovered later from the National Archives of India that it was a village of historical significance as Galandar Bhils had fought against the British, intermittently, until the end of the nineteenth century. For the first three months, from November 1979 onwards, I was

based in Pal Galandar and travelled by local buses across Dungarpur and Banswara with Dr J. C. Sharma. He was looking for variations to the Bhils' language. I searched, without success, for villages of Bhils following an original pattern and unaffected by the notions of devotion (bhakti) and government (sarkar).

I found some villages in Banswara where no Bhils claimed to be vegetarian (bhagat). I later discovered from Census records that average landholdings in those villages were larger than the State average, and that there was a broad correlation between the decreasing size of average landholdings in a village and the increasing percentage of households in most villages who claimed to be vegetarian (bhagat). The relevant data are presented in Chapter Five. But in all villages the question of whether one should become vegetarian (bhagat) was an issue, and some students were studying at local schools or in Dungarpur or Banswara, principally to obtain government employment.

I lived modestly, and paid Rs.250 a month, about U.S. \$30, to the Galandar postmaster, a Bhil, to share a room, and receive two humble meals a day, in his house built of packed mud (kacca) walls, and rudely baked roof tiles. I had stated that I ate meat and drank alcohol, and was therefore assigned to his house, rather than the house of a bhagat. As my host was a sorcerer (bhopa) there was the opportunity to study traditional Bhil

beliefs, in which I had expressed an interest. My motives were comprehensible to the Bhils as Roat had explained to them that research was a means of gaining government employment. As a College Lecturer in India, he was a government servant, and was writing a thesis on Dungarpur geography, from Udaipur University. Bhil envy at my good fortune was mitigated by my explaining that in Australia academic appointments were competitive. One could gain a degree and not obtain a position.

The principal method of gaining insight into how Bhils think was to follow one of the most useful strategies of anthropology, the practice of participation, and to respond to what was happening around me. My aim was to become like a Bhil, not by descent or marriage but by competence in nuances of language (a principal requirement for acceptance into any group,) by commensality, by dancing and singing in Galandar, or by walking with Bhils to fairs (mela), marriage ceremonies or devotional celebrations (bhajan) on full-moon nights, in villages related by marriage to Galandar. I learnt the value of humour in deflecting the aggression or envy of Bhil strangers. Of critical importance was my decision to labour with a large group of other Bhils, for Rs.5 a day for the richest Bhil in Galandar. I also shared Bhil food. The staple diet provided by the Bhils, was thick bread (roti) made from corn flour, and one vegetable, or at my request, rice. I supplemented this diet by providing dried fruits, vegemite, peanut butter, biscuits and vitamin tablets. Nevertheless my activity level was down. In 1981 I contracted guinea worm (draconsiasis) from drinking infected water in the well nearest

to my host's residence. These disadvantages seem to have been outweighed by a gain in empathy with the Bhils, and in understanding some of their sufferings and difficulties.

My most valuable possessions were a camera and cassette-recorder. I persistently explained to the Bhils that both were the property of the Australian National University. I photographed Bhil families when invited for tea or a meal. Because of the Bhil desire for photographs, the stream of invitations was constant, and could not always be accepted. I also recorded songs and conversations. Thirty-six hours of songs were transcribed and translated into Hindi, the language of education and government in Rajasthan, by Bhil college students I had befriended in Dungarpur. Without this method, even towards the end of my fieldwork when my language acquisition was at its best, it would have not been possible to catch all the nuances of the events I observed, and acquire a detailed record of them. Unelicited comments were particularly illuminating; questions the Bhils asked were also noted, as these too indicated their preoccupations.

After six months I was a familiar sight in Galandar and three of the other villages in western Dungarpur which have affinal relations with Galandar. I undertook sociological surveys, mainly gathering data on matters the Bhils considered important. The voters' roles obtained from the Dungarpur Collectorate listed, with some errors, all adults and their approximate ages, arranged by households. This information formed a basis for

collecting data about the number and sex of children, and jewellery (rakam) and brideprice (dapo) paid for one's wife, or given for one's daughters, and whether one had married (vivah) or eloped (natru). I identified those who claimed to be vegetarian and non-drinkers of alcohol (bhagat), and those who had gained government employment. I noted who had a well, or owned an irrigation pump (mashin) which was powered by a diesel motor (as the four villages studied in detail did not have electricity), who owned gold jewellery, a bicycle or radio. All the above information was public knowledge. Changes in these matters by one household would be discussed by many households in a village.

I collected other ethnographic data, guided by issues which were considered important in the literature on Indian anthropology. I was able to collect data on participation in paid labour by asking third parties. People are shamed if asked about their own participation in paid labour. I also consulted the records of the Rajasthan State Archives in Bikaner, the Rajasthan State University Library in Jaipur, and the National Archives of India in Delhi. Some of the findings are discussed in Chapter Three. I copied current lists of land-holdings, and maps of the villages at a local patvari's office of land records. In Dungarpur I copied records of land holdings in the four villages studied in detail, from the time of the first land settlement of Bhil areas in 1904, to investigate whether the importance of the concepts

bhakti (devotion) and sarkar (government) is related to changing economic circumstances.

Historical and government records, and ethnographic reports for areas outside Dungarpur, provide a wide perspective in time and space. They are therefore an important supplement to the most valuable source of knowledge of Bhil reality - living amongst the Bhils.

CHAPTER TWO : THE CONTEXT

2.1 Written sources on Bhils

The bibliography of this thesis probably contains the most extensive references on the Bhils available, but it is not exhaustive. This section only comments on some of the more important references.

The thesis studies the problem of cultural incorporation, and considers information on the relationship between the Bhillas of central India and the Bhils of modern Dungarpur. Sanskrit and Prakrit texts and inscriptions were consulted to search for early references to bhakti and sarkar and the relationship between Bhils and non-Bhils. Because the thesis considers historical and political influences on Bhil culture, Major-General (later Sir) John Malcolm's publications on the political economy of central India, in which he also discusses Bhils, are of particular interest. He refers to the beginning of the nineteenth century, and to Dungarpur, when the British were gaining political control of central India. Unpublished nineteenth century records of the Government of India also discuss political control of the Bhil tracts. Twentieth century records provide more information on economic changes. The first census of the Bhils was completed in 1881 on the basis of estimates. The British noted:

'Owing to a very pronounced repugnance to being enumerated, a repugnance which in some instances led to a disturbance of the peace, no accurate Census could be taken of the Bhil population in the States of Oodeypore, Partabgarh, Dungarpur and Banswara, and the authorities had to be contented with counting houses and allowing an average of four persons to each house.' (See FN 1).

The 1891 Census was also completed on the basis of estimates of the Bhil population. It estimated that 65 per cent of the Banswara population and 41 per cent of the Dungarpur population was Bhil. (See FN 2) The first census in which Bhils were enumerated was in 1901. The first known settlement of Dungarpur was in 1904.

Political and economic information had immediate pragmatic and strategic value for the British and was of major concern in early nineteenth century accounts. Studies of Bhil society and thought followed in a later period. Hendley, a surgeon who worked with the Mewara Bhil Corps, wrote the first ethnographic account of the Bhils, in 1875. His article includes a note on the Bhil reformer, Surji, who had about 1,000 followers, called bhagat,

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1. Census of India 1881, Census of the Native States of Rajputana, Bombay, 1882, p.6.
 2. Census of India 1891, vol. 26, Rajputana, part I, p.49.

in the region of the Mewar-Gujarat border, including Dungarpur. (See FN 1).

It was not until well into the present century that ethnographers lived among the Bhils. The first major ethnographic contribution was made by Koppers, who travelled briefly but extensively through Bhil areas in 1938, with a Dutch missionary named Jungblut, who was fluent in Bhili. Koppers published in 1948 an ethnographic description of the Bhils, which included a survey of previous Bhil studies. (See FN 2) He did not have access to unpublished government records. Koppers was a member of the Austrian Kulturkreis school. His 1948 Monograph was dedicated to Wilhelm Schmidt. Koppers also once taught C. von Furer-Haimendorf. Koppers' most theoretical article, and his only publication in English, seeks to show that, because of their worship of Bhagvan, Bhils and other Aboriginal groups were originally montheistic, in contrast to polytheistic Hindus. (See FN 3) The idea accords poorly with the ethnography, but accords well with the thesis of Koppers' teacher, Father W. Schmidt, who proposed that the most archaic form of religious life was belief in a high God. Another substantial study, on rituals and myths of

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1. T.H. Hendley 'An Account of the Maiwar (=Mewar) Bhils,' Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, vol. 44, 1875, pp. 347-388.
 2. W. Koppers Die Bhil in Zentralindien, Institut für Völkerkunde an der Universität Wien, vol.7, Ferdinand Berger, Horn-Wien, 1948, pp.3-21.
 3. K.R. Andriole 'Kulturkreislehre and the Austrian Mind', Man n.s. vol. 1, no. 1, 1979, pp. 133-144.

Bhils in central India, was published by Hermanns in 1964. (See FN 1) Neither Koppers' or Hermanns' work makes any reference to bhakti or sarkar.

D.W. McCurdy's doctoral thesis is a thorough modern ethnographic study of Bhils. J.K. Doshi, McCurdy's assistant, wrote a thesis, (which was published), on the same village of Pai, 30 kilometres from Udaipur, the District north of Dungarpur. In 1962, the year of their study, Bhils of Pai had a strong idea of what they did not want to become. The headman told McCurdy and Doshi: 'if you have come to make my people Christians, you better leave now, and never come back.' (See FN 2) Most people in Pai were self-sufficient in food, and on at least two occasions in a year the whole community set out for the forest in search of game.

Work was undertaken part of the year as roadbuilders or for forest contractors. Unlike Bhil settlements in western Dungarpur, in Pai, Bhils paid iron workers, tanners, potters, drummers, and ritual specialists to officiate at funerals. McCurdy noted that Bhil language formed a continuum. An Aravalli Bhil would fail to

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1. M. Hermanns Die Religiös-Magische Weltanschauung der Primitivstämme Indiens, Band 1 Die Bhagoria Bhil, Franz Steiner Verlag, Wiesbaden, 1964.
 2. J.K. Doshi Social Structure and Cultural Change in a Bhil Village, New Heights, Delhi, 1974, p.10.

understand a Khandeshi Bhil, but these extremes were linked by a chain of dialects. Ratakote Bhils understood Dungarpur Bhils with difficulty. Bhils of Kotra to the west were reputedly unfriendly. The Bhils of Chappan traditionally raided Ratakote and were raided in turn. (See FN 1)

McCurdy does not consider at length the relationship between Bhils and non-Bhils. Bhils in the Udaipur village he describes had experimented with bhakti, which required sobrious vegetarianism, then reverted to meat and alcohol. Since Independence they had been increasingly influenced by government institutions. McCurdy concludes that perhaps Bhils will not evolve from tribe to caste, but from tribe to a future mode of Indian society.

Y.V.S. Nath, (See FN 2) who studied the Bhils of Ratanmal, which is 150 kilometres southeast of Dungarpur, and T.B. Naik, (See FN 3) who studied Bhils in Khandesh, Gujarat, during the same period, do not mention bhagat Bhils, or Bhils employed by government. S.L. Doshi published an account of three villages in

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1. D.W. McCurdy 'A Bhil Village of Rajasthan', A Thesis presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Cornell University, for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, 1964, p.37.
 2. Y.V.S. Nath Bhils of Ratanmal, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Baroda, 1960.
 3. T.B. Naik The Bhils: A Study, Bharatiya Adimjati Sevak Sangh, Delhi, 1956.

Banswara, south-eastern Rajasthan. They included a dispersed 'tribal' village located in a forest area, and two closely settled villages occupied by Bhils and other castes. One of these latter villages is occupied by Bhils who are Christians, the other by different Hindu castes including Bhils who claim to be bhagat. In the latter two villages children attended school, there were village and district councils established by government, and alcohol was only consumed in secret. Crime rates were highest in the forest village. Doshi concludes: 'Bhagatism could be a strong social instrument in raising the moral and social standards of the tribe', and 'The solution for removing their backwardness lies in the spread of education.' (See FN 1)

Other unpublished theses on Bhils have been presented to Indian universities and colleges, and are listed in the bibliography. They suffer from inadequate lengths of fieldwork, and tend to make unsubstantiated generalizations, but in some cases they provide useful comparative data or impressions.

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1. S.L. Doshi Bhils: Between Societal Self-awareness and Cultural Synthesis, Sterling Publishers, New Delhi, 1971, p.250.

2.2 Four villages in Western Dungarpur

Dungarpur is located in the southern part of Rajasthan, and lies between 23 degrees 20 minutes and 24 degrees North and 73 degrees 22 minutes and 74 degrees 23 minutes East. On its south and west it has a common border with the State of Gujarat. The wild and rugged aspect of western Dungarpur is consistent with the topography of the Aravallis, of which it is an offshoot. The country is broken and hilly, but none of the hills attains a great height. The highest peak, in the extreme north-west, is approximately 572 metres above sea level.

General Sir John Malcolm and Bishop Heber wrote that extensive, thick and almost impenetrable forests covered much of Dungarpur at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The Rajputana Gazetteer of 1879 paints a picture which better approaches the Dungarpur of today.

'The country is for the most part covered with stony hills, on which grows a low jungle of cacti, jujube trees and gum-producing tree called salar by the natives [= boswellia serrata or dammer tree]... Of pasture-land, properly so called, there is scarcely any, and during the hot season of the year, the numerous cattle kept by the Bhils are reduced to a miserable state of leanness by the want of grass. With the exception of the patches of Walra [slash and burn cultivation] on the hillsides, the cultivated area is confined to the valleys and low grounds between hills...' (See FN 1)

1. Rajputana Gazetteer, vol. 1, Gazetteer of Dungarpur, Calcutta, 1879, p.273.

In 1908 it was reported that 'panthers and hyaenas are fairly numerous and sambar (cervus unicolor) plentiful in the Antri

jungles [south of Dungarpur town] .. are now again on the increase. Tigers, though scarce, are still occasionally found, while nilgai (boselaphus tragocamelus) are being gradually exterminated by the Bhils who value their flesh for food and their hides for shields.' (See FN 1)

Since then most forests have been depredated, some surviving along the Rajasthan-Gujarat border. Tigers, panthers, bears, sambar and nilgai are almost extinct in the district. The district still has many trees, including salar (boswellia serrata), dhokra (anogeissus latifolia) chan beri (zizyphus nummularia) timara, used by Bhils to make bidi cigarettes, and amla (phyllanthus embellica) which they use for medicine. There are also fruit-bearing trees, such as mango, imli (tamarindus indica), ber (zizyphus jujuba), temru (diospyros melanoxylon), khajur (phoenix sylvestris) and most importantly, mahuda (madhuca indica bassia latifolia) the source of the intoxicating drink mahudi.

The climate is dry; the cold season lasts from December to February. January is the coldest month. The mean daily minimum is about 9 degrees C. Thereafter the temperature progressively increases until May and June, when it can reach 43 degrees C.

1. Rajputana Gazetteer, vol. 2A The Mewar Residency, (by K.D. Erskine), Ajmer, 1908, p. 129.

The air, dry throughout the year, is then at its driest. About the middle of June the temperature drops appreciably. The monsoon, from the south-west, brings rains from June to September. Over 95 per cent of the annual average of 760 mm falls at this time. Throughout Dungarpur, the main kharif (autumn) crop of the Bhils, is maize. It is sown in July and August, during the rains, and harvested in November. Bhils also grow rice, juvar, pulses, sugarcane and vegetables. Their main rabi (spring) crops, planted in November and harvested in April, are wheat, barley, grain and vegetables. (See FN 1)

In my search for an original Bhil culture, relatively unaffected by Hinduism or modern government institutions, I headed for the remote and hilly areas which separate Rajasthan from Gujarat. Most of the fieldwork period, and my time in India, was spent in Pal Galandar, Jagbor, Balvaniya and Ratapani, four predominantly Bhil villages in western Dungarpur.

Jagbor is located near the Gujarat border and the beautiful temple of Samlaji, built around an idol of the black god Krsna by non-Bhils in the twelfth century. In Jagbor there is the largest percentage of bhagat (vegetarian) families. This village also has the least cultivable land per household. Monkeys abound in the surrounding forests.

1. Rajasthan District Gazetteer, Dungarpur (by K.K. Sehgal), Government of Rajasthan, Jaipur, 1974, pp. 1-13.

The houses of the bhagat (See FN 1), marked by white flags, are perched like eagles' eeries on the mountain peaks. Lower down the hillsides are the houses of the sansari 'the worldly' Bhils who eat meat and drink alcohol. There is no bhagat temple in Jagbor. Bhajan celebrations of the bhagat tend to be located in the houses of prominent bhagat, and are attended by a limited number of extended family groups. The economic life of both groups are similar. To supplement the crops, little girls, with red, blue and yellow head shawls, and boys with coloured singlets, herd the lean cattle and goats around the hillsides. Oxen are used to draw water from wells for irrigation.

In Balvaniya the land is more fertile. There are fewer bhagat households as a proportion of the total population, than in Jagbor or Galandar. Those families who are bhagat are aggressively proud of the fact. One ancient bhagat family in Balvaniya has built a large white-painted kacca (packed-mud) temple onto their house. From here a bhagat leader occasionally

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1. The Bhils' use of these ancient Indian words is partly idiosyncratic. This usage of sansari is unusual in India, and may have been borrowed from Indian Christians. There are a few Bhil Christians in Dungarpur, and more to the east in Banswara, where Protestant missions were established last century. Similarly, elsewhere in India a bhagat may be non-vegetarian. Among the Bhils of southern Rajasthan, he may not.

descends upon the one-room school house in the village, and berates the students, almost all boys, on the evils of consuming meat or alcohol. The bhajan celebrations on nights of the full moon at the Balvaniya bhakti leader's house, are famous. The celebrations attract Bhils from other villages and even some people who are not Bhils or tribals but who are troubled by physical or psychical ailments. On these occasions the contradictions and tensions of Bhils' lives and of their place in a changing world, are addressed in song and dance, and are restated if not reconciled.

With 410 households, Galandar is the largest of the settlements studied. Its land has been extensively cleared of forest. There are four large village wards (phada). Hero stones, dating from the 17th century and bearing the name Katara, often mark the boundaries of the village wards. The Katara clan comprise about 70 per cent of the total population, and 57 of the 61 bhagat households.

Ratapani is visibly different from the other villages. It is on flat land, and lies to the east, closer to transport routes and to Dungarpur town. Houses in Ratapani are often built in roughly formed streets, and are much closer together than in the other Bhil settlements. Ratapani is a village established by government. Its population is largely formed by families which moved from other villages in the 1960s. Land is more readily available here. There are also many Ratapani men who have

obtained government employment or other work in Dungarpur or as migrant labourers in Gujarat. Only two Ratapani families are bhagat, and they are chauvinistic about it. One has built a large white-painted kacca temple to Sita-Ram, and refuses entry to any non vegetarian, including myself. He did insist however that I take a photograph of himself and his family standing in front of the temple he had built.

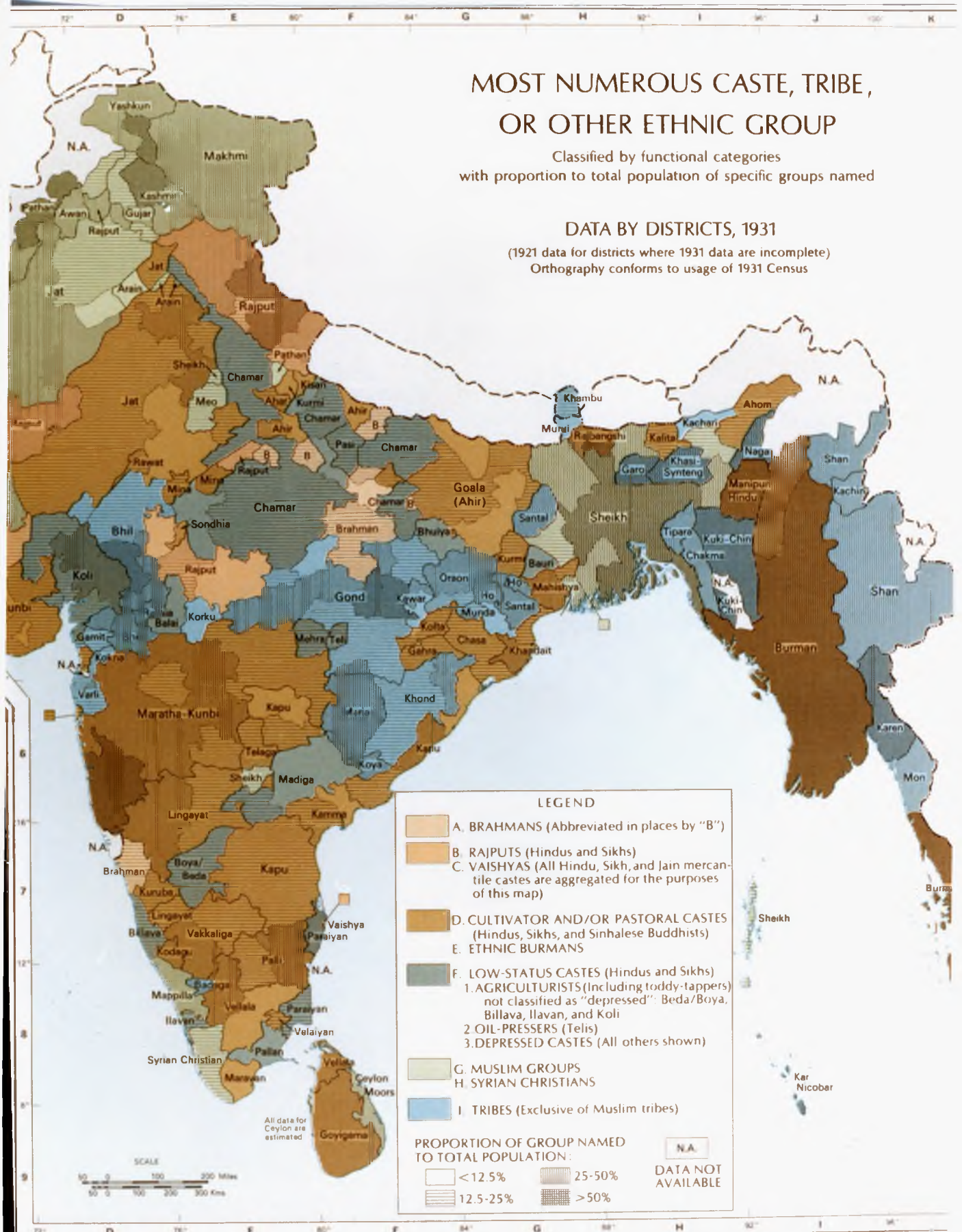
All four villages share much in geography and culture. The dry brown land of summer quickly turns green after the rains. High crops of maize, wheat, even sometimes cotton, provide hiding places for young adventurers. All the communities are agriculturally based. Women are consistent workers, rising before dawn to grind the maize flour for the morning meal, then fetching water from the well and undertaking both household and agricultural tasks. Small children graze the cattle and goats during the day. Men undertake some agricultural work; during the rains they labour from early morning to dusk planting the autumn crop.

Bhil house construction is uniform throughout Dungarpur. Thick walls of packed mud enclose a kitchen with earth-oven and mud and thatch store bins on the left of the single entrance, and cattle stalls comprise the other half of the dwelling. The roof of baked mud tiles extends over the house and veranda, providing a welcome shade from the summer sun and a breeze way under which to sleep on hot nights. Festivals and ceremonies are common to the Bhil villages of western Dungarpur. The most spectacular is Holi, usually in March. All who can, women married outside the village, government employees, labourers working in Gujarat, return to

their own village in new clothes. The ground resounds with the stamping feet and shouts of dancing men and women of each village, their movements timed to the beat of the large drums slung from the waists of the young men in the centre of the dancing circles. Following Holi the marriage ceremonies occur in April and June.

It is across this stage of rural villages that a few Bhils, with western-style clothes and wristwatches, walk with a different step, or cycle, to the nearest bus stand, to the school, office on forestry substation, where they are employed. Their base is in the village, their place of work is usually outside the village. Not so the bhagat, whose locus operandi is the village. They are more likely to engage in agricultural work during the day, and sing bhajan to God during the summer nights of the full moon, in their own village, or related villages nearby.

Map 1. 'Most numerous caste, tribe, or other ethnic group'



1. Source J.E. Schwartzberg A Historical Atlas of South Asia, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1978, p.106.

II SOCIAL FORMATIONS OF BHILS IN SOUTHERN RAJASTHAN

CHAPTER THREE: THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

3.1 Bhils of the Dungarpur region before the nineteenth century

'the road takes us ... through the gorge of the mountains at Gullia-Kote, into a very dismal wilderness of several days' journey, so much infested by tigers that no traveller could safely move before sunrise .. Dungarpur ... a country at all times unsettled.'

Bishop Heber 2 March 1826.

Before the nineteenth century southern Rajasthan was known as Vagar, the 'waste' or 'jungle' region. This chapter examines the early relations between Bhils and other peoples in southern Rajasthan and discusses the political changes affecting Bhils in Dungarpur brought about by British hegemony during the nineteenth century. Evidence for the early development of the notions of sarkar and bhakti among Bhils of Dungarpur is considered.

Geographers have noted the importance of ecological factors, such as jungles and hills, for supporting populations which in the literature are called tribal. The Vindhyan complex across central India is prominent. Running almost at right angles to it are the

western belts beginning with the Aravallis, and at the eastern end of the Vindhyan complex, the Eastern Ghats. (See FN 1) People called Bhillas or Bhils have traditionally occupied the western half of this H-pattern of forested mountains. The Bhils are one of the largest tribal groups of Central India. (See Map 1) 'Bhillas' are first mentioned in Indian texts written in about the seventh century A.D., and references continue in Sanskrit and Prakrit texts and inscriptions up to the nineteenth century. The word 'Bhilla' may come from a Tamil word meaning 'bowmen'. (See FN 2)

From the earliest times in India high cultures have developed next to subsistence-based societies. Intensive agriculture occurred first along the fertile river basins in north and later south India, and until recently the intensively cultivated regions were separated by forests covering the mountainous belt

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1. B. Subbarao The Personality of India: A Study in the Development of Material Culture of India and Pakistan, University of Baroda, Baroda, 1956, p.7.
 2. Caldwell Dravidian Grammar, quoted by L.D. Barnett in E.J. Rapsen, ed., The Cambridge History of India, S. Chand and Co., New Delhi, 1962, p.539.

that extended across central India, which supported distinct populations. (See FN 1)

People developed different economies, depending on the environment in which they lived. The earliest inscriptions found near Dungarpur are dated to the seventh century A.D. For over a thousand years before this date subsistence oriented groups had lived contemporaneously with evolved urban cultures. In broad outline the great high cultures of the Indian subcontinent developed in the fertile river valleys of north India and later also in the south. The high cultures co-existed with those of peoples practising shifting agriculture or hunting in the forested mountain areas which separated the areas of settled agriculture.

Upon closer examination a cyclical pattern in Indian history, namely the conversion of forest by shifting cultivation followed

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1. Asoka's thirteenth major rock edict, of 255 B.C., states that he pacified or disciplined the forest people. [J. Bloch Les inscriptions d'Asoka, Société d'Édition 'Les Belles Lettres', Paris, 1950, p. 166]. Kautilya's Arthashastra which was perhaps written about the same time, refers to forest people (atavikas) who could be hired as scouts and auxiliaries. [D.D. Kosambi The Culture and Civilization of Ancient India in Historical Outline, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1965, p.147.]

by intensive cultivation, and its degradation back into forest, is suggested by historical sources (See FNI).

Parts of the Vagar region of Dungarpur and Banswara apparently suffered this fate between the seventh and twentieth centuries. For instance in Pal Galandar, in western Dungarpur, which is the object of special study, forest lands have been cleared over the last two hundred years. Villagers believe that when their ancestors came there, perhaps two hundred years ago, they found the ruins of a large town in the forest. The oral tradition is supported by some archaeological evidence, namely an embankment, a well, and the ruins of a temple.

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1. The Chinese traveller, Hsuan Tsang, in the seventh century, stated that between the junction of the Ganga and the Yamuna, and Kausambi, about 120 kilometres to the west, was a great forest infested with wild beasts and elephants, and travellers had to group in large numbers in order to pass through. Kausambi was an ancient centre of Indian civilization, and Samudra Gupta engraved an important pillar inscription at the junction of the Ganga and the Yamuna almost three hundred years before Hsuan Tsang's visit. It seems unlikely that such a forest existed at that time, and the country most probably reverted to forest in the intervening centuries. [S. Beal Chinese Accounts of India Susil Gupta, Calcutta, 1957, vol. 2, p. 254.]

The literate cultures have left their impressions and imaginative reconstructions of the forest dwellers. Poets have described them in the following terms: 'The forest dwellers thick arms and chests resembled the rocks of the Vindhya or the dark-barked tamala tree. They were black, with a flat nose and thick lower lip and red eyes, and carried arrows'. (See FN 1) 'They haunted the open spaces of the forest, like the trunks of a forest blackened in a fire. Their chiefs were dwarfish men with muscular bodies and copper-red eyes'. (See FN 2)

The short height and stocky, muscular body may correlate with a positively selected somatic type that is well adapted to living in jungles, to cultivating by slash and burn techniques and hunting with bows and arrows. (See FN 3) Such jungle populations probably lived from the earliest historical times in the Vagar region, and continued to practise shifting cultivation until the twentieth century. There are some suggestions in the early

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1. Banabhatta Harshacarita, edited by P.V. Kane, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1965, pp. 68; 80-81; translated by E.B.Cowell and F.W. Thomas, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1961, pp. 226-227, 230-232.
 2. Budhasvamin Bṛhatkathāślokaśaṃgraha, edited by F. Lacôte, Imprimerie Nationale, Paris, 1908, p. 167.
 3. Anthropological studies recorded that the average height of Bhils ranged from 160 cm to 168 cm. The studies are summarized in M. Choudary Castes and Tribes of India, Indian Museum, Calcutta, 1977, pp. 91ff.

literary texts that the forest dwellers provided forest products to some members of the urban cultures. There were various political relations between the two societies, ranging from mutual aggression to trade and mutual assistance.

There was a general tendency after the Asokan period, i.e. the third century B.C., for kings to pay officers with the right to collect revenue from villages. It greatly encouraged the tendency towards devolution, instability, and inter-state anarchy. (See FN 1) The arrangements instituted in northern India under Harsha (606-647 A.D.) contrast with the system of paid officials of the Asokan empire (See FN 2) but continued in southern Rajasthan for 1200 years. Subordinates were paid not with cash, but with the right to collect revenue.

Politically there seems to have been only a loose integration of the Dungarpur forest populations with the feudal or quasi-feudal State established by the Dungarpur rulers. Direct information about Bhils in the inscriptions is limited, but one can make certain inferences about their situation and the societies they encountered.

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1. A.L. Basham The Wonder that was India, Sidgwick and Jackson, London, 1967, pp. 95-97.
 2. R. Thapar Asoka and the Decline of the Mauryas, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1963, p. 105.

Silver coins found in Surwaniya village in Banswara, and dated from the second to the fourth century A.D., establish that Banswara was then ruled by the Kshatrapas. (See FN 1) The earliest inscription of southern Rajasthan has been found about 70 kilometres south of Udaipur and is dated to 653 A.D. It records a grant by Devagana, a devout Saivite and ruler of the Guhila dynasty of Kishkindhipura, of a rent-free holding to a Brahmin, whose family came from Ujjain, a town in present day Madhya Pradesh, south east of Dungarpur District (See FN 2). Two features of this early inscription may be singled out as of special importance here. Firstly, Devagana was a Saivite. Most of the later temples were either Saivite or dedicated to goddesses. Certain Saivite practices, such as the sacrifices of bullocks, apparently performed by the rulers of Dungarpur until 1908, (see FN 3) may have assimilated aspects of the religion of forest populations. Conversely the earliest ethnographic report in the nineteenth century states that the Bhils worshipped Mahadev or

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1. G.H.Ojha The History of Rajputana, vol. 2, part I, History of Dungarpur State, Vaidik Yantralaya, Ajmer, 1936, pp. 20-23.
 2. J.A.S. Burgess, ed., Epigraphica Indica, Archaeological Survey, Calcutta, 1892-1956, vol 34, p. 167, vol. 35, p.55.
 3. K.D. Erskine Rajputana Gazetteer, vol. 2A The Mewar Residency, Ajmer, 1908, p.148.

Siv. (See FN 1) The genius of Hinduism allowed this two-directional incorporation of beliefs and practices. Secondly, as the family of the Brahmin to whom land south of Udaipur was granted came from Ujjain, this may be read as evidence that there was a trade route from Ujjain to Udaipur through the Dungarpur area in the seventh century. The location of a temple near Vatapadraka in 661 A.D. would appear to support this.

Most of the inscriptions which have been located to date in Vagar or southern Rajasthan occur after the inscription of 1020 A.D. in which Bhoja Paramar of Dhar, south of Ujjain, granted land to a Brahmin in the village of Vataparaka (present day Baroda) to the east of Dungarpur town. (See FN 2) Further locations along what was presumably an alternative route to older and more direct routes north become apparent in later inscriptions. There was a major trade route in ancient India passing from Dhara to Ujjain then north via Dasapura and Pushkar. An alternative route north, from Ujjain to Udaipur and beyond, through Banswara, Arthuna, Vatapadraka and Dungarpur, probably developed after the tenth century A.D. It was used by the Marathas at the beginning of the eighteenth century when the more direct route north was closed to them. (See FN 3) From the early periods, it is clear that Vagar

1 T.H. Hendley op. cit., p. 348.

2. Epigraphica Indica, vol. 18, pp. 181, 320. See Table 3.1.1.

3. M. Chandra Trade and Trade Routes in Ancient India, Abhinav Publications, New Delhi, 1977.

rulers had important relationships with other rulers outside that region. Control of this alternative trade route seems to have been contested by three dynasties. The Paramara of Dhar between the tenth and fourteenth centuries A.D. (See FN 1); the Guhilas from Mewar, in the seventh century A.D., and again in the twelfth century A.D. (See FN 2) and the Solankis of Gujarat at the end of the twelfth century. (See FN 3) The political organization of Bhils or forest dwellers in southern Rajasthan, and the extent to which they too may have formed feudal confederacies, which exercised rights over the trade route, is not known.

There are however continuous historical references to people called Bhils living in southern Rajasthan from at least the thirteenth century to the present. Bhils have therefore had a long and varying relationship with the settled agriculturalists occupying the valleys and trade routes of southern Rajasthan.

The term 'Bhillas' appears in inscriptions at Lakshmeshwar near Vijayanagara in 1147 A.D., at Jhansi near the Yamuna in 1150 A.D., and at Kalanjar south of the Yamuna in 1290 A.D.. Early

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1. G.H. Ojha, op. cit., p.25.
 2. Ibid., p.45.
 3. Ibid., pp. 39,48,51,54,56-7.

inscriptions in southern and northern India referred to the Bhillas as enemies, (See FN 1) but the grant of land by Virasimha Guhila in 1287 A.D. near his capital Vatapadraka in eastern Dungarpur marks a new trend because a Bhil is referred to in a friendly context. The inscription records that one and a half hal of land and one house was granted to a Brahmin by Maharaval (Maharajakula) Virasimhadeva, and that the 'Bhila' Nadhal, along with many 'rauls', people of the royal family or Brahmins, witnessed the grant. (See FN 2)

The non-inscriptional record confronts the problem of the proper relations between Bhils and non-Bhils, and suggests that those relations were sometimes important. In Rajput historical narratives (khyats) variously dated from 1258 A.D. to 1358 A.D., there is the tradition that Dungariya Bhil ruled the village of Dungarpur and wanted to marry the daughter of a merchant (Mahajan) of Thana, a village eight kilometres from Dungarpur. The merchant pretended to agree, and fixed the date of the marriage. The merchant then secretly went to Vatapadraka and arranged for Virasimhadeva (1287-1302 A.D.) to murder the marriage party when drunk. According to tradition Dungariya Bhil's two wives performed sati. Temples were built in their honour on the rocky outcrop which commands the city of Dungarpur. (See FN 3) Contemporary Bhils are aware of the temples and of the legends associated with them. They therefore have a

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1. Epigraphica Indica, vol. 16, p.45.
 2. Ibid., vol. 22, p. 192.
 3. G.H.Ojha, op. cit., p.128.

representation of the treachery of a merchant and of the noble Rajput-like behaviour of a merchant.

Early legends from Mewar, north of Vagar, whose historical value is uncertain, suggest that Rajput ideology was concerned with the problem of relating the higher culture and society of the valleys to that of the Bhils, and that alliances or agreements for coexistence were of considerable political significance. Goha of Mewar, son of a princess, preferred the company of the Bhils of Idar to his Brahmin educators. Bappa escaped from the Solankis with two Bhils from Undri and Oghna Panarwa. The legends date from the thirteenth century A.D., but refer to earlier periods.

(See FN 1)

There are several records of tanks and wells constructed after 1350 A.D. Before 1430 A.D. most inscriptions record grants of land to Brahmins, or construction of Hindu temples.

In Vagar inscriptional records and land grants increased substantially after 1430 A.D. (See Table 3.2.1). This was presumably caused by an increase in populations practising settled agriculture along the river basins, and the greater security and use of a trade and communication route from Ratlam to Udaipur.

1. J. Tod Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan, Oxford University Press, London, 1920, vol. 1, pp.258-262, 269.

TABLE 3.1.1: Inscriptions in southern Rajasthan (Vagar) (See FN 1).

Location of Capital	Date	Grants to:		Temples:		Gates	Tanks/ Wells	Other	Total
		Brahmins	Others	Hindu	Jain				
Kishkin- dipura	650- 749 750- 849 850- 949	2							2
Baroda	950- 1049	1							1
Arthuna	1050- 1149	2		4				2	8
Baroda	1150- 1249	2		5					7
Baroda	1250- 1349	3		1				2	6
Dungarpur	1350- 1449		1	3	2		4	1	11
	1450- 1549	1	10	10	4	4	2		31
	1550- 1649		10	24	5	1	6	4	50
	1650- 1749	4	9	10	3		2	14	42
Total		15	30	57	14	5	14	23	158

1. Ojha op. cit., Burgess op. cit.

During the fifteenth century there are increased records of land grants and the building of temples for both Hindus, and those belonging to the Jain merchant caste. During this period many Hindu temples were built and maintained, yet the Mughal sources report the Dungarpur rulers were vassals. (See FN 1). This illustrates the wide cultural and ideological diversity accommodated in India. Less Hindu temples were built after 1650 A.D. Several inscriptions refer to subjugation of Bhils. North of Dungarpur, 6 kilometres south of the great temple of Eklingji in the Udaipur district, Hammira, one of the 'princes born in the family of Bappa', boasted in 1421 A.D. that he 'captured Chela (Jilwada) and conquered by his might the notorious Bhils who were his enemy'. (See FN 2).

In 1469 A.D. at the Santinath temple of Antri, east of Dungarpur, it was recorded that Gopinath sent his chief minister, by caste an Osval, a merchant caste of southern Rajasthan, to conquer the Bhil pal, and that he suppressed rebellion. (See FN 3). 'Having

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1. Gopinath abandoned Dungarpur to Sultan Ahmadshah in 1433 A.D., but later 'repented, and Sultan made him a vassal'. [G.H. Ojha op. cit., p. 66]. In 1458 A.D. Sultan Mahmud Khilji of Malwa sent Prince Gayasuddin against the Bhils and Kolis, and then on to Dungarpur. Gopinath's son Somdas followed in his father's footsteps, as it were, by fleeing to the mountains, and in 1459 A.D. sent Sultan Mahmud Rs.200,000 and twenty one horses. [G.H. Ojha op. cit., p.70].
 2. Epigraphica Indica vol. 23, p. 230.
 3. G. H. Ojha op. cit., pp. 66, 70.

conquered the straw mats (kataka = Camps/masses?), Barya and others, the strongest of the Bhils, he pulled out the thorns (kantaka) from the territory of the Katara (= "lecherous ones", but also the name of a Bhil clan), and made a pavilion in the temple.' Bhils of the Antri area provided sporadic armed resistance to the British until the beginning of the twentieth century.

From 1421 A.D. when Hammira boasted that he conquered the Bhils north of Dungarpur, there is evidence for two developments occurring simultaneously. The Rajputs controlling Dungarpur extended their military control over the Bhils, and the Rajputs also extended the area of cultivated and irrigated land. But they also paid tribute to stronger powers when forced to do so. In 1524 A.D. the kingdom of Vagar was divided into two, contrary to Rajput norms of succession, on the death of the Dungarpur Maharaval Udaysimha. The elder son of Udaysimha inherited western Vagar, which was henceforth known as the Dungarpur Raj, and his younger son inherited what then became known as the Banswara Raj. The increase in inscriptions after 1524 suggests that further land was brought under cultivation after that time. (See FN 1).

1. G. H. Ojha op. cit., p. 82.

With few exceptions, Mughal references to Bhils in the sixteenth century are brief. The Mughals were more concerned with the areas of settled agriculture and their military capacity. (See FN 1).

There is some indication that before the treaty with the British in 1818, Dungarpur had seen more prosperous times, but that this prosperity had decreased by the end of the eighteenth century. Malcolm and later British writers noted the number of wells and reservoirs which had fallen into disrepair. (See FN 2). Mughal and Maratha records indicate that Dungarpur was able to support a much larger military force during the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries than it was ever able to do after that time. Sahasramalla (1580-1606 A.D.) was listed in Mughal records as a

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1. The Mughal Emperor Akbar sent a force to Dungarpur to exact tribute but later the Dungarpur ruler Askaran (1551-1580 A.D.) gave his daughter to Akbar in marriage. North of Dungarpur Maharana Pratap gained control of Mewar in 1572 A.D. with Bhil support. [G.N. Sharma Mewar and the Mughal Emperors, Shivalal Agarwala and Co., Agra, 1952 p. 5; Abu'l Fazl Allami Akbar Nama, translated by H. Beveridge, Rare Books, Delhi, vol. 3, pp. 278, 295].
 2. J. Malcolm A Memoir of Central India, Parbury Allen and Co., London, 1832, vol. 1, p. 506. Rajputana Gazetteer, vol. 2A, 1908, p. 142.

sarkar of Sultan Muzzafar of Gujarat, commanding a force of 1,000 horses. (See FN 1). The fortunes of the Rajput rulers ebbed and flowed. Sahasramalla colonized nine villages in the Dungarpur district. During the same period of expansion, the son of the Banswara ruler Pratapsimha, was killed by the Bhil headman (mukhiya) of Khandu (See FN 2).

There is no evidence that the Bhils were ever united as a group throughout Dungarpur in opposition to the Rajputs. In fact the early and later evidence indicates the contrary, that Bhil military support was important, but that this was fragmented. From 1287 A.D., when a Bhil was important enough to be recorded as witness to a Rajput's grant of land to a Brahmin, there had been both hostile and friendly Bhils. The Mughals suggested to Giradharadas (1658-1661 A.D.) that he should take Bhils with him when visiting the Udaipur Raja to demand his allegiance to the Mughal emperor (See FN 3). This suggests firstly that there were friendly Bhils, and secondly that their allegiance was of military significance.

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1. He, like the Banswara 'sarkar' 'spent the income of their jagirs when on duty and were exempted from paying any Peshkash'. [Mirat-i-Ahmadi vol. Dafa Awwal, no page numbering]. After 1666 A.D. Dungarpur contributed 2,000 horses for four years to the Mughal forces stationed at Dharampur. [Mirat-i-Ahmadi, vol. Dafa Dusara, p. 189.]
 2. G. H. Ojha op. cit., p. 101.
 3. Jaipur papers vol. 1, pp. 9-10.

The Dungarpur ruler Ramsimha (1702-1730 A.D.), according to the tradition of the khyats, suppressed the Bhils, and one of his sons died attacking a Bhil pal. (see FN 1). A motive for his expansionist policy may have been to encourage trade caravans. Ramsimha increased his authority on the Gujarat side to Lunavara and Kadana, and reopened the road to Malwa, which had been closed by robbers. (See FN 2). One outcome of Ramsimha's policy may have been to provide easier access to the north for the Marathas, as the direct route through Malwa was then controlled by the Mughals. (See FN 3).

The Dungarpur ruler Sivsimha (1730-1781 A.D.), whose brother had died attacking a Bhil pal, stimulated the revival of the Vanesvar fair, attended principally by Bhils, and presided over a Dungarpur capital of 10,000 houses, probably larger than the size of the city in 1971, which then had 31,000 people. During his reign he had to pay tribute to both Mewar and Marathas. (See FN 4) Bhils killed a Minister of the Dungarpur Maharaval Vairsa

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1. G. H. Ojha, op. cit., p. 125.
 2. Ibid., p. 128.
 3. From 1729 to 1741 the State of Dungarpur was often mentioned in Marathi sources, and was the main route taken by the Marathas from the Deccan to Rajasthan and further north. Once the Marathas gained control of Malwa they abandoned their jungle route for the older and more direct route northwards through Ujjain and Kotah. [Mirat-i-Ahmadi, Volume Dafa Dusara 1, p. 25. Rajasthan State University Library, Jaipur.]
 4. G. H. Ojha op. cit., p. 123.

(1785-1790 A.D.) and during this period the Rajput rulers were not able to settle fights within their own clan. The Marathas collected tribute from Dungarpur until 1815 (See FN 1). Jasvantsimha ruled Dungarpur from 1808. He was described, in Ojha's generally flattering history of the Dungarpur Raj, as 'useless', and as unable to control the Bhils (See FN 2). Prince Dalpatsimha of Pratapgarh was adopted as the ruler of Dungarpur when the British pensioned off Jasvantsimha after they signed a treaty with Dungarpur in 1818. Dalpatsimha made special efforts to pacify the Bhils and other tribes and establish peace. Bhils living over the borders in Malwa and Gujarat would make attacks into Dungarpur, then escape into their home territories (See FN 3). The British first intervened in Bhil political affairs in Dungarpur when they signed a treaty with Bhil headmen in 1824. The treaty symbolized the beginning of a new period of incorporation of the Bhils into a modern political system.

Historical records before the nineteenth century principally concern Rajputs, and those they patronized, usually other Rajputs and Brahmins. It is, however, also possible to draw some implications about the Bhils of the Dungarpur region from those records. They probably had a mixed economy: hunting, food

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1. Marathi records, Phalka vol. 1, p. 22, Rajasthan State University Library, Jaipur.
 2. G. H. Ojha op. cit., p. 142. K. D. Erskine [Rajputana Gazetteer, vol. 2A, 1908, p. 133] reports that Jasvantsimha fled to a Bhil settlement when Sindhia's troops occupied the capital for six years.
 3. G. H. Ojha op. cit., p. 153.

gathering, slash and burn agriculture, and collecting protection money from villagers and tithes from travellers. Most inscriptions so far located in the Dungarpur and Banswara districts date from after the eleventh century. Warriors, travellers, merchants and settlers from the regions of the high cultures of Indian civilization ventured into the area before then. There is no indication of an even development towards increasing the area of land cultivated intensively and increasing centralization of power. Dungarpur's economic and political history fluctuated. The Bhils' reliance on plunder probably also varied inversely with the strength of the central authorities. When the powers in Dungarpur were weak, plunder increased, when central powers were strong, brigandage was contained. Rajputs, Brahmins and Bhils lived in the same region from the seventh century A.D. Relationships between the three groups were sometimes peaceful from at least 1185 A.D.

The main conclusions therefore are that there was an uneven but consistent development of different economies. The Rajputs developed a system of quasi-feudalism to manage, protect, defend and expand the populations practising intensive agriculture. Ideological concerns were at least as important as economic development, in that the inscriptional records indicate that much, if not more effort went into the construction of temples than the construction of wells, reservoirs, and fortifications or the demarcation of land ownership. Even at the highest levels of power, the question whether revenues were tribute or loot, tithes or brigandage was to some extent a problem of semantics decided by whether those using the terms were gaining or losing by those

arrangements. When the Rajput rulers of the more fertile river basins were strong they controlled brigandage and forced the population inhabiting the less fertile forested hills to turn more to shifting agriculture. In this way they provided protection for those populations practising intensive agriculture.

Two lasting impressions would have been made on Bhils, the 'bowmen' living in the mountainous forested regions: the power of the new settlers, whom they now call 'the other castes' (dusri jati), to defend and expand the cultivated river valleys, from at least the seventh century A.D., and secondly the large amount of resources these populations devoted to building temples for the worship of gods whose origins lay outside the Vagar or waste regions.

The partial and incomplete historical record of the relations between Bhils and other peoples before the nineteenth century suggests that Bhils were sometimes military enemies of non-Bhils, and killed Rajput generals; they were sometimes allies, and offered refuge to Dungarpur kings. There was Bhil independence, military opposition and also uneasy local alliances. Bhils' right to extract protection money was generally acknowledged. Bhils' military strength diminished in the nineteenth century and new relationships evolved between Bhil and non-Bhil. The historical record is incomplete. Apart from the Bhil called Nadhal who witnessed a grant of land to Brahmin in eastern Dungarpur in 1287 A.D., there is little evidence of mediating agents between the two societies in Dungarpur before the nineteenth century.

3.2 Bhil formations around Dungarpur at the beginning of the nineteenth century

Bhils of Dungarpur before the nineteenth century were almost certainly aware of the concept and meaning of sarkar (government, authority). The term was often applied to local Rajput chiefs. But there is little evidence that Bhils appropriated the term or identified themselves with it. But in different geographical areas around Dungarpur many other types of relationships between Bhils and non-Bhils were possible.

In 1817 Colonel James Tod reported that some Bhil areas not under Rajput control had assumed the feudal characteristics of those that were. Oghna Panarva in western Rajasthan was ruled by a Bhumia Bhil of mixed blood, and he claimed descent from Solanki Rajputs. 'Its chief, with the title of Rana, whom one thousand hamlets scattered over the forest-crowned valleys obey, can, if requisite, appear at the head of five thousand bows.' (See FN 1) Tod also reported a distinction between pure (ujla) and impure Bhils at Kotah, in eastern Rajasthan. Rajputs would accept food from pure Kotah Bhils. Kotah comprised a series of hamlets, ruled by a Bhil chief who called himself raja (See FN 2). In

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1. J. Tod Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan, vol. 1, p. 262.
 2. Ibid., vol. 3, pp. 1521, 1644-6.

central India, the Bhilala claimed part-Rajput and part-Bhil ancestry. They 'infested' the banks of the Narmada, and plundered as far as Ujjain and Indore, and were pacified in exchange for contributions from the governments of Sindia and Holkar (See FN 1). The Khandesh Bhil Corps was formed under Major General Sir John Malcolm in 1825, and not converted into a police force until 1891 (See FN 2). On the other hand, Rath province, in Jhabua, was principally peopled by Bhils who paid taxes to their Rajput rulers. 'As the population bears no proportion to the extent of territory, they are prompt to change their residence from the slightest cause.' The discontented son of a tarvi (settlement head) would persuade some adherents to move some miles from his father's settlement, and fields would be cleared and cultivated, being manured by the ashes of the wood burnt upon them. The Rath ruler encouraged such moves because of increased revenue, and the originating settlement considered the colony a branch, and received dues and allegiance from it (See FN 3).

Abu'l Fazl had identified the Bhils with the Kolis of Gujarat during the sixteenth century (See FN 4). Heber described them

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1. J. Malcolm op. cit. vol. 1, pp. 515-6.
 2. Ibid, vol. 2, pp. 244-57.
 3. Ibid, vol. 2, pp. 34, 65-66.
 4. Abu'l Fazl Allami Akbar Nama, vol. 1, p. 309.

in 1825 as short broad-set muscular men, armed with long bow and arrows, and suspected they were only civilized Bhils, who had laid aside some of their wild habits, particularly the eating of beef. The Kolis were acknowledged as Hindus, which the Bhils never were, and practised agriculture. They paid rent to the government but lived under their own chiefs. They were considered one of the most turbulent and predatory tribes, and with the Bhils, disturbed government authority (See FN 1). The Census records an inordinately large decrease in the Bhil population of Gujarat and Rajputana between 1901 and 1911, a large increase in Koli population in Gujarat, as well as an increase in Rajput population in Rajputana during the same period. The Census Commissioner attributed these differences to changes in Bhil identification (See FN 2).

Communities identified as 'Bhil' have therefore developed in different political and economic structures. 'Wild' Bhils, in Malcolm's terminology, lived in forests and mountains and were accused of being bandits. They were probably also supported by

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1. M. A. Laird Bishop Heber, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1971, pp. 301-303.
 2. Relevant to the difference between Rajputana and Gujarat, is that in 1901 there were more Bhils in Bombay Provinces than Rajputana, but in Rajputana they formed twice as large a proportion of the total population as they did in the Bombay Provinces. [Census of India 1901, vol. 1, Ethnographic Appendices.]

hunting and cattle herding. In some localities there were Bhil chiefs, sometimes called raja, with authority over several hamlets. Feudal type confederacies governed by Bhils, and covering hamlets spread over a wide geographical area, were supported by shifting cultivation in fertile mountain valleys. Levies on travellers, merchants, or subsidiary hamlets tended to replace brigandage, but confederacies along the Narmada river tended to practise both. The chiefs often claimed descent from Rajput fathers, and called themselves Bhilala. Slash and burn cultivation was also practised in Jhabua, but here Bhils paid taxes to a feudal State controlled by Rajputs.

The distinction Bhils made at the beginning of the nineteenth century in eastern Rajasthan between pure and impure Bhils is most interesting. It establishes that Bhils were not only surrounded by Hindu societies distinguishing between the pure and impure, but also adopted this distinction among themselves at that time in at least some places. The distinction of purity was found among Bhils of eastern Rajasthan who were organized by a hierarchical political system.

In Gujarat, where Bhils form a smaller proportion of the population than in Rajasthan, groups who were perhaps once Bhils identified as Koli, a vegetarian caste group. Bhils at the beginning of the nineteenth century displayed some political independence, and were therefore threatening to government.

Bhils were in conflict with societies concerned with status and power, values which were hierarchically organized through the institutions of the Brahmin and Kshatriya. The organization of the hierarchical state would have been impressed upon the Bhils. Nevertheless, the hierarchy was exclusive. There were few benefits to Bhils in acknowledging the hierarchy. In western Rajasthan at Oghna Panarva, and in eastern Rajasthan at Kotah, Bhils did construct their own hierarchies of secular power, and of other worldly status, which were articulated by exchanges of pure food.

The references to food and drink, and to political power, in accounts of relationships between Bhils and non-Bhils outside of the Dungarpur region at the beginning of the nineteenth century portended significant developments which occurred within the Dungarpur region during the nineteenth century. Significant political changes, with implications for the Bhils' economy, affected Bhils' culture during the nineteenth century.

3.3 Perceptions of Bhils as the Other

The inscriptional and written records of Bhils have usually been provided by non-Bhils. The record is incomplete and partial. Information about Bhils is provided on the basis of certain premises. These premises may sometimes have a basis in fact, or they may tell us more about the groups making the observations, than about the Bhils who are being observed. Because of the many centuries of interaction between Bhils and non-Bhils, non Bhils' ideas about Bhils have influenced Bhil perceptions of themselves in various ways. The literary evidence of Bhils before the nineteenth century suggests that they were designated as the 'Other', a designation which had very different connotations, for Jain, Hindu and British writers.

Jainism is a religion which arose in India about the time when Buddhism first appeared. It preached against violence of any kind and in particular the taking of human life. Jainism has been popular among urban merchant communities in central India, including southern Rajasthan and Gujarat. There are several ancient Jain temples in the urban areas of Dungarpur which are still maintained today. In Jain texts, dated to the seventh century A.D., 'Bhillas' refer to forest dwellers, unsurpassed in archery, who are a continual threat to Jain women. There is a remarkable consistency of stereotyping of Bhillas in Jain texts over a long historical period, from the seventh century to the fifteenth. In Hindu texts women were objects of rivalry or

alliance between men, in Jain texts women chose Bhilla men and rejected the lack of virility of their more civilized Jain husbands. In a total of eight Jain texts which discuss Bhillas, they appear as bandits and are always inimical. They are superb archers. They are also the objects of outrageous sexual passions of Jain women. A seventh century text relates how a Jain woman attempted to kill her heroic and selfless husband in order to make love to a young Bhilla. In the fifteenth century a text describes how two princes dress as Bhils and dance in the evening. Their father's second wife falls madly in love with one of them. She locks him in her bedroom and attempts seduction. The prince flees out a window. He is ungallant by our standards, and the standards of contemporary Bhils, but virtuous according to the mores of the texts, written by Jain monks, which repeatedly preach the dangers of the seductive charms of women, capricious and unpredictable (See FN 1).

An important assumption of Jain and Hindu texts is a regime of endogamous classes. A seductive girl who dances like a creeper is 'flawed by her caste' (jāti) (See FN 2) as 'wise men approve

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1. H. Jacobi Ausgewählte Erzählungen in Māhārāshtrī, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft Darmstadt, 1967, pp. 7-20, 45-48, 77-85. J. Jain The Vāsudevahindī, Institute of Indology, Ahmedabad, 1977, pp. 16, 153, 251.
 2. 'jātie dūsiyā' in M. Caturvijaya and M. Punyavijaya, eds Vāsudevahindī, p. 156. Cf. J. Jain's translation 'censored by her caste' [op. cit. p. 313.]

of unions between members of the same class (varna) (See FN 1). Hindu texts, unlike the Jain texts where Bhillas appear consistently as inimical, suggest some success in incorporating Bhillas in a Hindu polity. The 'Five Treatises' (Pancatantra) written between the sixth and twelfth centuries A.D., shows a 'Bhilla chief, essentially cruel and rapacious, yet susceptible to human feelings' (See FN 2). The ambivalence of Hindu relations with Bhillas is elaborately developed in later texts.

In Hindu texts, sexual or any other relations between Hindu women and Bhilla or tribal men are not contemplated. Their alliance with Hindu princes and kings is important, but extremely problematical. Dandin in the seventh century A.D. discusses hostile and friendly Blacks (Sabaras = Bhillas in later texts) (See FN 3). Bana, also in the seventh century, describes a king greatly distressed to perceive the beauty and sensuousness of a young black woman who is without caste, and therefore unable to be embraced and enjoyed (See FN 4). These incidents occur in texts which constantly discuss proper relationships between men

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1. J. Jain Vāsudevahiṇḍī, op. cit., p. 156.
 2. Pantschatantra, translated by T. Benfey, vol. 2, Hildesheim, 1966, pp. 150-153. M. Bloomfield 'On Organized Brigandage in Hindu Fiction', American Journal of Philology, 1937, vol. 47, pp. 205-233.
 3. Dandin Daśakumāracarita, edited by M. R. Kale, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1966, pp. 24 ff.
 4. Bāṇa Kādambarī, edited by M. R. Kale, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1968, pp. 41, 59.

and women, and improper ones, and the need to constrain human passions within a caste system, often comprising arranged marriage.

The famous collection of fiction, the 'Ocean of Waves of Stories' (Kathasaritsagara), an eleventh century version of a widely known and popular earlier work, has nine episodes with Bhillas. As in the Jain texts, the Bhillas appear together with Vidyadharas, literally 'those possessing knowledge', strange mythical creatures, living half way between the world of gods and that of men and sometimes intermarrying with the latter.

The Bhillas hover between the natural and cultural worlds. They are said to live like animals, but in Hinduism, where animals are gods, this does not have the same connotations as in eighteenth century European rationalism. When the Bhillas appear as military allies, they are likened to the benevolent aspects of nature, when hostile, they are likened to the malevolent aspects of nature. In the Hindu texts, the Bhil women are perfumed with aphrodisiacs. British scholars noted that Bhillas in the texts were anomalous, and labelled them 'good' and 'bad' (See FN 1). The terms used in the texts are military alliance or opposition, commensality or avoiding commensality. At a highpoint at the end

1. G. Chatterjee, foreward to N. M. Penzer, ed., The Ocean of Story, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1968, vol. 9, p. VII.

of the longest episode concerning Bhillas, the daughter of a Bhilla chief becomes one of the wives of a Hindu king. The Bhillas by their more natural behaviour define by negative example the cultural world of the Hindu dharma or sacred law. Between the nine episodes involving Bhillas there are many stories in the 'Ocean of Waves of Stories' which discuss the regimes of female chastity and caste endogamy. The tales of the tenth book are told to illustrate the theme that 'the mind of even discerning women is fickle'. In the sixteenth book when a prince falls in love with a person of the lowest caste, there is a double bind, or logical reinforcement of caste, as the king takes this as proof that she is really of a higher caste. The semi-divine Vidyadharas and the 'animal-like' Bhillas define the outer boundaries of hypergamous marriage and hence civilization (See FN 1).

Some passages in the tales may refer to historical facts. In the 'Ocean of Waves of Stories' the Bhillas are led by chiefs. They live in scattered settlements (palli, the word pal is used to describe contemporary Bhil settlements) on the southern slopes of the Vindhyan range, and their dwellings are piled with elephants' tusks and deer-skins. They are dressed in tigers skins and

1. G. Chatterjee, foreward to N. M. Penzer, ed., The Ocean of Story vol. 5, pp. 27-37; vol. 6, p. 25; vol. 7, pp. 165-172; vol. 9, p. 45.

peacocks' feathers, and live on the flesh of deer. (See FN 1) The episodes present Bhillas as initially hostile, and then as allied to Hindus through various sorts of exchange. In the final episode which mentions Bhillas, a Bhilla chief reveals he is really a Brahmin, and gives his daughter to a Hindu ally, and receives payment, in fact signifying that he is participating in a bride-price system, a mark of Bhils. (See FN2).

The British stereotyping of the Bhils is quite different. Summarizing a great deal of material, there seems to have been a broad historical development in British stereotyping of the tribespeople in Central India whom they called Bhils or Bhillas. In the first period, from Forbes in 1780 (See FN3) onwards, they were stereotyped as 'wild mountaineers, under no regular government, and almost in a savage state, or demi-savage'. (See FN 4) The British noted the Bhils were more masculine in form than the Hindus (See FN 5). They called the Bhils bandits. A new observation is to note that they are 'probably the original owners of the country, assuredly an aboriginal race', (See FN6)

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1. Somadeva, Kathasaritsagara, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1970, 12.35.61 (p.481).
 2. Ibid., 18.4.38ff.
 3. J. Forbes Oriental Memoirs, White, Cochran and Co., London, 1813, vol. 1, p.213; vol. 2, p.484.
 4. J. Tod Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan, vol. 1, pp. 258-262.
 5. C. Coleman The Mythology of the Hindus, Parbury, Allen and Co., London, 1832, p.264.
 6. J. Tod Travels in Western India, William H. Allen and Co., London, 1839, p.34.

General Malcolm divided the Bhils into three groups:

- . Bhils who live in villages usually near the hills, reputed faithful and honest, and usually watchmen;
 - . cultivating Bhils of the plains, industrious, but retaining their weapons and habits, notably excessive drinking and eating not only buffaloes, but to the horror of the Hindus, also cows;
 - . wild Bhils of the mountains covered by jungles and forests, armed with bow and arrows, superstitious, quick, evasive, devoted to their chief, and heavy drinkers. These Bhils 'preferring savage freedom and indolence to submission and industry, have continued to subsist by plunder'. (See FN 1)
- Shifting cultivation and cattle rearing, however were also important to the 'wild' Bhils.

The major innovation in British stereotyping of the Bhils occurred after the Bhils were pacified. A Bhil corps was formed under Malcolm in 1825 at Khandesh (it was converted into a police force in 1891), and a second Bhil Corps was established at Kherwada, between Dungarpur and Udaipur, in 1828. Before 1891 Census enumerators had noted that Bhils were not sufficiently 'pacified' for enumeration, and Bhil population figures were arrived at by estimate. In 1839 Tod had called the Bhils 'children of the forest', introducing a neuter gender to the Sanskrit term which meant 'son of the forest'. In 1871, ninety

1. J. Malcolm 'Essays on the Bhills', Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, vol. 1, p. 81.

years after the first English accounts of Bhils, they were labelled as children. 'Like all savages there is a child-like vagueness about their conceptions which it is very difficult to get the better of,' wrote Lieutenant Forsyth in 1871. (See FN 1) The 'childish' tag was to continue, particularly after 1891. By 1901 in Rajputana, the stereotype of the Bhils had been transformed into a less threatening one than Malcolm's 'wild' Bhils. Bhils are naturally of a roving and restless disposition, shy, easily led, and excitable. They are active, skilful hunters but much addicted to drink and when intoxicated ready to quarrel and to commit raids. (See FN 2) The content of the category Bhil had been transformed from desirable sexual object of Jain women and object of dangerous, abhorrent sexuality of Jain men, to object of enmity or alliance for Hindus, to object of pacification (defined as cultivating land and paying taxes) and then paternalism by the British. This brief survey of a great deal of literature extending over many centuries suggests historical descriptions of the Bhils have been limited by the observer's beliefs and values. The Bhils' own ideology is complex, and pervasively affected by the ideology of the Indian society in which they are encompassed. The important point to establish here is that no representation of Bhils was developed which was acceptable to Bhils. They therefore had to establish

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1. J. Forsyth The Highlands of Central India, Chapman and Hall, London, 1871, p.139.
 2. Census of India 1901, vol. 25, Rajputana, Part I, Report, Lucknow 1902, p.144.

their own loci of meaning and status, partly outside these other systems, but in conscious imitation of them. One of the most important examples of this process is the development of Bhil interest in bhakti (devotion). Non-Bhils are still inclined to designate Bhils as the other in contemporary times. But beginning in the late nineteenth century some Bhils selectively and implicitly began to designate other Bhils as significantly different from themselves. This development occurred when bhagat emerged from among the Bhils. The development gained impetus after 1947 as more Bhils became government officials.

3.4 Pacification of Bhils in Dungarpur

The nineteenth century saw the gradual military suppression of Bhils in Dungarpur by the British. During this century, British, largely by indirect rule, established their hegemony over southern Rajasthan. They adopted various strategies to ensure political control, including treaty, military engagement and in 1840 , the Mewara Bhil Corps. The British were persistent and eventually successful. The irresistible power of the sarkar was made manifest to Bhils for over a century. The long and enforced demonstration encouraged a Bhil fascination with sarkar which is still evident. After the lesson of the nineteenth century, Bhils in Dungarpur during the twentieth century attempted to gain power within the national state, rather than independently of it. There were no attempts to establish a sovereign Bhil state in Dungarpur.

Pacification of Bhils eventually had important economic consequences. Under British hegemony Bhil society in southern Rajasthan was transformed from independent shifting agriculturalists and hunters, sometimes forming alliances with petty Hindu chiefs, sometimes extracting dues from travellers and merchants, to settled agriculturalists. Bhil power and independence was considerably reduced during the nineteenth century. The cultural implications for the Bhils of these political processes became apparent as the century proceeded.

The Dungarpur State came under British protection by a Treaty signed in December 1818. Tribute which had formerly been paid to the Mughals and Marathas was henceforth paid to the British

Government of India. In the Treaty the Maharaval agreed to reside in Dungarpur, to be satisfied with whatever the British decided to allow for his sustenance, and to approve whomsoever the British appointed as Prime Minister. The British policy was almost the reverse of that of the Mughals and Marathas before them. The latter referred to the Dungarpur rulers as zamindars and used armies to extract tribute, but otherwise left the Dungarpur rulers to themselves. The British referred to the Dungarpur rulers by the title 'Maharaval' (Prince) and claimed that they recognized Dungarpur as a sovereign state. To implement their policies the British relied largely on only one person, the Assistant Resident of the Southern Rajputana Agency, sometimes stationed at Dungarpur, and supported by the Mewar Bhil Corps stationed at Kherwara. As a result the British gained much greater control over Dungarpur affairs than the Mughals and Marathas had done before them.

The British referred to the system of Rajput States as feudal, and even suggested that Rajput nobles looked like knights of old. (See FN 1) The records of the Foreign Department, however, clearly establish the impact of British hegemony on the political affairs of Dungarpur and establish that Dungarpur no longer had feudal or quasi-feudal independence. In 1825 and in 1852, following representation by Dungarpur chiefs, (See FN 2) the British replaced monarchs they considered incompetent or

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1. Report of the Political Administration of Rajputana, Rajputana Mission Press, Ajmer, 1867, p, 11.
 2. Chiefs led by Surja Mul petitioned Captain J. Brookes, Assistant Political Agent, Mewar, against Dalpat Singh, on 20 December 1849 [RFD, Southern Rajputana States Agency. General Branch, Dungarpur affairs 1835-56. No. 1 of 1852].

unsuitable, and in 1852-6 and 1898-1909, during the minorities of monarchs, they ruled the State themselves. Although Dungarpur was classed as a Kingdom (Raj), the Government of India exercised substantial influence over Dungarpur after 1818. This influence was also noted by the Bhils, as their songs refer to direct British control of Dungarpur affairs.

The British described the period immediately after 1818 as one of great disorder. (See FN 1) Bhils made attacks in Dungarpur along the borders of Malwa and Gujarat and then escaped into those states. (See FN 2) In 1825 Bishop Heber noted the scope given to brigandage by the proliferation of small states. (See FN 3) Soon after 1818 in the hilly tracts north of Dungarpur city the British attempted 'to resume the taxes levied from time immemorial by the Bhils on their neighbours.' (See FN 4) The taxes were of two kinds - bolai levied on the passage of merchandise and travellers for whose safe transit the Bhils became thereby responsible; and rakhvali, or protection money, paid by villages to neighbouring Bhil communities as the price of avoiding being plundered. The consequence of the British attempts to resume these taxes were Bhil revolts, occasionally joined and even led by Rajput chiefs.

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1. Rajputana Gazetteer, vol. 1, Gazetteer of Dungarpur, (by Captain C.E. Yate), Calcutta, 1879, p. 276.
 2. G.H.Ojha op. cit., p.153.
 3. M.A. Laird Bishop Heber in Northern India: Selections from Heber's Journal, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1971, p.278.
 4. Rajputana Gazetteer, vol. 3, Gazetteer of Meywar, (by Captain C.E. Yate), Simla, 1880, p.59.

In 1825 A.D. the British made an agreement with 24 Bhil headmen (mukhyas) of Simalwara, Deval and Nandu whose Pal are situated close to the road running north to south through Dungarpur. The Bhils objected to the Maharaval administering the agreement and it was therefore signed and administered by the British representative. The agreement by the Bhil headman, translated into English, stated:

- '1. We surrender our arms.
2. We will make reparation for what was obtained by looting.
3. We will never loot in townships, villages, or roads.
4. We will not give refuge in our country or pals to thieves, looters, Garassias (See FN 1) or Rajput chiefs (thakurs)
5. We will follow [East India] Company orders.
6. Except in accord with our just and ancient rights, we will take nothing from the villages of Ravals or Rajputs chiefs (thakurs).
7. We will pay our annual tribute to the Dungarpur Maharaval, and never refuse.
8. We will protect [East India] Company personnel in our villages.'

The reference to just and ancient rights in item 6 refers to rakhvali, the practice of levying protection money on villagers in the Bhils' sway. The Bhil custom of also levying a tithe on travellers was not as easily conceded by the British. The British attempted to terminate this custom, but the Bhils clung to it tenaciously.

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1. Garassias are now a Scheduled Tribe of southern Rajasthan. In 1879 it was noted that they distinguished themselves from Bhils by better dress greater industry and agriculture not eating cows and other animals forbidden, by Hindu laws, by using Brahmins at marriage ceremonies, and by banning widow remarriage [Rajputana Gazetteer, vol. 3, Gazetteer of Dungarpur, 1880, p. 68.]

There were serious insurrections in Kherwara, the area of the trade route connecting Dungarpur and Udaipur, in 1826, and some 250 men were killed. As a consequence the British yielded to the Bhils the right to levy bolai taxes on passing travellers and merchandise. (See FN 1) In 1830 the British and the Dungarpur Maharawal made settlements with the Bhils of Deval Pal, (See FN 2) north of the town of Dungarpur, and prosecuted military operations against the Bhils near Antri to the east. (See FN 3) Because of the Bhils' intimate knowledge of the different passes through the mountainous districts, the British were unsuccessful against the guerilla tactics of the Bhils.

There are several examples of collaboration between Rajputs and Bhils. It is clear that alliances sometimes cut across caste solidarity. For example in 1831 the Chief of Mando informed Bhils of details of trade caravans, which they subsequently plundered. (See FN 4) In the same year the Rajput chief of Bunkora together with the Bhils of Panei Pal plundered Banjaras and Charans, nomadic groups in Galiakot. (See FN 5) The Raja of Jura, north of the Dungarpur State, refused to cooperate with

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1. Rajputana Gazetteer, vol. 3 Meywar, p.59.
 2. RFD, Political Branch, 2 July 1830, pp. 24-25, p.154.
 3. Ibid., p. 154.
 4. Ibid., 15 April 1831, p.30.
 5. Ibid., 9 September, 1831, No. 32.

the British against Bhil outlaws. The British considered annexing the territory, but concluded that the annexed territory would require a corps of native infantry, and its revenue was too small to pay expenses. Jura was therefore transferred to the Rana of Udaipur. The same consideration of weighing expenses against immediate economic benefit encouraged the British policy of indirect rule for Dungarpur. (See FN 1)

The British approach was to treat the Bhils cautiously. In September 1837, however, the Political Collector for Gujarat reported that a turbulent disposition was again manifesting itself among the hill tribes dependent on Dungarpur and Udaipur. (See FN 2) The Rajput States and their subsidiary chiefs were unable or unwilling to secure the trade routes that passed through their territory, and by 1838 it had been decided to form a Bhil Corps in Kherwara, which commanded the Gujarat, Dungarpur and Udaipur border. (See FN 3) The records up to 1840 contain several references to British concern for securing the trade routes between Gujarat and Mewar. These routes were constantly threatened by the Bhils. They stole goods and cattle and also killed merchants, whenever their rights to levy charges for

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1. Ibid., 6 March 1834, no. 1, pp.76,116.
 2. Ibid., 24 July 1837, no. 3.
 3. Ibid., 1 July 1848, p.68.

protection and safe conduct were not granted. (See FN 1)

A Bhil insurrection occurred in the State of Udaipur in 1839 and some 150 men were killed. Following this a Bhil Corps was finally formed at Kherwara in March 1840. (See FN 2) It was proposed that the Corps comprise between 400 and 1000 infantry and officers, and be financed by the Udaipur, Dungarpur and Banswara states. (See FN 3)

The Mewara Bhil Corps was largely effective in pacifying the border area between the Mahi Kant district in Gujarat, Dungarpur and Udaipur, which had caused much trouble to previous regimes and also had been a refuge for fugitives. (See FN 4) The British noted that the Corps provided congenial employment in a wild and poor country. (See FN 5)

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1. Ibid., 6 March 1834, no. 1 p.35; 27 February 1837 nos 20-22; 1 August 1838 no. 47; 4 July 1838 nos 50-51; 28 November 1838 no. 57) 14 February 1838 nos 94-5; 26 September 1838 nos 37; 14 February 1838 nos 94-5; 17 October 1838 no. 73; 3 April 1839 nos 52-53; 29 August 1836 nos. 21-22. Political Despatches to Court of Directors no. 2, 44 (1838) 17,79 (1839).
 2. Ibid., File no. 4, 1919. Assistant Political Superintendent, Hilly Tracts, Mewar. 'A detailed History of the Mewar Bhil Corps' by Mr Holme, pp. 22-23.
 3. Ibid., p.40.
 4. Ibid., 17 October 1838: 47-49.
 5. Ibid., File no. 4, 1919 p.40.

The British, like the Marathas before them, assigned Dungarpur a lower priority than Central India. The Khandesh Bhil Corps was established in Central India in 1825. It provided a model for the Bhil Corps established at Kherwara, north of Dungarpur, in 1840. (See FN 1) The Khandesh Bhil Corps may have encouraged more Bhils to turn to agriculture. By 1828 although many Bhils were armed and occasionally plundering, the British wrote of rapid changes affecting the 'miserable' Bhils of central India, formerly 'without a hovel to cover them nor a rag to their backs ... Now they are fat and sleek, and decently clad ... actually complaining of the low price of grains.' (See FN 2) The economic transformation of the Bhils of the Dungarpur region was to be less swift and less sure.

In 1841 Captain M. Hunter of the Mewara Bhil Corps wrote a long unpublished report on the Bhils which provides further evidence for the collusion of Rajputs in Bhil plundering expeditions. He wrote that no chief of Bhil or Mina extraction was to be found in Dungarpur. Bhils had been notorious for their habits of plunder, and they were particularly tenacious regarding their privileges of rakvali (protection money). The Rajput chiefs claimed a fourth of the agricultural produce of Bhil pal, but this was seldom paid in kind by any Bhils except those in the

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1. In 1818 the British agreed to pay ten Bhil chiefs in the Satpura mountains amounts ranging from Rs. 100 to Rs. 3,000 each year. [RFD Foreign Political, 6 March 1834 No. 1 pp. 1-12]. The British enlisted chiefs, relations of chiefs and members of influential Bhil clans in the Khandesh Bhil Corps. The result was that, provided a Bhil culprit remained in the district, and his name and village were known, he would almost certainly be apprehended. [RFD Political Branch, 6 March 1834, pp. 105-116]
 2. RFD, Political Branch, 6 March 1834, p.76.

immediate vicinity of the chiefs' residences. Every two or three years those Bhils would pay the Rajput chief with cattle they had stolen from adjoining states for that purpose. The Rajputs therefore profited from Bhil raids and also engaged in raids on the Bhils themselves. They would attack Bhil pal and kidnap women, children and cattle, and those would be restored to the Bhils on payment of Rs.5 a head. (See FN 1) In 1841 the British were unable to terminate the Bhils' custom of levying a tithe on travellers. This in fact continued until the twentieth century. Hunter thought that in bad seasons it was the only means the Bhils had to support themselves in most parts of the hilly tracts: 'to deprive them of this privilege only tends to excite the flame we would wish to extinguish', to which was replied: 'The Governor General agrees with you that however objectionable the impositions levied by the Bheel chiefs for their protection or forbearance may be in theory, it would be hazardous to attempt any sudden change of system.' (See FN 2) In 1841 the British therefore condoned the ancient Bhil practice. In August 1843 Captain Hunter claimed that no incidents had occurred in any of the Dungarpur-Udaipur-Gujarat border areas during that year. Captain Hunter's superiors noted that 'Mild and conciliatory measures had triumphed over harsh and coercive ones.' (See FN 3) Violent incidents involving Bhils did occur after 1843, but they followed famine, were sporadic, and often involved Rajput collaboration.

1. RFD, Political Branch, 6 September 1841, pp. 33-35.

2. Ibid., 6 September 1841, p. 34.

3. Ibid., 9 September 1843, pp. 53-56.

One of the last incidents in which a considerable number of soldiers were killed by Bhils was the affray at Naraina Ghati, in eastern Dungarpur, in June 1878. The incident indicates changes in Bhil pacification. Whereas in 1826 Bhils had killed 250 people at Kherwara, a major incident at Naraina Ghati in 1878 involved the death of only 17 soldiers, and there was no threat of the incident triggering off reactions elsewhere. The incident suggests that rivalry between pal over women, as well as hostility towards the State, was important. (See FN 1)

Bhils of Pal Mandav, south-east of Dungarpur, attacked a party of soldiers and later claimed that they thought the soldiers had come to attack Mandav because Mandav Pal Bhils had abducted a bride several days before. The Mandav Pal Bhils plundered the soldiers' matchlocks, and the Bhil women carried up to five matchlocks on their heads. In similar fashion Bhil women carry fire wood today. A year later British shot the three Mandav Pal ringleaders, Lalura, Maua Gameti and Bhanjera. (See FN 2)

A further incident occurred at Borai Pal on the Dungarpur Udaipur border in 1880. Ten soldiers were killed, and Bhils also killed five Dungarpur officials who were attempting to arrest the Borai Bhils involved. The attack at Borai was not followed, as in the past, by similar attacks elsewhere. Bhil headmen (gameti) and

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1. RFD, Political Branch A, May 1879, nos 114-128.
 2. RFD, Political Branch, 30 July 1878, no. 169; 25 November 1878, No. 251.

other Bhils in fact rallied round the officials who were attacked. Dungarpur stationed a garrison of troops in the village and the British reported a year later that most Bhils were quiet. (See FN 1)

Several sporadic violent incidents occurred after 1881 when an attempt to undertake a census in Bhil areas had to be abandoned in Udaipur, and was not even attempted in Dungarpur, because of Bhil anxieties and violent opposition. In 1884 Bhils paid 'lawless Thakurs' (Rajput chiefs) a quarter of booty acquired in return for shelter in their villages. (See FN 2)

A new development after 1880 was the centralization of legal authority and the intervention of the Dungarpur State in Bhil internal disputes. In 1882 a fight arose between Bhils from Pal Dehpir in Mewar, and Maturgamra and Khemaru in Dungarpur, over fishing rights in the Som river. The Bhils aligned themselves according to the State in which they lived; one person from each side was killed and a total of seven were wounded. The case was finally settled by a Bhil pancayat in the presence of the Superintendent of the Hilly Tracts and officials from Dungarpur and Mewar. (See FN 3) The Dungarpur Maharaval's court tried seven Bhils for the murder of an old Bhil woman and the rape of

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1. RFD, Political Branch A, October 1879, no. 201.
 2. RFD, General Branch, no. 193a, 1882-3, p.8.
 3. Eight Headmen (gameti) of four pal in Dungarpur, and eleven headmen of nine Udaipur pal traced a circular symbol and poured saffron into two pools, whose ownership was disputed. This rendered the water sacred and ended fishing in them. [RFD, Political Branch, February 1884, Nos 131,131A.]

two Bhil girls near Javar, north of Dungarpur, in 1885. Since 1867 the Maharaval had attempted to resume the powers of criminal and civil jurisdiction from the local chiefs and in particular their powers to levy fines. The 1883 case is one of the earliest in which the Dungarpur court assumed responsibility for what would have been considered in an earlier period internal Bhil affairs. The Maharaval also opened a school for Bhil children at Javar shortly afterwards. (See FN 1) Education became more common, and assumed greater importance, in the years which followed, particularly after Independence.

Epidemics and famine after 1890 were not followed by widespread increases in Bhil violence, and this fact indicates that major changes had occurred. The famine of 1899-1900 was particularly severe. Other ecological disasters had occurred before then, but as far as is known they were not of the same magnitude. There had been a partial drought in 1838, and extensive damage to crops by heavy rains in 1868 and 1875. (See FN 2) Cholera and pneumonia outbreaks continued up to 1895 and were particularly devastating in urban areas. They therefore may have weakened the Dungarpur government in relation to the Bhils. Relief measures, which had been effective in containing violence after the food shortages of 1869 (See FN 3), were ineffective in containing crime during the 1899-1900 famine. The violence did not assume political overtones of Bhil unity, or involve large groups of Bhils. A major change had therefore occurred during the

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1. RFD, General Branch, 1883-4, no. 199, p.58.
 2. Rajputana Gazetteer, 1879, vol. 1, Dungarpur, p.275.
 3. Report on the Political Administration of Rajputana, 1869-70, p.48.

previous sixty years. Of the 165 dacoities which were reported in 1899, 65 per cent were Bhil feuds with other Bhils and 16 per cent involved losses of less than Rs. 10. Two thirds of the incidents occurred on the jagir lands of Rajput chiefs, suggesting the relative strength of the Dungarpur government. (See FN 1) In 1900 323 dacoities were reported, all involving robbery by more than five persons. Often participation by a group was not planned, but fortuitous. A heterogeneous mass of Bhils wandered around destitute. When one or two of them robbed a traveller, another eight or nine onlookers joined in. (See FN 2) The Bhils did not attempt to gain possession of firearms in 1900. (See FN 3) Bhils had used firearms only one generation before. Bhil failure, incapacity or unwillingness to arm themselves highlighted the loss of political independence.

The 1899-1900 famine coincided with the minority of Vijay Singh, and British administration of Dungarpur through a Political Officer assisted by a Kamdar and State Council. They responded to the famine and the consequent increase of crime with a variety of measures. Two companies of the Mewar Bhil Corps were stationed on the Dungarpur-Kherwara border to prevent raids by large bodies of Bhils and to control the most lawless Bhil pal. (See FN 3) The Government also provided famine relief for 6,300 persons in 1900/1901. All of the relief workers were Bhils. (See FN 4)

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1. RFD, Political Branch, no. 113 of 1900.
 2. RFD, Political Branch, 10 January 1900, no. 75.
 3. RFD, Internal Branch A, August 1900, nos 209-19.
 4. Ibid., 1900, no 396, p.11.

An interesting measure, however, was the reestablishment of the old system of Bhil cauki along the three principal trade routes, the Kherwara-Dungarpur road, the Aspur-Dungarpur road, and the Mewara-Dungarpur road. The roads followed the ancient alternative trade routes from Ujjain to Udaipur. In 1900, under the cauki system, Bhils were paid by the State at the rate of Rs. 2 to Rs. 3 a month each and were posted at commanding points along the road within the limits of their pal or village. If there was an attempted robbery, the guards gave the alarm, and it was the duty of the whole pal to rescue stolen property and pursue offenders. (See FN 1) The Bhils therefore acted as token Rajputs, and were paid for the service of not looting luggage.

There was a most important difference between the cauki system reintroduced by the British in 1900, and the Bhil system of levying revenue on travellers, which had continued until at least 1848. In 1900 the system was introduced by the government and funded by the State, and could therefore be ended at the State's discretion. It was also accompanied by State loans to friendly headmen (gameti) for irrigation and other work undertaken in villages. (See FN 2)

Consistent with earlier times, Rajputs were suspected and sometimes convicted of collaboration with Bhils, and outbreaks of violence were usually isolated in notoriously lawless pal. Rajput collaboration continued a tradition which went back to

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1. RFD, Internal Branch A, August 1900, nos 209-19.
 2. RFD, Internal Branch A, August 1900, nos 209-19, pp. 79, 118.

1830 or before, and was probably fostered by the isolation of parts of Dungarpur and the marginality of agriculture. Ecological factors were important because the Bhil pal with long traditions of opposition and dissent tended to be located in the hilliest and most forested areas of Dungarpur. Dispersed settlements of pal, located in less fertile mountainous areas, were considered by the British to be much more difficult to manage than Bhil villages. In 1900 local officials were afraid to enter Bhil pal without an armed force. (See FN 1) Nevertheless, even during the famine of 1899-1900, lawlessness tended to be concentrated in a few areas, near the jagir land of Rajput chiefs rather than crown (khalsa) land, and in Bhil settlements with traditions of dissent. They included Hirata Pal and Mandav Pal, in the hilly forested areas between the Dungarpur-Aspur and Dungarpur-Galliakot roads, and Galandar Pal, to the west.

The Bhils of Hirata, near Antri, had a tradition of dissent extending over six hundred years. In May 1900 the British dispersed Hirata Pal. After British-led forces killed 25 Bhils in June 1900, the headmen of Mandav Pal submitted to the Darbar's authority, and brought with them a number of well-known offenders. (See FN 2) In June 1900 Galandar Pal Bhils committed a serious dacoity near Ver village. (See FN 3) Galandar, discussed in the following chapters, was an isolated pal to

1. Ibid., p. 75

2. Ibid., pp. 120ff.

3. RFD, Internal Branch A, 1 June 1900, nos 209-19, pp. 44, 144, 128.

the south-west of Dungarpur city. Its headman (gameti) Wajjia was the terror of all the surrounding country. The members of the Pal refused loans for improvements (taccavi) and relief work, and raided almost daily. Wajjia was openly defiant and boasted he was 'entirely independent of the Darbar.' (See FN 1) On 28 June 1900 Wajjia was arrested, and the last remaining area of Bhil resistance broken. The British policy of subduing the Bhils with as little bloodshed as possible had been successful. Two months later the British were happy to come to the conclusion that Bhil unrest had been caused by the mismanagement of relief funds, the unavailability of food, and the refusal of merchants to sell grain. It was clear, the British said, that the Bhils 'were not habitual criminals, nor is crime a profession amongst them' (See FN 2)

The Dungarpur armed forces, numbering 1,100 in 1824, (See FN 3) 620 in 1866, (See FN 4) 380 in 1899, (See FN 5) were increased by 100 in September 1899. By November 1900 the Political Officer was sufficiently confident to reduce the forces to 350. The Dungarpur forces were supported during the famine by the Mewara Bhil Corps. The British noted that 'For the maintenance of internal order in a most difficult country, the suppression of riots and disturbances and escort work generally the Bhils can hardly be bettered.. they are entirely reliable even when used

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1. RFD, Internal Branch A, August 1900, nos 209-19 pp. 111-114.
 2. Ibid., p. 118.
 3. Rajputana Gazetteer, vol. 2B, Mewar Residency, 1908, p.152.
 4. Report of the Political Administration of Rajputana, no. 73 (1868-69), p.68.
 5. RFD, Internal Branch A, August 1900, nos 209-219, p.57.

against their own people'. The period of Bhil military resistance to the British or central Dungarpur authority had ended. The Dungarpur armed forces were dismissed and replaced by a police force of about 200 in 1902, and the Mewara Bhil Corps was changed into a Military Police Battalion in 1908. (See FN 1).

The changes in political power relations during the nineteenth century had important consequences for Bhils. Prevented from levying taxes or looting, they increasingly turned from shifting to settled agriculture. Early in the nineteenth century the British sought to secure the ancient trade route between Ujjain and Udaipur. From 1825 the British made a Treaty with the Bhils which gave no recognition to Bhils as an independent political entity. Subsequently the Bhils unsuccessfully attempted to terminate Bhil taxes on travellers and villagers. Only with the establishment of the Mewara Bhil Corps in 1840 did the British gain military control of the area, and, significantly for this thesis, incorporated Bhils into a system of government.

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1. 'A detailed history of the Mewar Bhil Corps' by Mr Holme, Assistant Political Superintendent, Hilly Tracts, Mewar, File no. 4, 1919. Demographic factors may also have disadvantaged the Bhils. In 1900 in Dungarpur there were an estimated 405 Bhils per thousand population, lower than Banswara (648), where even today crime rates are higher than in Dungarpur, but higher than Partabgarh (304) and Mewar (204).

By 1848 Bhils were no longer able to levy taxes on villages, and there was a consistent centralization of power thereafter. In 1867 the Dungarpur government assumed, from the Rajput chiefs, the power to levy fines. Rajputs colluded in some Bhil crimes which occurred in following years. By 1879 more Bhils had become settled, practised intensive agriculture and paid taxes. In 1880 legal authority was centralized in Dungarpur. The transformation of the Bhil economy of hunting, gathering, shifting cultivation and brigandage to settled agriculture was supervised by British ruling by means of the Dungarpur State and the Mewara Bhil Corps, and therefore involved the collaboration of some Bhils.

The famine at the end of the nineteenth century revealed the political weakness of the Bhils and strength of the British. Two thirds of the dacoities occurred on jagir land of Rajput chiefs, and most were Bhil disputes with other Bhils. At no time did Bhils threaten to unite across the State. The British used the Bhil Corps against dissident pal, killing some leaders and recruiting others into the State's military forces. Relief works were established, and a system of Bhil cauki, or check posts, reestablished, but unlike those of previous centuries, the State paid Bhils to protect the highways. The Bhils participation in the power of the sarkar (government) anticipated development which occurred after independence in every village.

It should finally be noted that most nineteenth century sources on Bhils were written by those attempting to conquer or control them. Bhils' knowledge of their own history is shallow. There are some references to past heroes in their songs and in the hero stones found in their villages. The stones are not well preserved and in many cases illegible until cleaned.

They suggest a concern to represent a few of their number in a heroic, independent tradition, rather than as collaborators with government.

For instance Pal Galandar has six old inscriptions near an ancient Mahadev temple and the reservoir (talab) which separate Gamv ward from Talab ward. The inscriptions can be dated from 1662 to 1842 A.D. On all of them only a date and a name, at most, are legible. The stones feature one or two figures, with bow, arrow, sword, shield or gun. They therefore conform to a pan-Indian phenomenon of stones commemorating men who have died in acts of heroism. These stones are typically found in upland areas, on the outskirts of forests, and the 'tribal' areas of central India.

Thapar has suggested that rituals to the dead, including the construction of hero-stones, contradict belief in a cycle of rebirth and reincarnation. The hero-stones of Galandar, and the few Bhil songs referring to historical events, refer to a world which was seeped in the notion of status achieved through the heroic act (virya) which brought the hero fame. Thapar writes 'In a society given to competitiveness, the heroic act was also an act of individual self-assertion and the hero-stone captured the moment of self-assertion for eternity.' (See FN 1) The term virya which literally means 'semen, virility and valour' in Bhil songs usually refers to the devor, the 'husband's younger

1. R. Thapar, 'Death and the Hero', in S. C. Humphreys and H. King, eds, Mortality and immortality: the anthropology and archaeology of death, London, Academic Press, 1981.

brother', and his erotic adventures with his elder brother's wife. The hero stones therefore refer to both a heroic and erotic genre. They represent a focus for patrilineages which are important for Bhil expansion, but the symbols associated with the hero raise him above the context of family, time and place. Thapar suggests the hero stones are particularly associated with buffer regions where political security was transient and the authority of royal armies weak. They were associated with migrating peasant groups bringing fresh land under cultivation or turning to brigandage and raiding. The hero-stones are not a typically 'tribal' phenomenon, but part of the cultural markers of the boundaries between 'caste' and 'tribal' societies and the uncultivated forest regions.

In Galandar six hero stones are placed in a row facing east. There are two small stones, one undated has the name 'Katara Katara Parcand Khatu' on it. Parcand and two people appear to be engaged in a Holi dance. The other stone has a warrior with bow, shield, and what appears to be a gun, and is dated to 1662 A.D. (1719 Samvat) and has the name 'Ranga Sri.' Next to them are two large stones, each with the sun and moon in the top corners indicating the eternal nature of the memorial. One with no legible date has a warrior bearing a bow, the other, dated 1739 A.D. (1796 Samvat) has a warrior with sword at his side and bow drawn; and the inscription 'Katara Khat Nanca Rana.' Next to them are two smaller stones on a raised stone platform. The fifth stone is dated 1766 A.D. (Samvat 1823); it depicts a couple, one of whom carries a gun. 'Katara Katara' are also legible. The sixth stone depicts a warrior, carrying a gun and sword, and is dated 1842 A.D. (1899 Samvat).

The historical record of the Bhils is therefore illuminating and important. It imitates a greater Indian tradition with the use of the sun and moon motifs. It is quick to adopt and boast of technological innovations such as firearms. The clan name Katara is legible in at least three of the six inscriptions, which celebrate the warriors Parcand in 1662 A.D. and Nanca Rana in 1739. The stones also have the distinctively Bhil features of the Holi dance, or a man's wife assisting him in battle.

The stones therefore suggest a Bhil consciousness of a proud and independent tradition, which celebrated its heroes Ranga in 1662 A.D., Parcand, and Nanca in 1739 A.D., who fought for their independence and also adopted the weapons of their opponents. They provide a preliminary attempt to address problems more fully addressed in the twentieth century. These problems centred around the need to create representations of themselves in relation to other societies, who ultimately controlled the economic and political system of which the Bhils were now a part.

The hero stones name particular clans and are located on the boundaries of particular villages. Although the only authentic Bhil record of their past, they in fact form part of a pattern common in central India. To this extent they are analogous to the resurgence of interest in bhakti among Bhils at the end of the nineteenth century, and the pervasiveness of notions of government in the twentieth century. Both these developments occurred after the political suppression which was so effectively achieved by the British.

The hero stones commemorate Bhil big men, from dominant clans in the village, who have achieved fame by resisting the other societies, and defending Bhil society against central governments. But now the stones are overgrown and covered with earth and moss. The heroes of a Bhil resistance are largely forgotten. From the gentle rises and slopes which provided a home to these traditional heroes, have emerged new leaders, drawing on different symbols, with different purposes and different contexts and problems. Ranga, Parcand and Nanga of the seventeenth and eighteenth century have been forgotten in their own villages. The cultural heroes of the Bhils in the late nineteenth century were leaders of bhakti; in the late twentieth century, Bhil government officials.

Bhils had learnt from bitter experience during the nineteenth century the power of government. At the end of this era, in June 1900, the last rebel, Wajjia of Galandar, was arrested. Some Bhils, by participation or observation, had learnt of the benefits of collaboration with government.

Once pacification was achieved, there was little scope for independent assertion. It was also true that while there were material benefits to Bhils employed by the Mewar Bhil Corps, the numbers of Bhils who could hope to gain such employment was circumscribed. Many more Bhils found themselves in a new relationship with the society of the lowlands. It was in this context that bhakti was promulgated among the Bhils, successfully, towards the end of the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE EMERGENCE OF BHAKTI (DEVOTION)

4.1 The early development of bhakti (devotion) among Dungarpur Bhils

Bhakti has a long tradition in India. Bhils may have experimented with bhakti for hundreds of years. But there is little evidence for bhakti movements being significant among Bhils for most of the nineteenth century.

One of the first historical references to bhakti among the Bhils of southern Rajasthan is contained in an appended note to T. H. Hendley's article on the Bhils, which was published in 1875. He writes:

'The following Extract from the Political Report of the Superintendent of the Hilly Tracts of Maiwar may be of interest in connection with my remarks on the religion of the Bhils.

"A reformer, Surji, a Bhil Guru, has for some years past been at work among his countrymen on the Maiwar-Gujarat frontier. He preaches worship of one God, peace and goodwill. His followers take an oath to abstain from all crime and offences, spirituous liquor, and from causing death to any living being. They bind themselves to live by

the produce of the soil, and to bathe before eating. Surji has now a following of upwards of one thousand 'bhagats', or believers, and three disciples, Gurus, ordained by himself to preach and convert.

I saw and conversed with him in February last when I was travelling in the district. He asked for protection to his followers in Dungarpur territory, where the other Bhils, he said, annoyed them by calling them 'Musulman' (with them, meaning 'infidel'). His influence in securing followers has spread as far as Khairwara and Kotrah.

I talked with a number of his converts, and they said that they had prospered since they had been guided by the Guru to do as they had sworn. They certainly looked in every way superior to their unreclaimed brethren." (See FN 1)

Hendley's note is important, and confirms oral history of the development of bhakti among the Bhils.

In April 1981 Surmabhai, the fourth grandson of the bhakti leader Surmal Das (See FN 2) related a history of his grandfather to me, in a Bhil kacca temple in the village Lusadia in Gujarat, just over the Rajasthan border:

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1. T. H. Hendley, 'An Account of the Maiwar Bhils,' p. 388.
 2. Surmaldas, son of Kalidas, was succeeded by his son Kandas, who had six sons: Jiva, Ranchod and Sona, who were older than Surmabhai, and Prabhudas and Sukhdev, who were younger. I was told that Surmabhai would be succeeded by his son Prabhudas, and grandson Sukhdev.

1. 'Surmal (Das) used to eat meat and alcohol, and rob people.
2. He wandered from village to village committing thefts.
3. Near Samlaji (a Vaisnavite temple in the Panc Mahals, Gujarat, near the Rajasthan border) he encountered God.
4. In Nag valley he encountered a man and a woman.
5. Each day he got two annas (Rs. 0.125).
6. On that day he got Rs. 1.25.
7. The man and woman gave it to him.
8. "We will come to your house tomorrow".
9. They came in the form of a holy man and woman.
10. They lit a lamp, and offered incense and ghee in it.
11. They taught us, the man and the woman.
12. From that time, Surmaldaas obtained enlightenment.
13. He returned home

1. 'Surmal dārū māms khātā, ne cor kartā.
2. Gāmre qāmre phartā corī karte.
3. Samlājī nā sank mae Bhagvān mālajā.
4. Nāg Darāter mae strī ne purush be mālajā.
5. Dādu te be ānā maltā,
6. te ne dāde havā rūpiyā maljo.
7. Strī ne purush ālīgaja hai.
8. "Jo tamāre ghar bīze divas paṇ āvī."
9. Sādhu rūp meṃ āye,
10. divo no dhūp kido, ne ghī no divo kido.
11. Amne upades kido, strī purush.
12. Tethī Surmaldās bebbhan thaī giyā,
13. ghar āvī

14. and after that cast off any desire for meat and alcohol.
15. He dedicated part of his house as a temple.
16. On that day he obtained some firewood
17. and lit a fire for penance.
18. That was the day he lit a fire for penance.
19. Then he sat there as a religious austerity.
20. Some people said he had become senile,
21. but he obtained enlightenment from that time.
22. The sick were smeared with ashes,
23. and became happy once again.
24. The blind, the lame recovered by performing religious austerities in this way.
25. The word of the teacher was proselytized.
26. In every village alcohol was banned.

14. ne pāsā māms ne dārū no vāsaṇo pheki dīda,
15. ghar māe gārkoṇo paṇa karāyā,
16. pase lākṛo maṅgāvī
17. ne dhūne halqāvji.
18. Te divas thī dhunī halqāvji.
19. Tethī tap karvā baiṭhā.
20. Koī kahe gāḍā thāe kiyā,
21. bebhān thāī gijā, pasī tethī.
22. Roḡiyā sapaṭī babuthī,
23. lālnā te sukhī thāī jātā.
24. Adā, lūlā āvī rīte tapa karta,
25. guru no vacan no phailāve paṇa thājo.
26. Gāmṛe gāmṛe dāru no band karāvjo.

27. From that time obedience to the word of the teacher was taught.
28. "Say 'Victory to Sita and Ram'" - one great sacred salutation was transmitted.
29. In the state there were other sacred ascetics,
30. who advocated 'Victory to Sita and Ram'
31. but used alcohol and meat.
32. Devotion (bhakti) was proselytized.
33. In the state it became known that there were some ascetics,
34. who were performing religious austerities.
35. In Sadra village, in Idar State, at that time they came to know of it.
36. In Idar Kesarsimh was the ruler.
37. His father died,
38. so in the light half of the month of Kartik

27. Pasī ethī guru no vacan nu pālan sikhādī ne.
28. "Jay Sītā-Rām bolo" ek mahā mantra āljo.
29. Rāj bīj sādhu sant mae
30. "Jay Sītārām" thī,
31. dārū mams pan cāle che.
32. Bhakti phelāvā thī
33. rāj mae jān parī kī koī tapaseṭī he,
34. ine tapās karte,
35. Sādrā na Idar Steṭ te vakte, Idar mae, japtī hoy.
36. Kesarsimh darbār Idar mae.
37. Bāp marī gay,
38. ata Kārtik sud mae

39. there was a great gathering.
40. The police came to the gathering to arrest the ascetics.
41. The ascetics arrived,
42. then went to Daha village, then to Lusadiya.
43. The Rajput chief was the measure of people.
44. They went there,
45. performed religious austerities, true devotion, that is what they did.
46. They were made to drink 250 grams of lead.
47. In this way they drank boiling lead from the pot.
48. After they drank they vomited the lead back again,
49. one ratti of lead, and took it out of their teeth.
50. They gave Rs. 1.25
51. then got down below the crown and feet.

39. pana melo parāto.
40. Ato emā melā ne tapās rakhvā māte melā mā polis melā māe āvīlā.
41. Tapās karva āyā,
42. phir Lusadiyā āyā, Dahegāmra.
43. Thākor ek logo ne parmāno he.
44. Te ya avīne.
45. Tapās karta sāñcī bhakti, em karī ne.
46. Savāse sīsu pāju.
47. Kevī rīte kadāī māe ukālī ne sīsu paī qiyā.
48. Paī ne pāsī kādīāpyu
49. ek ratī pan ācu paryu pasī e bāt dāt māe hūm.
50. Savā rupiyā āliyā ne,
51. tapī utārī ne, poqe paryā.

52. Then Uncle made a tilak of ash
53. and wore a garland of tulsi around his neck. ..
54. Today they are not forced into slavery.
55. From that day slavery was stopped.
56. "I will end it for Adivasis.
57. Who will know it, wears a yellow turban.
58. Wearing it, they are not forced into slavery."
59. They went back to Samlaji.
60. Then they talked to Kesarsimh the King.
61. One saint drank 250 grams of lead for a penance.
62. The lead (is proof) of true devotion.
63. Kesarsimh the king said "I want to see the teacher of
the Adivasis."
64. Then they called the teacher.

52. Pasī kaṅku nu tilak karāvī babhun nu,
53. tulsī nu kaṅthī pherāvjī, ne galā māe. ...
54. Āj hā veṭ ne karāvo.
55. Te divas thī vet band karjā:
56. Adivāsī ne māṭe band karī,
57. su khabar parse bhaktane en māte pīliyā bandhvā
58. va june vaṭ ne karāvu."
59. Valtī pāsā Sāmlājī gayā.
60. Sāñje Kesarsimh Darbār ne sāthe bāt thāī.
61. Ek Sādhu ne savāser sīsā pāī ne tapās kidu,
62. ne sāsū bhakti che.
63. Adivāsī ne māṭe tayāre Kesarsimh Darbāre ye sādhu māre
paṇ juve.
64. Tayāre bulāvī

65. He drank 250 grams of clarified butter at Khank (near Samlaji).
66. Then he wrote on leaves of tambu
67. "Reform your caste,
68. ban intoxicating liquor and meat."
69. In this way devotion has occurred for 300 years,
70. with the word 'SitaRam'.
71. He wandered to every village,
72. and caused Adivasi people to understand,
73. in Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Mewar,
74. and there was profuse devotion to Sita Ram among the Adivasis.
75. He wandered through the Dungarpur State.
76. The queen was an ascetic of the Kabir panth (in eastern Dungarpur).

65. ne khāk sok me savāser ghī paīne
66. pāsu qādī āpyu, tathī tāmā pataraka lakhī ālu.
67. Tamārī jāt ne sudhāro.
68. Dārū mās band karo.
69. Avīrite utā bhakti tan hau varsh purā kājā,
70. pasī Sītārām no sabdo hāthī.
71. Gāmre qāmre pharjā,
72. samajhvatā. Adivāsī ne jātiyo
73. Rājasthān end Gujarāt Mevār evam
74. Sītārām no sabd Adivāsī mae khūb bhakt banī qiyā.
75. Dungarpur bāzu phartam.
76. Darbār tapas rānī kabīr panthī kesā sādhu che.

77. In a pitcher there was a burning coal
78. and there was a melon in molten lead.
79. The saint held them for a long time, then pulled them out.
80. Then he swallowed molten lead, without harm.
81. Then the queen told the Adivasis "Reform your caste."
82. We are reforming our caste.
83. Wear a thread of seven strands.
84. A Vishnu tilak, a Siv Tilak, from Surmaldas.
85. The aforesaid description has been delivered.
86. Devoted people repress alcohol and meat.
87. Today we all live according to a religious law.
88. Abandon meat and intoxicating drink.
89. Devils eat meat and alcohol.'

77. Pātulā māe kolu
78. sīsā māe sibaru
79. te sādhu ākal mokyū ne bāhar nikālo.
80. Moṭla paṇ potvu ne juḡe golu pāsu gāḍī āljī, ne pāsu
kālī ālju.
81. Pasī Rāṇī āsirvād dīdo ke tamāre jāti ne sudhāre,
82. tayāre amāre jāti no sudhāriye che.
83. Hāt tāṛnu bānu koḡ māe pajoveje
84. Vishnu. tilak, Siv tilak Surmaldas thī, prāpt kiyā,
85. vivarāṇ prāpt kiyā.
86. Bhakt loḡ dabo dārū mās rākhe de.
87. Āj haṃ sab dharmse thāī.
88. Mās madirā paṇ kāḍo.
89. Dārū mās khāe rākshas paṇ he.'

The oral accounts of the history of Bhil bhagat, related in a mixture of Wagadi and Gujarati, with English loan words (State, police, and), reflect an interest in money, but focus on the attainment of spiritual power, which can be used to impress secular powers. Differences of behaviour (banning meat and alcohol) distinguish false from true believers. In the myth, Surmal Das, who lived at the turn of the century, is introduced as a Bhil who used to eat meat and rob people. He was therefore first a person with whom other Bhils could identify, and who subsequently gained enlightenment. The greeting 'Jay Sita-Ram' is used by all Bhils. The yellow turban is the most visible mark of the bhagat. The myth therefore purports to tell the historical origin of a phenomenon, but explains aspects of contemporary everyday behaviour.

The myths related by the descendants of the early bhakti leaders confront themes which summarize part of the Bhil drama played out in the twentieth century. They concern right moral behaviour, which is formulated in interaction with non-Bhils and made manifest by consumption of pure substances, and sanctification of one's own life by association with divine heroes. They concern a separation of believers from non-believers among the Bhils. The mythic dimension of the path followed by the true believers also implicates them, at an early stage, in confrontation with secular powers. The drinking of molten lead leaves the true believers unharmed. The implicit contrast is with those Bhils without grace, who drink 'burning' mahudi, to their damnation. The demonstration is verified before secular leaders, who require visible signs of grace, which should be made manifest on the body. The secular leaders

also command consumption of pure food and drink. Both themes have been maintained during the twentieth century. The path of bhakti promulgates differentiation in behaviour, and in dress, for the select few. It is apparently available to all Bhils.

The Records of the Foreign Department were concerned with the impingement of otherworldly matters if a threat to State Security. The Records are most extensive concerning Govindgiri, a member of the nomadic Banjara caste. Govindgiri wrote to the British, and complained that Bhils were subject to the extraction of customary labour (vet); that the Bhils experienced delay in obtaining rights to timber for house construction; and that there was interference with long established rights to cut bamboo, gather firewood or receive adequate payment for grass (See FN 1). In his petition he stressed that he had taught Bhils 'religion and truth', which involved right moral behaviour, the practise of agriculture, equality (regarding all as children of the same parents, the Creator), and non-violence (See FN 2). As Govindgiri was not of the Bhil caste, he was more patronizing towards them than Surmal Das. He wrote to the British:

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1. Mewar Residency Office file no. 3, 1914. L. Robertson, Secretary to the Government of Bombay, Political Department 13 May 1915, p. 51.
 2. Ibid., 12 November 1913, pp. 53-57 (Exhibition 3/6).

'Formerly I had built a hut in the village of Vedasa (in Dungarpur) and lived there with my family. At that time I lived among the poor, submissive and wild people, e.g., Bhils, Kolis, etc., who had no idea of the Creator; and I maintained myself by begging handfuls of flour (from these people). To those who came to my hut I used to advise to behave like saukars (the higher classes). These people, nugaras (wild), expressed a desire to be made sugaras (civilized), and to have me as their guru. I thereupon undertook to preach to these people of Vedasa and surrounding country and made them my chelas (disciples). I showed them the path of religion and truth; and preached them to worship God; not to commit theft, adultery, deception etc., not to cherish feelings of enmity with others but to regard all as the progeny of the same parents (the Creator) and live peacefully with others, to follow agriculture and to maintain themselves thereby, not to believe in vins, vantaras, bhopas, etc. (ghosts, witches, sorcerers), but as a safeguard against them to establish firepits and flags and to worship these. I asked that those who were my disciples should wrap round their heads yellow-coloured turbans, should wear rosaries of Rudraksh round their necks; should not carry dangerous weapons such as swords, rifles, bows and arrows, but only iron tongs; should bathe and wash themselves every morning, should not kill animals of any kind ... the number of disciples went on increasing; so much so that at present there are about four or five lakhs of people among

whom this bhakti creed has spread ... in the meantime the officials of these Rajas [Sunth, Banswara, Dungarpur] misinformed their Rajas ... the Raja of Dungarpur arrested and imprisoned me all of a sudden ... my wife and children were also placed under police custody. My Lord [God] helped me in getting released from imprisonment after three days. I ran away at once to the village of Rojada in the Idar State, where I lived among Banjaras of my caste.'

(See FN 1).

Any radical break with the past had implications for Bhil status. The bhakti movement's political implications were perceived as a threat by the British. Govindgiri was imprisoned in 1913 by the British.

In 1914 the Bhil Corps attacked a gathering of Bhils who were Govindgiri's followers at Mangarn, in Dungarpur. The British noted: 'For ... the maintenance of internal order in a most difficult country, the suppression of riots and disturbances and escort work generally the Bhils can hardly be bettered ... they are entirely reliable even when used against their own people.' (See FN 2). Thirty years later it was once again non-Bhils who lived with Bhils and provided leadership for them in struggles leading to India's Independence.

Historically, government officers saw a connection between bhakti and settled agriculture: 'A good many of them are

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1. Mewar Residency Office, File no. 3 of 1914, pp. 53-57, Exhibition 3/6.
 2. RFD File no. 4, 1919, Assistant Political Resident Mewar, 2 July 1919, 'A detailed History of the Mewar Bhil Corps' by M. Holme, p. 74.

becoming "Bhaktas" who abstain from meat and liquor and have now settled down as peaceful cultivators.' (See FN 1) Although the bhakti movement was often formulated by Bhils in their own terms, its assumptions of hierarchically ranked status demonstrated by pure practices did not provide a basis for uniting all Bhils in opposition to other castes. Rather it provided some correspondence of beliefs and practices between Bhils and castes traditionally considered high. Although bhakti preached a transcendant unity with God its practice divided Bhil from Bhil.

There are other historical references to bhakti (devotional) movements spreading rapidly through southern Rajasthan during the twentieth century. The 'Das Nami', (Servants of Krsna), also called 'Kansaliya (the name of a garment covering a woman's breast) Panth' (Followers) swept through Bhil villages in southern Rajasthan in about 1920. There was initiation through a cult rite, acceptance of a guru, worship of the Mata, and rejection of meat and alcohol. (See FN 2)

During the period that the census recorded Bhils in 'Tribal' or 'Hindu' categories, the latter category generally increased. After 1921 in particular, Bhils have increasingly identified, or been identified, as Hindu, not Tribal. It is likely that adherence to bhakti (devotion) as it was defined by Bhils in southern Rajasthan, by worship of Sita and Ram, and avoiding meat and alcohol, may have been important in classifying some Bhils as

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1. RFD Report of the Revision of Settlement of the Dungarpur State, (by K. N. Doshi, Divan), 1928, p. 7.
 2. D. W. McCurdy 'A Bhil Village of Rajasthan', pp. 238-266.

Hindus. Table 4.1.1 may therefore indicate the growing institution of bhakti among the Bhils.

TABLE 4.1.1:

'Hindu' and 'Tribal' Bhils between 1901 and 1931 (See FN 1).

	1901	1911	1921	1931
Bombay:				
Hindu	466,000	468,000	787,000	777,000
Central India:				
Hindu	113,000	-	49,000	145,000
Tribal	89,000	-	289,000	218,000
Rajputana				
Hindu	9,000	63,000	104,000	458,000
Tribal	331,000	386,000	466,000	198,000

The growth is not necessarily undirectional. Jain and Hindu accounts referred to in Chapter 3.3 mention conversion of Bhils to Hinduism or Jainism. The existence of 'pure' (vegetarian) and 'impure' Bhils at the beginning of the nineteenth century in eastern Rajasthan suggests that the coexistence of the two categories among Bhils may be ancient.

The accounts of bhakti's growth at the turn of the century emphasizes the social implications of conversion to bhakti. Conversion was linked with abandoning meat and alcohol and turning to settled agriculture. The practices were the outward and visible signs of changes in inner beliefs. All practices could be adopted by any person, but they are also seen as a

1. Census of India 1931, vol. 1, Part 2, Table 18, Delhi, 1933, p. 346. Figures in Table 4.1.1 are to nearest 1,000.

means of reforming the Bhil 'caste' (jati). The actions of an individual have implications for the actions of the group. In myth and history religious conversion confronted the secular state. The suspicion that Bhil followers of bhakti might provoke political opposition prompted the British to attack a large group of Bhils in 1914. In the early nineteenth century the British had been content to gain indirect political control over the Bhils, partly by employing them in armed forces. By the early twentieth century pacification had encouraged substantial settled agriculture. In the myths the followers of bhakti accommodated the secular state. It was in this context that bhakti ideas appealed to Bhils, and were adopted by many of them.

Bhakti had both Bhil and non-Bhil leaders. It had immediate consequences for everyday behaviour, and therefore social consequences. It was professedly apolitical, but its political implications were noted by the British, and acted against. It offered open membership, but its creed of sobriety and vegetarianism broke with the past. These practices corresponded to practices of higher castes. Bhakti was not simply a religious expression of middle-ranking peasants. Conversion sometimes anticipated changes in the economic behaviour of Bhils, rather than followed as a consequence of raised economic status. Bhakti did make important statements about the relations of some Bhils to other Indians. It provided the first widely available opportunity of incorporation into greater India.

CHAPTER FIVE: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

5.1 The modern economy of Scheduled Tribes in Dungarpur

Bhil interest in bhakti and the power of sarkar have developed together with transformations of their economy. The economic changes have benefited some Bhils and affected all Bhils. In this chapter the economic circumstances of Bhils are considered firstly on a district basis, then on a village basis.

According to tradition recorded by rulers of Dungarpur, lands were measured and tax rates for the inhabitants of Dungarpur were set at one-third to one-fourth of produce in the time of Maharaval Punja (1612-1657 A.D.) (See FN 1). Malcolm reported that in 1824 Bhils in Dungarpur practised cultivation and were taxed one-fourth of their crops of maize, millet and pulse. No revenue was collected from the 'wilder' Bhils, who were quite separate from the 'cultivating classes'. (See FN 2) Hunter, who established the Mewara Bhil Corps at Kherwara, observed in 1841 that the Rajput chiefs claimed a fourth of the agricultural produce of the Bhil pal, but this was only paid by communities in the immediate vicinity of the chiefs' residences. (See FN 3).

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1. Rajputana Gazetteer, vol. 1, Gazetteer of Dungarpur, 1879, p. 280.
 2. J. Malcolm A Memoir of Central India, vol. 2, pp. 68-69.
 3. RFD, Political Branch, 17 April 1847, pp. 85-88. By 1880 great irregularity existed even among caste villages. Government officers negotiated revenue with the Patel cultivators of each village, and the village headman was responsible for collecting revenues.

The 1867 Report on the Political Administration of Dungarpur confirmed Malcolm's earlier references by noting that the Bhils' main food was 'Indian corn' (=maize), and that they distilled a flower from the fruit of the mahuda tree (bassia latifolia). Both observations are still true over 110 years later. The 1879 Meywar Gazetteer identified Bhils as 'living in dispersed collections of detached huts (pal) inhabited solely by Bhils except for a few devotees (yogi) and drum beaters (waiti).' They were divided into exogamous pal whose arrows carried distinguishing marks (See FN 1). Wealthy men wore jewellery and owned guns and swords.

It appears that there were two methods of cultivation during the nineteenth century: shifting cultivation by Bhils and intensive cultivation by other castes, and perhaps by some Bhils. The cultivated area was principally confined to the valleys and low ground between hills, and mostly inhabited by Rajputs and Patels. Boundaries between the two areas may have wavered, and depended ultimately on the power of central government. There were indications that the State had seen better times before the nineteenth century, as 700 of 2,500 wells and 134 of 340 tanks or reservoirs were in disuse. Revenue during the eighteenth

1. Report of the Dungarpur State, no. 176, (1879-1880), p. 63.

century was allegedly twice the revenue which prevailed during the nineteenth century. It is therefore likely that more land was intensively cultivated in the eighteenth century than at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Malcolm cites records which indicated that before 1790 the total revenue of Dungarpur had been over Rs.500,000. By 1819 it was Rs.244,000, and it declined steadily after that. (See FN 1).

There was both crown (khalsa) land on which rent was levied by the Dungarpur ruler, and jagir land held by Rajput chiefs. There are contradictory accounts of the respective rights of the chiefs (thakur) and peasants (ryots); in the final instance their respective success depended on a struggle between the Rajput chiefs' need for labour and the peasants' need for protection, and incapacity to defend themselves from exploitation. The first Gazetteer of Dungarpur, published in 1879, stated that land was owned by the ryots but was 'not altogether inalienable': a ruler could deprive the cultivator of his land, although this was a severe punishment. No ryot

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1. The total State revenue declared to the British for most of the nineteenth century was considerably less than Rs.200,000, but on special occasions, such as the marriage of Udaysimh II's daughter in 1873 and his son in 1874, it was possible to collect Rs.400,000 in that financial year. Tribute to the British government ranged from Rs.17,500 to Rs.35,000 (between 10 and 25 per cent of total State revenue), until 1904, when it was fixed at Rs.17,500. [Rajputana Gazetteer, vol. 2A, 1908, pp. 140-2.]

had the power to sell his land, although he could mortgage it (See FN 1). In their unpublished official records, however, the British referred to the Rajput chiefs as owners of the land. They report, for instance, that in June 1877 most of the inhabitants of the Bhil Pal of Bulwarra, who numbered 600 families, left their homes for Gujarat because of the 'oppressive conduct of the owner of the village', and that Maharaval Udaysimh II resumed the village and compensated the 'owner' (See FN 2).

In 1879 the British reported that land was the property of the ryot. In 1900 the British considered that land in the State of Dungarpur belonged to the State. In practice there was a compromise between the need of Rajput rulers for people to work the land and the need of those people for protection, which they paid for. Legal considerations therefore ultimately depended on political considerations. Since Independence Bhils are considered owners of their individual areas of cultivated land, and land revenue collected from the Bhils by government is nominal.

Settled agriculturalists

The Bhils' economy changed during the course of the nineteenth century. At the beginning of the nineteenth century Rajput chiefs were either unable to control the Bhils or collaborated with them in plunder and annexation of lands. In 1830 the

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1. Rajputana Gazetteer, vol. 1, Calcutta, 1879, p. 281.
 2. Reports of the Dungarpur State, no. 122 (1873/4) p. 68; no. 151 (1877/8), p. 280, p.65. In 1877 a large body of 'industrious Patel cultivators' on crown (khalsa) land migrated to Salumbar. Their freedom to move may have been assisted by the depopulation which followed the cholera epidemic of 1876. [Report of the Dungarpur State, no. 139 (1876/7), p. 57.]

British had unsuccessfully attempted to terminate the Bhil practice of levying taxes. (See FN 1) Protection money (cauth literally 'one-quarter') was levied by Bhils on nearby villages and was once the sole support of many Bhil families. By 1848 protection money had not been enjoyed for many years. (See FN 2) The 1879 Gazetteer describes the shift of Bhils from slash and burn agriculture to intensive agriculture. '... the predatory characteristics of the Bhils were gradually giving way to settled habits.' (See FN 3) 'The Bhils actually within the limits of Dungarpur are neither so numerous nor troublesome as those on the frontier, and are kept in subjection and order without difficulty.' (See FN 4) The cultivated areas were principally inhabited by Rajputs and Patels. The higher and more inaccessible hills were the haunts of the Bhils. Here in patches of valra (slash and burn cultivation) Bhils 'scratched near or below their huts perched on hilltops, threw seed broadcast, and used no wells.. imprudent and indolent (they) prefer to the labour of ploughing and irrigating, the easier method of burning down the jungle on the hillside and scattering seed in the ashes'. (See FN 5).

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1. RFD, Political Branch, 9 September, 1831, No. 32.
 2. RFD, Political Branch, 1 July, 1848, p. 71.
 3. Rajputana Gazetteer, vol. 1, Calcutta, 1879, p.276.
 4. Administrative Report of Dungarpur, no. 176 (1879/80) p. 163.
 5. Rajputana Gazetteer, 1879, p.277 . The Mewar Resident thought that Bhil practise of shifting cultivation may have been caused by the poverty of the soil rather than mere indolence [Administrative Reports of Dungarpur, no. 176 (1879/80) p. 163, no. 183 (1881/82) p. 89.]

Above the valleys, which were cultivated by other castes such as the Patels, and ruled by the Rajputs, the country was mostly covered by forested stony hills. Pasture land was scarce, and during the hot season, the numerous cattle kept by the Bhils were reduced to a miserable state for want of grass. (See FN 1) The two methods of cultivation continued during the nineteenth century. The Hindu castes and some Bhils practised intensive cultivation in the valleys, other Bhils practised shifting cultivation in the forested hilly regions.

The progress of the Bhils from shifting to settled agriculturalists was not always steady. In 1881 the Bhils were estimated, without enumeration, to number 67,000. In 1901 the first enumeration of the whole population counted 34,000 Bhils, one third of the total Dungarpur population. The British attributed the large reduction to the famine of 1899 - 1900, the epidemic which followed it, and the improved method of enumeration. (See FN 2) During the famine of 1899-1900 large numbers of villages lost nearly half their population, either through death or migration. (See FN 3) The famine and epidemics may have encouraged greater Bhil reliance on the jungle, as in 1908 hunting provided an important food source for the Bhils. The 'extensive and thick forests' noted by Malcolm and Heber at the beginning of the nineteenth century were still there, but

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1. Rajputana Gazetteer, vol. 1, 1879, p.273.
 2. Rajputana Gazetteer, vol. 2A, 1908, p.136.
 3. RFD, Internal Branch A, August 1900, no. 209-19, p.52. Report on the Land Revenue Settlement of the Dungarpur State, Rajputana, in 1904/05.

less dense. Panthers, hyaenas and sambar were plentiful until the famine, and recovered their numbers shortly afterwards. By then tigers were scarce and nilgai, eaten by Bhils, were rare. (See FN 1)

The first Land Revenue Settlements, undertaken in Dungarpur in 1902-4 and 1905-6, provide further information on the Bhils' agricultural system. The British attempted to prohibit shifting cultivation (valra) shortly afterwards, but an anonymous history of Dungarpur, published in English in 1909, observed that the 'still rude Bhil again every year sets fire to many a magra (hill) and their ashes are carried by rain and wind over hundreds of acres of ground.' (See FN 2) The Bhil migration to Bombay and Ahmedabad during the famine (See FN 3) anticipated a trend, discussed by Meillassoux, (See FN 4) and more apparent in the Dungarpur district in 1980.

The report of the first Land Revenue Settlement, of 1902-4, states that most of the Bhils' land was sukhi, yielding one kharif harvest in autumn, and rankar, land only just worth

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1. Rajputana Gazetteer, vol. 2A, 1908, p.129.
 2. Anonymous A Short History of the Dungarpur State or Western Bagar, Pandit Thaku Prasad Misra and Kishori Lal Gupta, Calcutta, 1909, p.6.
 3. Rajputana Gazetteer, vol. 2A, 1908, p. 79.
 4. C. Meillassoux Femmes, greniers et capitaux, Francois Maspero, Paris, 1979. cf., B.R. Chauhan 'Towards Understanding Rural Urban Interactions, An International Exercise', Emerging Sociology, vol. 2, 1980, pp. 1-7.

tilling, and hence left to the Bhils, who sowed a meagre crop of maize. The Bhils subsisted on a mixed economy of hunting and gathering and shifting-cultivation. The Report states:

'Bhils are wonderfully good at eking out a living by jungle produce and if one of a family gets his 10 chitaks of grain another possibly earns something by cutting grass and wood, while the children collect bark, fruit, seeds and the hearts of date palms and other things sufficient to supply a meal to all'. (See FN 1)

The Assistant Resident writing during the famine in January 1900, suggested that the Bhils could partly subsist on the mahuda fruit which ripened in March. The cultivation in nearly all Bhil villages consisted of a few fields immediately surrounding the isolated hut in which a Bhil family took up its abode. The Bhil would plough enough land to provide his family with food from the kharif harvest alone:

'As often as not, he is too lazy to sow his fields with rabi food grains. His past experience warns him that if he should be seen to cultivate industriously and extensively, and to hoard up a large stock of grain, he will inevitably be looted, either by his fellow Bhils or, more unpleasantly still, by State underlings.' (See FN 2).

Bhil villages or pal covered large areas,

'dotted over at wide intervals by a few acres held by indifferent cultivators of indolent habits who are

1 Report on the Land Revenue Settlement of the Dungarpur State, Rajputana in 1904/5, Dungarpur, 1941, p.7.

2. Ibid., p.7.

quite prepared to carry themselves and their belongings elsewhere if more should be demanded from them, than a few days work during the year will produce.' (See FN 1)

The Land Revenue Settlements undertaken in 1902-4 and 1905-6 only surveyed 128 non-Bhil khalsa villages. Brief censuses were made of the Bhil villages, but cultivation was not stable or extensive enough for a survey and settlement to be worth undertaking. (See FN 2).

The head of a Christian mission to the Bhils in Lusadia, which is also a bhakti centre of west Dungarpur Bhils, located just over the Dungarpur border in Gujarat, described in 1914 economic changes in the lives of Bhils, and some of their political consequences.

'The Bhil country is now passing through a period of economic change ... The change is greatest however for the Bhils. In the olden days, they lived in grass or wattle huts in the jungle, and just sowed a little maize in the rains. The rest of the year they lived by loot ... Now they are everywhere settling down as farmers and working really hard on their farms. They live in houses with solid clay walls and have grain bins and other property ... This more settled state of theirs puts them very much more in the power of Thakors.' (See FN 3) The

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1. Ibid., p.23.
 2. Report on the Revision of the Settlement in the Dungarpur State, in year 1915/6, by Rai Bahadur Munshi Ganesh Ram, Ajmer, 1923, p.16.
 3. Rev. A. Birkett, 15 December 1915, quoted by Lieut Col. F. Carter, Mewar Residency File no. 3 of 1914, pp.12-13.

Christian missionary also suggested that the conversion of Bhils to vegetarian devotees of Surmal Dass, the Bhil Bhakti leader described in Chapter Three, was connected with these economic and political changes. The British policy in the early twentieth century encouraged the Bhils in intensive agriculture and it was believed that this encouragement was effective in achieving economic change.

'...In Banswara and Dungarpur the happy results are plainly manifest. More land is being brought under the plough. The Bhils are settling down, they have attained a higher efficiency in agriculture, they are for the most part free from the clutches of the Sahukars, [money lenders] they possess their own cattle and agricultural stock, they have become an important asset from the point of view of the Durbar.'

Their contributions included land taxes and begar (unpaid labour performed by the Bhils for the Durbar). (See FN 1) The concern for the moral improvement of the Bhils happily coincided with increased taxation revenue for the British.

The economic transformation apparent at the beginning of this century was fully developed sixty years later. Its course can be depicted by examining the contemporary economic role of Scheduled Tribes in the Dungarpur District as a whole, and the history of land tenure in Pal Galandar this century.

1. Ibid., p. 13.

The contemporary economic position of Scheduled Tribes in
Dungarpur

The Government of India's policy is to collect statistics on the economic status of Scheduled Tribes. Information on Bhils is not always separately aggregated, so it is easier to identify the economic position of Scheduled Tribes than of Bhils, who comprise the largest Scheduled Tribe in Dungarpur. Many Bhils identify as Scheduled Tribes, or Adivasi (Aboriginals) when dealing with government. The available information suggests that on a District basis, the differences in the economic position of all Scheduled Tribes and of the Bhil group is not significant.

A 1980 Government of Rajasthan report documents significant economic changes since Independence, but notes that the Dungarpur population of 589,000 was basically rural. (See FN 1) About 80 per cent of all villages had populations between 200 and 2000. In the District as a whole, 393,000 people, 67 per cent of the total population, were members of Scheduled Tribes. They were dispersed in 834 villages and 1532 wards (phalas).

Outside the three towns, 82 per cent of the population cannot speak Hindi, the language of government, and most people choose not to do so unless they are putting on airs or speaking with government officials. The language of most villagers is Wagadi (literally meaning 'forest language'). In towns locals speak 'town Wagadi', whose difference from village Wagadi is a

1. Rashtriya Sarkar Bainc mark sarveksan janjati upayojna kshetra Dungarpur, Government of India Publications, Janjati kshetriya Vikas Vibhag, Rajasthan, Udaipur, 1980, Appendix, pp.2-7.

matter of dispute. Most townsfolk cannot understand Bhil songs unless they have spent a long period in rural areas.

Over half of all Tribal families are identified as Bhils. Less than one fifth are Mina, and live in eastern Dungarpur. The rest are Damor and unspecified 'Tribes'. The four villages which are the objects of special study in this thesis are in Bichivara subdistrict, in western Dungarpur. Scheduled Tribes are at their strongest in this subdistrict, and form over 81 per cent of the total population. Here 68,000 people, or 69 per cent of the population of Scheduled Tribes, are identified as Bhil.

The same report states that in 1977 10,333 people, almost two per cent of the District's population, had left their village, in most cases to obtain 'service'. This category includes government service. In the case of Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes, the second most important reason was to labour, while for other castes, it was business. Other castes and Scheduled Castes migrate out at twice the rate of Scheduled Tribes:

TABLE 5.1.1:

Migration out of Dungarpur, by caste grouping. (See FN 1)

CATEGORY	EMIGRANTS (%)		REASON FOR EMIGRATION(%)				
			Service	Labour	Educ- ation	Bus- iness	Other
Scheduled Tribe	5,094	(1.3)	(71	24	2	3	1)
Scheduled Caste	460	(2.3)	(54	32	-	1	12)
Other	4,779	(2.7)	(66	11	3	12	8)

1. Bainc mark p.21.

The average size of all families is 5.95 (The average size of Bhil families is 6.2). The migration figures indicate that over ten per cent of families may have an income-earner working outside the District. In fact wage labouring is now of major economic importance, providing a vital supplement to inadequate incomes or returns from small land holdings. Among the Scheduled Tribes, migration rates vary greatly to favour the tribal group Minas, who live predominantly in eastern Dungarpur. They have adopted a name which allows them to interact more easily with caste Indians, and they are more likely to migrate than Bhil. (See FN 1) Surveys of Bhils villages indicate that migration rates vary widely between villages. (See FN 2) As a result of the size of holdings, which are now under pressure to decrease because of increased population, the phenomenon of labouring on relief work inside the village, in the towns in the District, or outside the District, is increasing.

About one quarter of all Scheduled Tribal families have one member of their family engaged in labouring work. This rate is slightly higher than the rate for Scheduled Castes, and much higher than the rate among other castes, where less than five

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1. Most Minas live in Aspur, where only four per cent of the population are identified as Bhil. Early census reports relate how Bhils sometimes attempted identification as (vegetarian) Minas. [A.T. Webb These Ten Years: A Short Account of the 1941 Census Operations in Rajputana and Ajmer Merwara, Census Department of India, Bombay 1941, p.190.]
 2. Own data, cf., Bainc mark p.215.

per cent of families have a member engaged in labouring. (See FN 1)

Economic necessity had therefore forced a reassessment of older prejudices against performing manual labour. Fuchs reported in 1972 that 'The tribals of Central India are unfortunately obsessed by the fear of losing the social status of a respectable caste in Hindu society were they to get engaged in any manual labour other than farming or forest work ... all these tribes want to keep up the pretence that they are Kshatriyas, and more exactly, Rajputs'. (See FN 2) Bhils, unlike some other Scheduled Tribes in Dungarpur, did not claim to be Rajputs, but they did say that their ancestors two hundred years ago came from Cittorgarh, the old capital of the Rajput rulers of southern Rajasthan.

Manual labour among contemporary Bhils in Dungarpur has low status. Of all matters this was the most difficult to obtain accurate information about. The general tendency was for more Bhils to be forced into manual labour, but they would not admit this. Accurate information could only be gained by asking third parties.

1. Bainc mark p. 204.

2. S. Fuchs 'Land Scarcity and Land Hunger among some Aboriginal Tribes of Western Central India' in K. Suresh Singh, ed., Tribal Situation in India, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, 1972, pp. 367-373.

Manual labour is hot, tiring, unpleasant and poorly paid. An even more important reason for the low status of paid manual labour is that it is directed by others. Government employment is perceived as an excellent means of avoiding manual labour for oneself and one's family. It is obtained by few Bhils. Most subsist on agriculture, supplemented by labouring work in the village, or outside it.

Few members of Scheduled Tribes are artisans - only 2.9 per cent of families, and the largest group were carpenters. In contrast, 32 per cent of Scheduled Caste families are artisans, 59 per cent of these were shoemakers. The small Scheduled Caste population includes those performing impure but essential services for the other castes.

The pattern of residence in small villages reflects the importance of agriculture. Most holdings are small - 48 per cent of families own less than one hectare, (2.47 acres, 8.25 bighas) 99 per cent of families less than five hectares. Only 27 families (0.03 per cent) own more than 20 hectares. The holdings of Scheduled Tribes are smaller than other castes, and they tend to occupy the least fertile soil, and are least likely to own irrigated land. The difficult hilly nature of their terrain has historically required small units of production. Significantly, only seven per cent of Scheduled Tribal families, here taken as all generations of a given household, are landless. There are only three Tribal families who own more than twenty hectares. Scheduled Tribes are therefore almost, but not completely, excluded from large land ownership, but 93 per cent of families own some land. Both these facts are of major social and political importance.

TABLE 5.1.2:

Land ownership of Scheduled Tribes in Dungarpur (See FN 1).

	No. families (%)	Total land owned (hectares)	Land per family (hectares)
Less than 1 hectare	29,062 (49)	18,201	0.62
1 - 5 hectares	30,051 (50)	56,881	1.89
5 - 10 hectares	597 (19)	3,846	6.44
10-20 hectares	73 (0.12)	867	11.88
20 hectares or more	3 (0.01)	70	23.20
Total	59,786	79,865	1.34
Landless	4,554 (7.08)		
TOTAL	64,340 (100)		

The rate of land ownership of other castes in Dungarpur, apart from Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes, is also high - 86 per cent of them own land. Among the other castes, 42 per cent own less than one hectare, and 56 per cent own less than five hectares. A major difference between Scheduled Tribes and other castes occurs with larger land-holders - Among other castes 1.7 per cent of the population own 5 to 10 hectares (cf. 1.00 per cent among Scheduled Tribes); 0.32 per cent own 10 to 20

1 Bainc mark p.23.

hectares (0.12 per cent among Scheduled Tribes), and 0.09 per cent own more than 20 hectare (0.01 among Scheduled Tribes). Wealthy families from other castes are considerably wealthier, and proportionately more numerous, than wealthy Scheduled Tribal families.

In the Bichivara subdistrict of western Dungarpur, 81.3 per cent of the population are Scheduled Tribes. Most landholdings (59 per cent) are larger than one hectare, but here the land is poorest. It covers the settlements of Galandar, Jagbor, Balvaniya and Ratapani, discussed in this study.

After Independence, Government imposed restrictions on the transfer of land by Tribals to non Tribals. Transfer is possible in some cases, and has been increasing since 1967. Between 1947 and 1966, 228 (0.34 per cent) of Scheduled Tribal families transferred land, 128 of them (0.84 per cent) in the Bichivara subdistrict. Between 1967 and 1977 the rate effectively increased by four times, as 453 families (1.78 per cent) transferred land; 272 in the Bichivara subdistrict (1.76 per cent) transferred land. (See FN 1) Scheduled Tribes are also more likely to divide their land than other castes - 4.3 per cent of Scheduled Tribal families did so in 1977. The rate was highest (six per cent) in the Bichivara subdistrict. Here lies the poorest land, often scattered over hilly areas where communication between the holdings is . most difficult.

1. Bainc mark pp. 32-33.

In rural Dungarpur 17 per cent of the land is classified as jungle, much of this is now reforested or depredated. However 56 per cent of villages are less than 5 kilometres from the depredated forests which provide some forest products, at the least, illicitly gained firewood, and a retreat for sexual adventures and recreation. Forest products include gurd (gum, used for food), timaram na panam, used for bidi cigarettes and food, and amla for medicine.

Of the remaining land in Dungarpur, one quarter is uncultivable, less than one fifth is not cultivated and the remaining 40 per cent is cultivated, including fallow land. (See FN 1) The main agricultural production of the District as a whole in both sowing seasons is rice and maize. There are also wheat, barley, grain, small grains, pulses, some cotton and sugar cane. Most Bhils prefer subsistence rather than cash crops. The net area sown comprises almost 170,000 hectares, sixty-seven per cent of this area is sown in the kharif (autumn) season and harvested in October and the remainder is sown in the rabi (spring) season and harvested in March, about the time of Holi, the major annual festival.

Forty per cent of Tribal land holdings are listed as in close proximity to a well but in practical terms only those lands possessing a well and irrigation pump or Persian wheel are irrigated. Nearly all wells are privately owned. There were seven irrigation pumps and seventy wells including four government wells in Pal Galandar, a settlement of 409

1. Bainc mark pp. 37,194.

households. There is a small percentage of land holdings (12 percent of non-Scheduled Castes, 6 per cent of Scheduled Tribes) near canals. (See FN 1) The system of scattered land holdings and consequently dispersed population was originally stimulated by the need to exploit poor land in hilly inaccessible terrain, and makes the provision of schools difficult i.e. more expensive than average. The result is that two-thirds of the 1532 phala (or village wards) inhabited by Scheduled Tribes have no school. Children have to attend the one provided in an adjacent phala, which is often four to five kilometres away. (See FN 2) Similarly one quarter of the phala are five to fifteen kilometres away from a health centre. Such centres tend to be under-utilized because they are staffed by inadequately trained health workers equipped to deal with not much more than minor cuts and abrasions. People in the less accessible wards are more inclined to resort to the psychological reassurance of the bhopa (sorcerer's) mantra, sometimes used together with modern medicine. Only six village wards in all of the District have their own doctor or person trained in traditional Hindu medicine (vaidya). Attracting doctors even to provincial centres is difficult. Guinea worm still occurs where step wells are used and affected over 150 people in Pal Galandar. Malaria and fever (bhukha) particularly affect children, who have low resistance because of a poor diet. The positive factor inhibiting the spread of disease is the pattern of dispersed settlement.

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1. Bainc mark p.44.
 2. Bainc mark pp.47.

Health and education services may assist economic development, and have increased since Independence. Bhil perceptions of government and its services are discussed in Chapter Six. Scheduled Tribes have about one half to one third the schooling rate of males of other castes, depending on the age-category, and Scheduled Caste males have about one half the rate. Among Bhils, 3 per cent of males under seven years of age, 28 per cent of males between six and eleven years of age, and 16 per cent of males between eleven and sixteen years of age attend school. Few girls from Scheduled Tribes attend school. Because there is a low schooling rate there is an incentive for having larger families. Children who do not go to school provide extra labour at home, or may be sent to town for work. All but 252 males and 26 females of Galandar's population of over 2,300 were classified as illiterate in the March 1981 national census. The literate comprise a select group, but an expanding one, for over one quarter of boys attend school. Schooling is associated with government. It has delivered benefits to few and anticipation of some benefit to many.

There is considerable penetration of the Bhil economy by non-Bhils. The largest source of indebtedness is to merchants (55 per cent of those indebted). After them, 32 per cent of families were indebted to government councils, seven per cent to banks, and five per cent to other government agencies. Fifty-nine per cent of all Scheduled Tribal families are indebted. Their rate of indebtedness is not much greater than other castes, 52 per cent of whose families are indebted. There is great variation in the rate of indebtedness of different Scheduled Tribes and different subdistricts. The rate of

indebtedness is highest (82 per cent) in Aspur subdistrict, where Scheduled Tribes are absolutely and proportionately weakest and only amount to 46 per cent of the subdistrict's total population. Of the larger tribal groups, Bhils have the lowest rate of indebtedness (55 per cent of families indebted), which reflects their geographical isolation and lack of integration into the national economy, much more than their relative wealth. (See FN 1)

Vyas in a study of indebtedness has noted that 'high castes' may well have the same rate of indebtedness as 'underprivileged' groups. The difference lies in the different economic positions the two groups occupy in the same economy. (See FN 2) Identification of families lending money therefore provides a better description of economic inequality in the District. Only 272 (0.28 per cent) of families in the District are identified as lenders. Only 19 (0.03 per cent) of these were members of Scheduled Tribes, and these 19 families lived in Dungarpur and Aspur.

Occasionally money-lenders may also manage shops. In 1977 there were 2109 shops in the district, only 113 of which were operated by members of Scheduled Tribes. This statistic, however, ignores the aspirations of Bhils. In Galandar for instance seven of the 407 households attempted to sell bidi cigarettes, jaggery (in Wagadi ghur) and tea, but they were not included in

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1. Bainc mark pp. 65-66. In Pal Galandar, 35 families were in debt to the Bhumi Vikas bank, and owed amounts ranging from Rs. 330 to Rs. 3,850.
 2. N.N. Vyas Bondage and Exploitation in Tribal India, Rawat Publications, Jaipur, 1980.

government statistics as shops, and they were usually outstripped in their entrepreneurial efforts by better organized baniya (money-lender) castes with more capital who had networks with Dungarpur town and beyond.

There has been extensive economic penetration of formerly remote areas of Dungarpur. The manifest and visible signs of government-permitted penetration are the deforestation, the schools, the hospital substations, and the roads. Almost 80 per cent of wards in 1977 were within 5 kilometres of a sealed road, but this primarily benefits the other castes who own vehicles, bicycles, and have money for bus fares. The roads are of proportionately less benefit to the Adivasi.

Almost 940 of the 1100 village headmen in the District were members of Scheduled Tribes, but again this only reflects the tendency of Scheduled Tribes to live in non-mixed villages, and the impotence of the pancayat (village council) compared to the civil and jurisprudence-arms of government, vested in the Collector of the District, and the Superintendent of Police.

Despite the twentieth century transformation of the Bhils' economy the predominantly rural circumstances of contemporary Bhils in Dungarpur provides scope for economic self-sufficiency within villages. Village residence fosters a culture which is to some extent homogenous. Most (93 per cent) Scheduled Tribe families own some land, usually less than one hectare and for

all but one per cent of families, less than five hectares. Well-irrigation increases economic self-sufficiency for some, but temporary migration outside the village is necessary for others to survive. Additional income from securing government employment is always desired.

There is strong penetration of government institutions into the everyday life of Bhils, through medical services, schools, roads, police services, and banks, which add to the indebtedness contracted with other castes. The most advantageous means of participating in the services of government is by means of gaining government employment, but as few Bhils do so, the social fact of government employment introduces inequality. Nevertheless, school enrolment is prompted by this hope. The economic resources available to most Bhils are therefore limited and often precarious. Social and cultural responses to this situation are discussed in Chapters Six to Eleven after considering differences in Bhil villages' economic circumstances.

The economy of Bhils has changed remarkably during the past 150 years. In contemporary Dungarpur 93 per cent of Bhils own some land. There is an orientation towards self-sufficiency. But there is also extensive penetration of the external economy into the Bhil village - through credit, cash crops, and government institutions. The differences which government institutions have indirectly encouraged between Bhils is more readily apparent on examining individual villages.

5.2 Differences within Bhil villages

Historical accounts of Dungarpur suggest changes in the Bhils' way of life have occurred. These changes are confirmed when one examines particular villages. Surveys of land holdings conducted in 1916, 1925, 1948 and 1980 document the extensive increase in the area of cultivated land, particularly after 1948. Pal Galandar is the largest of the four settlements studied. The 1906 Land Revenue Settlement of Pal Galandar recorded a population of 80 households, 62 ploughs, 60 bulls and 50 cows or buffaloes. It was not until 1916 that cultivation patterns seemed stable enough to be recorded in a subsequent Land Revenue Settlement. In that year the number of houses was about the same as in 1906, but there were 92 ploughs, 154 bulls, and 389 cows or buffaloes, indicating that more land had been brought under cultivation.

All land was owned singly by males, apart from one woman who owned 27 bighas (3.47 hectares). Within the past seventy years there has been a growth in the total number of clans in Pal Galandar, from twelve to twenty. There has been a more significant growth in the size of the dominant clan in Pal Galandar, the Katara, in both numbers of households and total area of land owned. Conversely, small clans have had little success in expanding.

The pattern of land holdings change over time. The changes suggest that clan allegiance is important to the long term

viability of oneself and one's family in a particular village. Clan allegiance is certainly important in traditional Bhil songs, which begin with a standard formula of naming a village, then asking which clan has the power in that village (See FN 1). Clan allegiance is also important in village disputes. The only fights resulting in physical violence which I observed in Pal Galandar between 1979 and 1981 were between members of different clans.

What seems to have taken place is for one or two large clans to dominate, numerically, in a village. Presumably families from the dominant clans settled in the area first, then attracted their relatives to settle near them.

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1. 1. Raīne kevo bole Galandar.
 2. Galandar māe kenu rāj vāze?
 3. Galandar māe Kaṭāra rāj vāze.
 4. Kaṭāra māe kenu rāj vāze?

1. Having rested they sing of Galandar.
2. In Galandar whose power is famous?
3. In Galandar the Katara's power is famous.
4. Among the Katara whose power is famous?

TABLE 5.2.1:

Number of land registrations, by clan, and number of bighas* owned in Pal Galandar between 1916 and 1980.

	1916 No. (Total land)	1925 No. (Total land)	1948 No. (Total land)	1980 No. (Total land)
Katara	49 (572)	64 (1069)	75 (1220)	185 (3220)
Karadi	10 (108)	10 (108)	11 (176)	25 (420)
Manat	6 (38)	5 (29)	4 (45)	2 (23)
Ahari	4 (67)	4 (55)	4 (82)	7 (85)
Harat	3 (32)	1 (24)	3 (30)	3 (47)
Kother	2 (13)	3 (50)	6 (87)	12 (151)
Parmarth	2 (10)	3 (36)	3 (29)	5 (74)
Bhagora	1 (7)	1 (12)	3 (53)	5 (99)
Dhamlat	1 (10)	2 (31)	-	-
Kalal	1 (3)	1 (2)	1 (6)	1 (4)
Nanama	1 (3)	2 (11)	2 (18)	1 (17)
Roat	1 (6)	1 (15)	1 (11)	2 (25)
Bariya	-	1 (5)	-	-
Damor	-	4 (41)	2 (31)	4 (92)
Kalauua	-	2 (24)	1 (24)	1 (6)
Borat	-	1 (23)	4 (49)	2 (42)
Angari	-	-	-	2 (23)
Vijnat	-	-	-	1 (5)
Honta	-	-	-	1 (19)
Taral	-	-	-	1 (21)
Garasiya	-	-	-	1 (14)
TOTAL REGISTRATIONS	81 (869)	105 (1535)	120 (1861)	261 (4387)

* 7.7 bighas = one hectare = 2.47 acres.

Bhils, like other Indians, consider land ownership very important. 'How many bighas do you own?' is often one of the first questions one is asked in conversation. Land is retained if at all possible. Few families have left Galandar since 1916, despite large population increases. (Table 5.2.1). Money earned through government employment or labouring in Gujarat is spent on jewellery for marriage, and on improvements to land: the digging of wells, or complementing a loan for an irrigation pump.

Land is never owned on a clan basis. It is usually owned by individual male Bhils. Over recent years there has been a growth in joint ownership of land. Table 5.2.2 documents the growth in joint ownership. Since 1925 more land has been owned jointly, mainly by groups of two or three brothers. The joint ownership, however, on a per capita basis, involves smaller parcels of land, suggesting that poverty is a major impetus to joint ownership and joint residence. The extreme example was that of three of seven brothers who together owned seven bighas (0.9 hectares). They were unmarried, although adults, and worked in Gujarat. In 1980, 29 per cent of registrations and 33 per cent of the land was not owned by single title. This included some cases of large joint holdings. In three cases two brothers jointly owned 50 bighas (6.43 hectares), in one case three brothers owned 69 bighas (8.87 hectares) by joint title. There was only one case of land ownership which cut across clan allegiance, which had involved joint clearance of land by two friends. Land held jointly other than by brothers

involved patrilineal cousins, sister's sons, or small parcels of land owned by joint colonizers, which were too small to be viably divided. The patrilineal sibs upon which clan allegiances are developed therefore have residual importance in defining the outer limits of potential joint ownership. Despite changes during the last 70 years, single landowners remain the largest category.

TABLE 5.2.2:

Land ownership in Pal Galandar 1916-1980, and average holding per landowner (in bighas).

	1916	1925	1948	1980
Number of land- holding groups per individual)	(Average No. holding)	(Average No. holding)	(Average No. holding)	(Average No. holding)
Single land- owner	82 (11.9)	96 (14.8)	99 (15.3)	170 (16.3)
Group of two brothers	-	3 (9.0)	14 (8.7)	30 (9.2)
Group of three brothers	-	3 (9.1)	2 (7.3)	22 (8.9)
Group of four brothers	-	-	2 (1.8)	8 (5.3)
Group of five brothers	-	-	1 (4.6)	6 (6.1)
Group of six brothers	-	-	-	2 (1.8)
Group of seven brothers	-	-	-	1 (1.0)
Other groups	-	3 (4.1)	2 (5.8)	24 (3.0)

The diversity of land-holding arrangements suggests that the norm of equal patrilineal inheritance among brothers is not always maintained (cf. Table 5.2.2.) Further support of

potential inequalities of inheritance is provided by field observations. The 1981 Holi celebrations in Jagbor lasted only three days instead of the usual seven because there was a dispute between a man and his four half-brothers (sons of his father's second wife) over whether their land would be divided into two or five portions. On that occasion the single brother managed to retain his half share of the total.

Table 5.2.3 indicates that Bhils share a similar rate of owning less than 2 hectares of land as the rest of the Indian population, although they have fewer rich peasants (those owning more than four hectares). The land occupied by Scheduled Tribes in Dungarpur tends to be rockier and less fertile. In Pal Galandar some Bhils own more than four hectares of land, but they are not always the wealthiest in the village. Agricultural production is doubled by an irrigation pump, and income is crucially increased by securing government employment.

TABLE 5.2.3:

Middle income and rich peasants by landownership in Pal Galander, 1980.

	PAL GALANDAR		Total Galander (%)	ALL INDIA (See FN 1) (%)
	Non joint (%)	Joint (%)		
> 2 hectares	113 (61)	68 (92)	181 (70)	70
2-4 hectares (15.5 - 31.1 bighas)	61 (33)	6 (8)	67 (26)	15
4+ hectares	11 (6)	-	11 (4)	15
TOTAL	185 (100)	74 (100)	259 (100)	100

1. Indian Express, 27 October 1980. The average Indian holding is 1.8 hectares = 4.45 acres = 14 bighas.

During the twentieth century the population has increased rapidly but until recent years additional people have been fed largely by bringing more land into production. The size of average holdings of land has increased since 1916 in Pal Galandar, and in the district as a whole the area of cultivated land more than doubled during the course of the twentieth century. Production could double again in the future if more and deeper wells were excavated, and more irrigation pumps became available, financed either by government loans or grants, or by income gained from temporary urban migration. This increase in population, however, was no doubt a stimulus to the increase in joint ownership of land in Pal Galandar and other Bhil settlements. As the holdings inherited grow smaller, because of the increasing number of sons inheriting land, the pressure to preserve partial entitlements of even small plots is greater. Despite the legal fact of joint ownership of land, there is a tendency for brothers, and particularly patrilineal cousins, to divide land informally, even if registered as a joint holding.

Traditionally brothers built their houses just within calling distance, but not hearing distance, of one another, preferably on a hillock, so that they could be seen (zuo). Because of land shortage, houses now tend to be built closer together. The Galandar sarpanch (headman) lives in a detached house only six feet away from his brother. Nevertheless, the Bhils consider that he, and others like him, live separately (algo), in the traditional manner of true Bhils. Households comprising married sons and the grandchildren of the household head were often considered in a stage of transition. The physical fact of jointness was denied as other than a temporary arrangement by Bhil cultural preferences, even when the arrangement had persisted for seven years.

The patterns of land ownership, mostly single landholders, but sometimes joint holdings by brothers or other relatives, reflect production and distribution relations. Labour is based on the family, defined principally by separate residence, but supplemented at peak periods of the year by neighbours who happen to be friends. Because marriage is virilocal, most neighbours, from a man's point of view, are patrilineal relatives or their spouses. The six bullocks used at harvest may include four owned by a man's two brothers who live nearby. A boy from a large family may live with, work for, and be fed by a father's brother with a small family who lives nearby.

Within the family some tasks are sex specific. Tasks which suggest authority such as weighing a crop, or selling parts of a crop, are undertaken by men. Many agricultural tasks are undertaken by men and women jointly, with women being noticeably more diligent. A contemporary joke is that women do most of the work, and men only drop bij, which has the double meaning of seed and semen. Conversely, only women grind corn, their legs spread around two grinding stones in the dark inner recesses of their houses, as their bodies push back and forth in a circular motion. Grinding is usually undertaken before first light, which is coincidentally the time of most sexual activity. There is therefore a qualitative difference in autonomy and satisfaction between work done for one's own house, in the village, and paid labouring work done outside. The village basis of economic life also furthers social solidarity and suggests cultural metaphors for meaningful action.

The importance of land in measuring wealth and assisting economic self-sufficiency for many Bhils is reinforced by the valuation placed upon the house. The common word for husband is ghervala 'owner of a home'. One was considered to be normally living in the home if one spent the week as a government teacher in another village, and returned at weekends, or if one spent several months labouring in Gujarat, and returned home before Holi celebrations in March. In other words the economic incentive to invest in land in the village is reinforced by strong emotive associations with the village and one's home within it.

Other castes have an emotional attachment to their village. Bhils, however, develop a social life in their village, in which live few, or sometimes no members, of other castes. Although the strong attachment to one's village may be similar to that of other castes, it is not shared with other castes for any particular village. Bhils' culture has many similarities to the culture of other Indians, but it is developed separately.

Land is also valued because owning enough of it allows one to avoid labouring for others. Land ownership is viewed positively; it signifies economic independence. Labouring is viewed negatively; it signifies economic dependence. If Bhils have participated in labour, they tend to hide the fact. Because most Bhils own some land, they identify as landowners rather than as labourers.

If a Bhil does gain a surplus, it tends to be reinvested in land, or an irrigation pump to make the land more productive, and in house extensions, and in property 'of the house', such as his wife's gold jewellery, or his own, a wristwatch, bicycle, or radio. One of the wealthier Bhils was a bullock cart driver before Independence. Twelve years ago he gained a job in the Forestry Department. His salary is only Rs.350 a month, but his fellow villagers allege that in addition to his salary he has received hundreds of rupees through improper means. He and his family are good examples of what Low calls rich or middle peasants. He is separated from his fellow-villagers by his wealth, which allows him to enter into a new economic

relationship, as employer. But his caste (jati) and lifestyle define him as one with those he employs.

Lalu's house indicates his similarity and difference from other Bhils. Most Bhils' huts comprise a single room, divided into cow-stall and kitchen/storeroom, and covered verandah for sleeping, all built of packed mud and covered by baked roof-tiles. Lalu has the largest house in Galandar, also of packed mud but with elaborately carved doors and verandah posts, and wooden cupboards which enclose valuables. It is comprised of three normal-sized Bhil houses, for himself, his two married sons, one of whom is often absent through government employment, and his cattle. Lalu's three houses are arranged to form a courtyard. Lalu and his family never have to perform labouring work for others, and he employs fellow villages to work on his land, or prepare mud-tiles, which are then sold for baking in Gujarat.

Other writers have designated an Indian tendency to maintain prestige and position as feudal, and contrasted it with a capitalist desire to increase profit and production. (See FN 1) The Bhils of Pal Galandar, and of many villages in Dungarpur

1. G. Omvedt, 'Women and Rural Revolt in India,' Journal of Peasant Studies, vol. 5, no. 3, 1978, pp. 370-403.

district, were too close to poverty to avoid manual labour, despite their attempts to disguise it.

Lalu is the largest private employer of labour in any of the four villages studied. Most paid labour in the villages is government-financed relief work and occurs during famines. Paid labour is important for the survival of many Bhils. If it takes place in the village, the ties of support from kin and land can be maintained. The government's policy of making relief work available in villages trains villagers in the organization of wage labour, and at least in the short term it provides a counter-incentive to urban migration.

In 1981 labourers earned Rs.7 per day. This amount is less than \$US 1, but could purchase about 5 kilograms of wheat. The labourers were engaged in relief work in their villages, implementing an election promise of the Congress-I government. Four months of relief labour were made available to over 400 people in Pal Galandar alone during 1981. The work involved constructing embankments on private lands. People worked from 8 a.m. in the morning until 6 p.m., with one-and-a-half hours off for lunch. Table 5.2.4 analyzes by age and sex an apparently representative four-week period, in which most people worked 8 to 9 days of the 24 days of a month. The largest category were under 20 years of age. From conversation with the labourers, it became apparent that males worked to save for their bride's

jewellery and brideprice. Women under twenty worked in their father's village to save for marriage expenses, such as new clothes. Between the ages of 30 and 60 they worked to support their families in their husbands' village. Their affinal status is marked by a veil worn over their faces. One woman, who was over 50 years of age, recorded her husband's name on the wage-sheet register, and he collected her wages. The two largest categories of wage-workers are (young) unmarried men and (older) married women. The third category comprises unmarried girls working for some of their own marriage expenses.

TABLE 5.2.4:

Government relief labouring in Pal Galandar
over four weeks (February to March 1981).

	Total males	Women born in Galandar	Women born outside Galandar	TOTAL
Age 10 - 19	31	1	17	49
20 - 29	19	1	1	21
30 - 39	9	4	14	27
40 - 49	4	5	14	23
50 - 59	5	1	14	20
60 - 69	1	-	9	10
70 - 79	-	-	1	1
TOTAL	69	12	70	151

Bhil women made the major contribution to relief labouring. They play a major part in agricultural work. Ethnographic reports in the nineteenth century also noted women's important role in agricultural work. The demonstrable importance of women's labour accounts in part for institutions such as brideprice, with its accompanying gift of jewellery given to the bride.

In other respects, in the status given to women, particularly in their husband's village, their economic contribution is not given adequate recognition. Male labourers work for another person's household, and have low status. All women, who marry and as a matter of course also labour in their husband's house, have lower status than men.

Bhils within one village have diverse economic interests. Most can claim to be landowners to some degree, and most own a house at some stage. A few Bhils are employers of labour. Those labouring for others, inside the village or outside it, are more numerous.

The Collector, the highest ranking official in the district, and a central government employee, during visits to Galandar in 1981 suggested possible influences on Bhil economic development in the future. In conversation, the Collector categorized the 'Tribals' as less effective farmers than the Patels. He noted that 'Tribals' tend to grow food crops instead of cash crops. The Collector outlined the Government's program for assisting the economic development of Tribal areas. In 1979/80 the Government dynamited over 1,000 wells, free of charge, and assisted

conservation on private lands. The Collector was also encouraging the development of cottage industries - basket-making by members of Scheduled Tribes, treating skins by members of Scheduled Castes, and making carpets by members of all castes, for sale in Ahmedabad. He favoured private marketing of these products by baniyas, shop keepers who belonged to the merchant or money-lending class. The Director of Programs, who accompanied him, argued that it was against the government's policy to encourage the private sector. The Collector responded by asking 'Will you ever eliminate baniyas from India? You would hold 200 Tribals back just to stop one baniya. It is also government policy to encourage economic development. Government business ventures are expensive failures.'

Government relief work and cottage industries provide some orientation to non-agricultural production, and support continuous permanent residence in areas geographically remote from industrial centres. Permanent residence in rural areas is principally encouraged by land ownership among 93 per cent of Scheduled Tribes in Dungarpur, and 90 per cent of Scheduled Tribes in Banswara.

It is also supplemented by income earned outside the village. There has existed a wage economy for some time. The economic importance of Bhil pay and pensions has been noted since 1919 (See FN 1), and began with the establishment of the Mewara Bhil

1. 'A detailed history of the Mewar Bhil Corps' by C. Holmes, Assistant Superintendent, Hilly Tracts, Mewar. RFD, File no. 4 of 1919.

Corps in 1840. After Independence reservations of positions in government departments for members of Scheduled Tribes provided further avenues for the gaining of government income for a few Bhils in each village.

The more significant source of income for most Bhils, however, is gained through temporary migration to urban centres in Gujarat. For instance at the end of 1980 some people who had recently returned to Pal Galandar from Ahmedabad estimated that about 100 Galandar people, half of them female, or four per cent of the total population, were labouring there. Rates of temporary migration vary greatly between villages, but at a District level one quarter of all Scheduled Tribe families have a member labouring in Gujarat. Only 1.3 per cent of the Scheduled Tribe population had permanently left the Dungarpur district. Wealth gained from temporary migration is generally used to support life in the village.

The increasing shortage of land forces people to engage in some labouring work, inside the village or outside it. The continuing ownership of land by the vast majority of Bhils, and supportive government policies, ensure permanent residence in the village for the foreseeable future for most Bhils. Potentially the interests of the employer and employed could conflict, but their identification as fellow Bhils living in the same village, perhaps as members of the one clan, masks the potential conflict. One response to potential conflict between employer and employed, rich and poor, industrialized urban centre and rural periphery, has been the spread of bhakti. From oral accounts, and from censuses I collected of bhaqat households in nine villages

during the past 20 years, it is clear that the bhagat population has increased. There also appears to be some correlation between land shortage in a particular village, and the tendency of that village's households to identify as bhagat.

Jagbor has the highest percentage of bhagat (vegetarian) households, and the least cultivable land of the four settlements. It also has twice as many households where a member has gained government employment, compared to the three other villages.

It may be that as Bhils own less land, because of population increase, they may be more likely to become bhagat (vegetarian), and families will become more desperate, and perhaps in a few cases more successful, in gaining government employment. Table 5.2.5 reflects this trend for the four Dungarpur villages:

TABLE 5.2.5:

Land, bhagat (vegetarian) and government households in four villages.

Settlement	Number of cultivable per household hectares	Cultivable hectares per household	Percentage of house- holds <u>bhagat</u>	Percentage of house- holds with government employee
Jagbor	103	1.90	44	8
Galandar	913	2.83	15	3
Balvaniya	280	2.87	12	3
Ratapani	374	4.45	1	3

On checking information I collected on Banswara Bhil villages with 1971 Census data on the number of cultivable hectares per household, the same broad correlation was also apparent at the village level. In Markola 66 per cent of Bhil households are bhagat (vegetarian), and there are 2.31 cultivable hectares per household. In Lankai 17 per cent are bhagat (vegetarian) and there are 2.22 cultivable hectares per household. All Bhils are sansari (nonvegetarian) in Muniya-ka-khunta (3.28 hectares), Khera (4.90 hectares) and Jalanpur (4.98 hectares).

Pal Galandar, where I was based, is the largest of the four settlements, comprising more than four hundred households dispersed over hilly ground that has now been largely cleared of most vegetation. Balvaniya is the most isolated of the four. It has the smallest percentage of government servants, and of families with a member who had undertaken labouring work outside the village. Balvaniya and Galandar have about the same area of cultivable land available per family, which is the relevant unit of distribution and production. Galandar has slightly more land available per head of population, but Balvaniya's land is of better quality.

Ratapani is a new settlement established by government in 1962. Uncharacteristic of Bhil settlements, the houses are clustered together, and there are members of twenty different clan groups represented in a small village. Many Bhils came there from Anpura, after a dispute with the local Rajput zamindar (landlord) of that village. Ratapani has the largest proportion of households with a member engaged in labouring work outside the village, and the largest proportion of joint households. It is

also exceptional in having only one bhagat (vegetarian) family, and more land per household than the other settlements.

Land is important and its importance has increased this century for Bhils, as they have adopted intensive agriculture. Labour, conversely, has a negative value. Bhils who are engaged in paid labour tend to hide the fact if possible. Because of increasing population and pressure on available land resources, labour is being urged upon many Bhils. Securing government employment is of critical economic importance.

There is similarity and difference in the village. All Bhils are married and live in their own house. Almost all own some land. They have an attachment to their village, which usually accommodates few non-Bhils. Culturally elaborated differences between men and women appear to be of ancient origin. It is probably also traditional for one Bhil clan to be dominant in a village, and for a man from that clan to achieve distinctive status and wealth. But recently other differences have developed, between employer and labourer, between government official and poor Bhil, between those with sufficient land and those without sufficient land.

Bhils tend to live in remote areas and have limited contacts with other castes. Government acknowledges the difference, but also perpetuates it by listing Bhils as a Scheduled Tribe and reserving some rights for those so designated.

Government is benevolent and particularly benefits those Bhils who are government officials. Other Bhils proudly identify as land owners, rather than as rural proletariat, yet many of them engage in relief labour in the village or migratory labour outside it. There is no clear set of economic relations which coincide with the category Bhil.

CHAPTER SIX: SOCIAL ORGANIZATION IN FOUR BHIL VILLAGES

6.1 The status group and the family

'I have one son and four daughters, two married (panavji) and two unmarried (kumari). Six children died, three sons and three daughters died when they were big, not babies, the girls were even fetching water.'

- a Bhil woman visiting Pal Galandar in March 1981.

A Bhil's identity is not constituted solely by membership of one status group. Other allegiances may be even more important in particular contexts. A Bhil is firstly a member of a family. The attributes of membership of a status group, whether bhagat or government official, tend to extend from the individual to the family. In fact the definition of a person is constructed around the family. Almost all Bhils I met over twenty-one years of age were married, unless they were deformed.

A major purpose of marriage is to produce children. Pregnancy is defined as 'being in a good condition' (hau thaiji), and the same expression in other contexts means 'yes', or 'I like it' (mae hau lage). Marriage is above all a means of ensuring social reproduction. Unmarried girls with a child cannot subsequently enter into a marriage (vivah), but may enter into an irregular relationship (natru). Membership of a family is characteristic of being human.

In perfect symmetrical opposition, it is believed that all ghosts (bhuts) and witches (dakan), do not enter into marriages (vivah) or even irregular relationships (natru). During early fieldwork in a strange Bhil village, I was asked if people like myself were conceived nine months before birth. Perhaps it was feared I was a ghost. One of the first questions I was always asked in any village I visited was what village (gamv) or country (des) I was from, and whether I was married, and how many children, brothers and surviving parents I had.

The sociological context for the developing importance of bhakti and sarkar, and the emergence of bhagat and government officials as status groups among the Bhils, is the perpetuation of institutions such as the family and marriage, and allegiance to certain clans.

All Bhils are part of a family, marry and are members of a clan. Although institutions associated with clan and government affect all Bhils in some ways, only some Bhils identify as bhagat and government officials, and the boundaries of these status groups are never absolute. Membership of a particular status group may also be variously emphasized depending on context. Given these qualifications, it is said, by Bhils and others, that different villages have different proportions of the population who are bhagat or government employed. Consciousness of bhakti (devotion) is pre-eminent among the bhagat (vegetarians), and the two words are semantically related, and involve notions of

otherworldly status and purity. (See FN 1) Consciousness of sarkar, which means authority or government, is pre-eminent among the government employed. But the two concepts bhakti and sarkar impinge on all Bhils in the four villages studied and throughout southern Rajasthan.

TABLE 6.1.1:

Bhagat (vegetarian) households and households with a government official.

	<u>Bhagat</u> households		Total (%)		Non- <u>Bhagat</u> households		Grand Total
	with govt. official	without govt. official	<u>Bhagat</u>		with govt. official	without govt. official	
Jagbor	4	19	23	(44)	0	29	52(100)
Galandar	6	55	61	(15)	7	342	410(100)
Balvaniya	2	13	15	(12)	2	104	121(100)
Ratapani	0	1	1	(1)	3	90	94(100)

Households with one or more members employed by government comprise eight per cent of households in Jagbor, and three per cent in the other settlements. Households who are bhagat are more common. They range from 44 per cent of all households in Jagbor to one per cent of all households in Ratapani.

1. L. Dumont Homo Hierachicus, Paladin, London, 1972, pp. 84-99.

In tabulating membership of a status group it is more correct to discuss households, which are family based, rather than individuals, because, with few exceptions, the benefits and associations of a household's head gaining government employment, experiencing conversion to bhakti (devotion) and adopting a vegetarian diet and sobriety, or even the benefits of a Bhil labouring outside the village or owning an irrigation pump, flow to all members of a household.

Families with one member who has gained government employment attempt to marry their children to other such families. Most bhagat marry other bhagat. Although a few cases of sansari (non-vegetarians) marrying bhagat (vegetarians) were recorded, there were practical difficulties if a household was divided along these lines. A non-bhagat woman married into a bhagat (vegetarian) household would usually become vegetarian after marriage. A bhagat (vegetarian) wife, married to a non-bhagat would avoid commensality and ensure that non-vegetarians, including family members, did not touch cooking utensils. The situation was uncommon, as it meant that the wife's family had married down, at least in the scale of purity. The principle of bhagat endogamy tended only to be overruled by the wealth and status that a non-vegetarian government-employed husband could offer. In the rare cases of mixed marriages, the data summarized in this chapter record the status of the household or family head.

The basic family structure is monogamous, with at least one son living with perhaps one elderly parent of the husband if he is the youngest son. Normally all but the youngest son establish

new households. The fissioning tendency may have been a device for clearing new areas of land. British historical records suggest that the system of separate residences also assisted military defence. There seems to be a Bhil preference for not living with one's in-laws. For instance people explained a young wife's desertion of her husband in Galandar by her unwillingness to live in a joint household with her father-in-law.

Modifications to this monogamous structure occurred when the first wife was sonless and a man married a second wife. In Galandar the only man married to two wives who had both borne sons was deserted by one of them shortly after the surveys were undertaken. Very poor families, or families where members have secured government service, have recently begun to live together in joint households. A joint household includes two or more related couples, usually parents and married son(s), or brothers. Other relatives besides the component couple's unmarried children may also be present.

Tables 6.1.2 illustrates the family structure of the four Bhil settlements under discussion, compared to a Jaipur Jat community studied by Kolenda. In comparison to the Jats, most (sixty per cent) Bhil families are nuclear. Therefore about half of all Bhils (48 per cent to 53 per cent depending on the village) live in nuclear families, whereas only 20 per cent of Jats do. The second major difference is that only one-sixth to one-third of Bhil families are joint, whereas one third of Jat families are.

McCurdy's study of Bhils near Udaipur and Karve's study of Bhils in West Khandesh support these generalizations. (See FN 1)

There is no consistent pattern of bhagat or non-bhagat Bhils being more likely to live in joint households. The joint family among the Bhils does, however, accomodate situations where a household head is absent from the village for labouring or government employment. Joint family formation among the Bhils is found among both bhagat and non-bhagat families. A major impetus to their formation is employment outside the village. This is the case for government servants as most teachers at best gain employment in schools near to their village, and visit their family during weekends.

A household head may also be absent part of the year to labour outside. A more detailed analysis than is normally provided in the literature on Indian kinship suggests the reasons for Bhil preferences for different family arrangements, and how these are affected by members of families labouring outside their village, or gaining government employment. Such analysis is provided in Table 6.1.3.

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1. D.W. McCurdy ['A Bhil Village of Rajasthan, p. 341] found 68 per cent of families nuclear, 11 per cent polygyonous, 15 per cent, lineal joint and 6 per cent collateral joint. I.Karve found 55 per cent of Bhil families nuclear or polygynous and 35 per cent joint. [The Bhils of West Khandesh: A Social and Economic Survey, University of Bombay Press, Bombay, 1966, p. 10].

TABLE 6.1.2:

Bhil family structures compared to Jat family structure in percentages.

	Jagbor	Galandar	Balvaniya	Ratapani	Jaipur
	Families	Families	Families	Families	Jats
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	Families(%)
Joint	20	17	16	32	31
Supplemented-	16	10	8	5	25
Nuclear					
Nuclear	60	57	61	58	31
Polygynous	4	4	8	1	3
Supplemented-	-	3	2	1	3
Sub-nuclear					
Sub-nuclear	-	3	4	1	3
Single person	2	5	2	1	3
TOTAL*==	100	100	100	100	100

TOTAL NUMBER

OF HOUSE-

HOLDS=	52	409	123	94	37
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NOTE:A 'joint' family includes two or more related couples, usually parents and married son(s), or brothers. Other relatives besides the component couple's unmarried children may also be present. In Ratapani two patrilineal brothers with their families, lived together. In Galandar one daughter and her husband lived with her father. All other Bhil joint families were based on parents and one or more married sons or married brothers living together. A 'nuclear' family is composed of parents and their unmarried children. 'Supplemented-nuclear' is a nuclear family plus some other relative who does not have a spouse include. 'Sub-nuclear' families are fragments of nuclear families, such as a widow and her children, a widower and children, or unmarried siblings.

*Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

TABLE 6.1.3

Bhil family structures in detail, in percentages.

BHIL Family Structures	JAGBOR Families (Persons)	GALANDAR Families (Persons)	BALVANIYA Families (Persons)	RATAPANI Families (Persons)
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)
JOINT parent married son with grandson	10(13)	6(11)	10(13)	15(19)
parents married son no grandson	6(5)	6(7)	4(5)	7(9)
parents daughter daughter's husband	-	0(-)	-	-
married brothers no sons	-	2(2)	-	2(4)
married brothers one with no sons	2(2)	3(5)	1(2)	3(7)
married brothers all with sons	2(7)	-	1(1)	5(8)
SUPPLEMENTED NUCLEAR Husband, wife husband's mother, child	10(11)	7(7)	5(6)	4(4)
Husband, wife, husband's mother, no child		1(-)	2(1)	1(-)
Husband, wife, husband's father,	6(7)	2(2)	-	-
Husband, wife, husband's father, no child	-	-	-	-
Husband, wife, wife's mother	-	-	1(-)	-

Table Continued Next Page

Table 6.1.3. Continued

(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)
NUCLEAR				
no child	12(7)	9(3)	7(3)	4(2)
with child(ren)	48(41)	48(50)	54(51)	54(47)
POLYGYNOUS				
one wife	2(4)	3(4)	6(10)	1(1)
without sons				
both wives	2(2)	1(3)	2(3)	-
with sons				
SUPPLEMENTED	-	3(2)	2(2)	1(1)
SUB NUCLEAR				
SUB NUCLEAR				
Father, child(ren)	-	1(0)	3(2)	-
Mother, child(ren)	-	2(1)	1(1)	1(-)
SINGLE PERSON	2(-)	5(1)	2(-)	1(-)
TOTAL * = 100%	100(100)	100(100)	100(100)	100(100)
TOTAL POPULATION	52(311)	409(2307)	123(636)	94(624)

*Percentages shown in columns have been rounded to nearest whole number.

Most Bhils, however, live in nuclear family arrangements. Bhils prefer to live separately, ideally on a hillock within calling distance of their brothers, whom they can see, but with whom they are not crowded together (vaglus). (See FN 1) Bhils attributed this preference for nuclear families to sexual jealousies and suspicions between men and women living in joint families. 'He (the husband) says "Why are you looking at him, (the brother-in-law), why are you talking to him, why are you joking with him?", and then there is a fight (jaghra) and they live separately.'

In the past, when they practised slash and burn agriculture, or when forest lands were readily available, the Bhil pattern for creating separate households was appropriate for territorial expansion. British sources in the nineteenth century also noted the difficulty of surrounding or attacking a Bhil pal because of the wide geographical distribution of the Bhil huts. This was caused by new families establishing separate households. In contemporary times there is a decreasing availability of land and new families are forced to construct their residences ever closer to those of their parents. Bhils not only prefer to live separately, but this preference seems strong enough to alter their perception of what actually occurs. Educated Bhils employed by the government as teachers told me that Bhils prefer to live in separate households, and in southern Rajasthan this had become known as a special characteristic of the Bhils. When it is pointed out that there are many families in their village who live in joint arrangements it is said that this is a temporary

1. cf. vaglu = branch of a tree.

phenomenon. Statistical analysis shows this is not the case. (See FN 1)

Most nuclear families comprise parents with children. Very few people (two to three per cent) live in nuclear families without children, and this category includes both some young couples who have not yet embarked upon the cycle of reproduction of their domestic group, and elderly couples at the end of the cycle who do not have children living with them. Most married couples without children, particularly those without a son, continue to live at the home of the husband's father. Eventually this home is inherited by the youngest son, after his elder brothers have established houses of their own.

Despite jokes made by non-Bhils about Bhil polygamy, only one to four per cent of Bhil families in the four villages studied are polygamous. Bhils do not differ from the less notorious Jats or other rural Indian castes in this respect, with the exception of certain higher castes, such as Brahmin and Vaishyas who do not practise polygamy. In most cases polygamy was decided by a first wife failing to bear a son, - and then only with the first wife's consent. A school teacher from Ratapani who taught at Pal Galandar had two wives who had both born sons, but his first wife

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1. One qualification to the statistical data is that it reflects the patrilineal prejudices of the Bhils in responding to questions about who (normally) lives in a household and it masks Bhil mobility and the institution of the guest. During certain periods of the domestic and annual cycle a woman returns to her father's home i.e. the village of her brothers, and thereby compensates for her predominantly virilocal residence-pattern. For instance the daughter, daughter's husband and daughter's husband brother often visited the house of my host's brother and stayed for two days.

was not well enough to help with farm work. In all four settlements there were only eight other men who had two wives who both had born sons. None of the families were bhagat. One of them, from Ratapani, was also employed by government as a teacher, even though polygamy was supposedly proscribed for government servants. In addition to these nine cases there were other men who at one time had formed a polygamous relationship, only to be deserted by the first wife. In the Tables these 'husbands' are registered as monogamous. If an older brother died, his wife could be married by her deceased husband's younger brother. This also accounted for some instances of polygamy. Among husbands whose first wife had no sons, there was no consistent pattern of bhagat or nonbhagat allegiance. This category also included government servants, and one brave man spending most of the year labouring outside the village despite the temptations which his two wives might find within it. Polygamous husbands included labourers, government officials and bhagat.

The distinction of labourer, government official, or bhagat therefore had no identifiable effect on the socially reinforced desire of men to procreate sons. In this desire Bhils are probably not greatly different from other rural caste Hindus. Polygamously married men were sometime referred to by the title 'enjoyer of two wives' (bebeirivala), but in the case of a man without sons this had connotations of his failure to produce male offspring which meant there was no son to inherit his land.

A man who had daughters and no sons might induce a young man to live and work in his household, with the understanding that

after a few years he would marry one of his daughters. In many Bhil songs and jokes the resident son-in-law appears as the epitome of poverty and powerlessness, a man so poor or landless, that he has to work and live with his wife's father, usually a man without sons, to obtain an inheritance. He is therefore without the support of brothers or other patrilineal relations.

The institution of resident son-in-law is known in other rural Indian communities. Among the Bhils, sons-in-law living in their father's-in-laws house are responsible for the appearance of many of the small clans in the settlements, but they are uncommon. A resident son-in-law, although obliged to live for some time in his father's-in-law house, establishes his own house as soon as possible. Only one son-in-law, a non-bhagat, was recorded as resident in his father's-in-law house, at the time of completing the surveys in all four settlements studied. During the last 60 years only 17 such marriages have occurred in all four settlements. None of them involved bhagat families.

Table 6.1.4 indicates that employment outside the village, either as a labourer or government employee, is particularly associated with joint households. It seems likely that employment of a family member outside the village encourages greater joint family formation, rather than the other way round. Bhils themselves explain the formation of joint households by the fact that one member of the household is labouring outside the village. Families where all members are employed within the village, however, are also sometimes joint, and some of the psychological pressures and economic supports mentioned in the literature for

Hindu joint families are here apparent. (See FN 1) 'One hundred days are the mother's-in-law, but one day is the son's wife', a proverb told to me by men, articulates the disadvantages of joint families from the point of view of women. (See FN 2)

TABLE 6.1.4:

Joint households according to religion and occupation.

VILLAGE	JAGBOR	PAL GALANDAR	BALVANIYA	RATAPANI
	%	%	%	%
Joint Households	20	17	16	32
Joint <u>bhagat</u> households where a member labours externally	50	34	—*	—*
Other joint households where a member labours externally	33	19	—*	47
Joint <u>bhagat</u> households where a member is a government servant	50	80	—*	—*
Other joint households where a member is a government servant	—*	28	100	—*

* Zero here taken as only three or less cases recorded.

1. G.M. Carstairs [The Twice Born, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1961] and D.G. Mandelbaum ['Family, Jati, Village' in M. Singer & B.S. Cohn, eds Structure and Change in Indian Society, Aldine Publishing Company, Chicago, 1968] believe that purity taboos on touching, hierarchy, separation of men and women and deference to superiors are of paramount importance in joint families. M. Sharma [The Politics of Inequality: Competition and Control in an Indian Village, University of Hawaii Press, Hawaii, 1978] reported that fighting between Brahmin wives caused their two husbands to establish separate households. Loyalty takes precedence over jati solidarity in situations of great stress.
2. 'Hau dāḍā hāhunā, ek dāḍo baūno'

It is therefore apparent that a structure which looks like a traditional Hindu pattern of family organization is being adapted to meet new economic structures of employment outside the village, or as the Bhils put in 'Bahar naukri, vaglus rai'. ('There is service outside (the village), so they live all together'.) Again the term 'joint' includes a number of possibilities, but in fact particular arrangements tend to be preferred. Table 6.1.3 shows that most joint families comprise parents and a married son. Married brothers sometimes live together, but if all the brothers have sons, they normally only conduct joint households if a brother is labouring outside. The joint families sometimes include members from four generations, but this is rare. Occasionally the sub-categories under the heading 'joint household' may include another relative who does not have a spouse, such as a kaki (younger brother's wife) or grandparent. In one case patrilineal cousins (kaka babha na bhai), one of whom normally laboured outside Ratapani, jointly conducted a household together. In summary almost all marriages are virilocal and a man usually establishes a house near the households of his brothers, whether he is bhaqat or not.

The case of widows who live with their married sons, or in some cases (two per cent of households or less) live in their deceased husband's house with their unmarried children, is exceptional. These 'sub-nuclear' families include mothers living with adult sons who had not married because of poverty.

More bhagat (vegetarian) than non-bhagat live in joint families, but this may largely be explained by bhagat families having a higher rate of employment outside their village, through labouring or government service.

Ratapani, for instance, has the highest rate of joint households, but none of them are bhagat. About half of the Ratapani joint households do have a member working outside the village. The impetus to adopt what looks like a convergence with the classic Hindu pattern among land-owning higher castes has therefore been brought about by changes in the economy, and the growth of employment opportunities outside the villages. The joint arrangement chosen usually involves a married son living with his parents or married brother. Land is usually not divided among brothers until all the brothers have had sons. Married brothers are more likely to live together until they all have sons, and their right and need to bestow land on their sons is thereby established. It is only in Ratapani that one finds several married brothers who have procreated sons living jointly, but this is because in all of these households at least one member had obtained employment outside Ratapani.

This section has established that some aspects of Bhil social organization are not affected by membership of status groups. For instance status groups have no affect on the desire of men to procreate sons. Most Bhils live in nuclear families, irrespective of status group membership. Poor Bhils, and Bhils with a family member employed outside the village, tend to live in joint families. A greater percentage of bhagat than non-bhagat live in joint households, but this may largely be explained by

bhagat families having a higher rate of employment outside the village. Ratapani, for example, has the highest rate of joint households (about one third of all families). No Ratapani joint households are bhagat, but about one half do have a member working outside of Ratapani. The impetus to adopt what appears to be a traditional Hindu joint family structure among land-owning higher castes seems to have been encouraged by the economic transformation which has affected the Bhils.

Despite laws forbidding polygamy for government servants, they have taken a second wife if their first had not borne a son. Only non-bhagat men were found to have married a second wife after their first wife had borne a son. The total numbers of such cases are small. Similarly small in numbers are resident sons-in-law, the epitome of poverty and powerlessness. The only known cases occurred in non-bhagat families. The main conclusion, therefore, is that the status groups have had little influence on family structures, but they are an essential element around which the status groups are constructed. This is apparent on examining Bhil marriage-arrangements.

6.2 The village basis for marriage

Bhil rules of village and clan exogamy were found to be consistent during the course of the twentieth century. The marriage prescriptions have been largely consistent over time and large geographical area, i.e. one cannot marry a woman of one's own village, and one cannot marry a woman from one's own clan (atak), one's mother's clan, or one's father's mother's clan. The only exception to this consistency, which is represented in Table 6.2.1, is a report of 1911, that cross-cousin marriage is allowed in Khandesh, at the southern part of the Bhil area.

TABLE 6.2.1:

Bhil rules of exogamy recorded in the literature.

Reference	Year	Place	Rule of marriage for male.
Hendley (1875,p.351)	1875	Mewara, Rajasthan	cannot marry own clan* or 'cousin'
Rajputana Census (Vol.25, Part I,Report)	1901	Rajasthan	cannot marry own clan or within two degrees of relationship on the paternal or maternal side.
Bombay Census (Vol. 7, Part 1,p.237)	1911	Gujarat Khandesh	cannot marry father's sister's, mother's sister's, or mother's brother's daughter ('In Khandesh, marriage with a father's sister's or mother's brother's daughter is allowed.')
Koppers (1948,p.126)	1938	West Khandesh, Madhya Pradesh	cannot marry own clan, mother's clan or father's mother's, mother's mother's clans.
Naik (n.d.,p.55)	1948	Western Khandesh, Madhya Pradesh	cannot marry affines, or affines of the clans that have given their daughters in marriage to this clan in the past.
Nath (1960,p.118)	1953	Ratanmal, Gujarat	cannot marry own clan, or mother's, father's mother's, father's father's mother clan.
Doshi (1971,p.122)	1958	Banswara, Rajasthan	cannot marry own clan or family lines of one's father or mother.

TABLE 6.2.1 Continued

McCurdy 1962 Udaipur, cannot marry own clan*, mother's
(1965,p. 396) Rajasthan clan or father's mother's clan.

*the Wagadī term is 'atak' and comprises a group of people who consider themselves descended from a common ancestor, but who cannot fully trace their genealogical links to one another.

There are numerous examples in western Dungarpur of one's village being used as a primary identity marker. For instance a stranger walking past a house in Pal Galandar would occasion the question from those seated 'Where is he from?' meaning 'From what village does he hail?' Usually one person in the company knows the stranger's village, and adds by way of elaboration, the stranger's relationship to some person in the village. 'Balvaniyano, Panna no bhanéz'. ({He is} from Balwaniya, Panna's sister's son.) Likewise a parent might refer to their daughter as 'Gundukua panavja' ({She} married {in} Gundukua), almost as if she in fact married a village. Or Dhula Gameti in Talab ward would ask where (rather than who) x's daughter married. (See FN 1)

Village allegiances were stronger than allegiances to a status such as bhagat. A visitor to a village would introduce himself by his kinship affiliation to someone in that village - e.g. as 'Galandar no bhanéz' ('A nephew {sister's child} of Galandar'), thereby providing a rationale for his visit and a person who was responsible for his conduct while he was in the village. Conversely, one night in Pal Galandar I slept soundly while a bhajan (devotional celebration) was conducted at a house

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1. The house to which the young girl has gone is defined in everyday relationships, is given form, by the encompassing network of affinal kin. 'vye hāu he, vadhāhū ne hāhāro, sab he' ('She has a mother-in-law there, and a great mother-in-law and a father-in-law all there together.')

nearby. A Bhil college friend was visiting me, and although he was an enthusiastic participant at bhajan, when questioned he said he did not attend, because 'ne olkhī gāmv māe' ('in {this} village, I would not be recognised').

There is therefore some evidence to suggest that Bhils see marriage in part as alliances made with other villages. One popular song I recorded celebrated the marriage between Laluda Damor, of Mandav Pal, and Hurji, of Talaiya. Hurji's daughter's name was not considered of sufficient consequence to mention in the song; only the groom and the bride's father, and their villages, were necessary. Bhil songs often begin by mentioning the name of a particular village. They then ask which clan has the power in that village, and which person has the power in that clan. In everyday conversation it is suggested that marriage is an alliance between villages, that 'x's daughter married village y'. Village co-residence is therefore an important constituent of Bhil identity. The reason why one of the first questions one encounters in rural Rajasthan is 'what village are you from?' is that this, among other things, is an important consideration in marriage, together with descent.

Marriages (vivah) and irregular unions (natru) between Bhils and non-Bhils are very rare indeed. Within the community of Bhils, within what Bhils call their jati (caste), marriages are arranged according to certain constraints and priorities. All the data collected on marriage in the four villages surveyed were categorized according to the wife's date of birth. It was therefore possible to investigate whether there were any consistent trends over time, but no consistent changes were identified.

Pal Galandar was the largest of the settlements surveyed, but trends evident there were also apparent in other settlements. In Pal Galandar for instance there have been twenty-six marriages between Galandar boys and girls whose fathers lived in Galandar. Eight of these were love marriages which took place between 1945 and 1965, and involved men and women of different clans both residing in Galandar. The remaining eighteen marriages involved youths who came from other villages to Galandar and lived there as resident sons-in-law.

In marriages where the wife came from another village, the distance to the wives' villages ranged from two to forty kilometres. (See FN 1) For most directions the average distance was between ten and fourteen kilometres, a distance which could be walked there and back with difficulty in the same day. Just as houses within a village are preferably built within sight (zuo) but out of hearing, not 'crowded together' (vaglus) with one's brothers, so marriages tend to be established between villages which are distant but not too distant from one another.

There is also a clear tendency for bhagat to marry further away than non-bhagat. The small number of marriages involving government officials do not establish a tendency to marry distantly, although some Bhils remark that big people marry far. It is therefore possible that bhagat marry more distantly than non-bhagat because they have to go further to find a wife.

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1. McCurdy found that in 1962 in Udaipur District, Bhils married within 40 kilometre, and 20 per cent of marriages were with 3/50 villages in a north-east/south-west axis [D.W. McCurdy 'A Bhil Village of Rajasthan', pp.360-362].

Table 6.2.2. statistically summarizes the difference between bhagat and non-bhagat marriages in terms of distance from the wife's village. The data for each of the villages was classified according to age of the wife and distance and direction of the village. For any one village most marriages are between the men of that village and women from about twenty other villages, i.e. an alliance established in 1915 through taking a wife from a certain village tends to be repeated over time, through the phenomenon of visiting in-laws (vevai/vevan).

TABLE 6.2.2:

Average distance to wife's village (in kilometres).

	Non- <u>bhagat</u>	<u>Bhagat</u>
JAGBOR	17.3	20.2
GALANDAR	13.2	16.1
BALVANIYA	15.3	20.0
RATAPANI	21.1	22.5

Most wives of both bhagat and non-bhagat Bhils come from villages lying to the north and east of their husband's village. This is established for the four villages studied. Bhils' general impression is that marriages are to the north-east. The explanation they give is that distant relatives (haqai) live there already. Bhagat are statistically less likely to follow this tendency than non-bhagat.

TABLE 6.2.3

Direction of wife's village.

	Non- <u>bhagat</u>	<u>Bhagat</u>
Wife's village		
north or east:		
JAGBOR	63%	44%
GALANDAR	81%	66%
BALVANIYA	85%	-*
RATAPANI	86%	-*

* 100%, but less than 10 cases recorded.

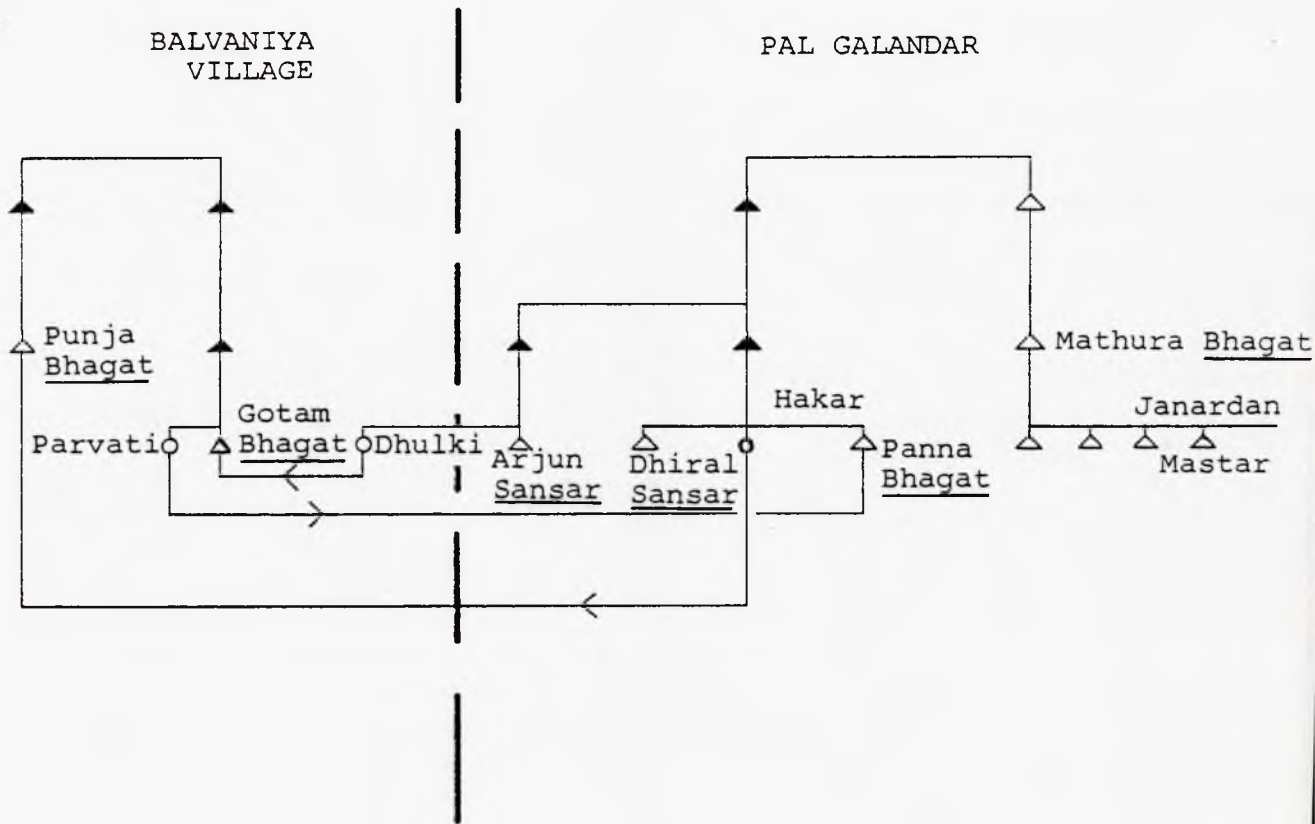
McCurdy's data from a Bhil village near Udaipur established that Bhils married outside their village, but within a forty kilometre radius. The data I collected, south of Udaipur, in western Dungarpur, agree with McCurdy's findings, and therefore establishes a consistency in space. But because the data was analyzed diachronically it also indicates that two identifiable tendencies for men to marry women from the north-east, and for bhagat families to marry more distantly than non-bhagat families, are also consistent over time.

There are some ethnographic examples of marriage exchanges between two villages, also indicated by the ambiguity and jokes associated with the term 'in-law' (vevan / vevai).

Figure 6.2.1 illustrates reciprocal exchanges established between the extended families of two groups of patrilineal cousins living as groups, in close proximity in two villages. The exchange is all the more remarkable in that one of the groups is bhagat, and the other not, although the latter's patrilineal cousins belong to the highest status bhagat family in Pal Galandar. In fact after marriage the two Galandar women and the Galandar men converted, and became bhagat, although in the man's case there was an intervening period of fifteen years between marriage and conversion. He did not convert, therefore, until the pleasures of mahudi had dimmed with age, and the future marriages of his children were imminent. This ethnographic example however is an exception to the logic of the exogamic prescriptions which push the Bhils out in search of new villages with which to make alliances. The marriage exchanges delineated in Figure 6.2.1 represent a compromise to the practicalities of finite marriage choices and familiarity through the (vevai/vevan) in-law acquaintances established in a preceding generation. Patrilineal cousins (kakabahanabhai) are therefore in the useful liminal category of being considered brothers for certain purposes, and members of discrete families for others.

The main point about this exchange of women between extended family groups living in two villages is that bhagat have married non-bhagat, suggesting that considerations other than purity are primary when marriages are being negotiated.

Figure 6.2.1 Exchanges of women between patrilineal sets in Balvaniya and Pal Galandar.



Irregular unions (natru)

Bhagat marry more distantly than non-bhagat. They are also less inclined to form irregular unions. A wife may be taken by love marriage or elopement (natru) which is not agreed to by the parents, either because of a large status difference between the couple, or because of a previous marriage of the wife. If a man is able by his charm to induce a woman from a higher family to run off with him, he is liable for a large brideprice (dapo), paid to her furious father, or former husband. If he entices a girl from a poor or weak family, he may pay nothing. Irregular unions therefore often indicate a gross inequality between partners.

The incidence of irregular unions has always been high in Jagbor, where average land holdings are smallest, and comprised over one half of unions before 1945, and over one third after 1945. It is much higher among non-bhagat than bhagat, but is also present among this second category after 1955. There were no cases of bhagat love marriages before 1955. By contrast, the other settlements have less incidents of irregular unions. They also have more land.

In summary, love marriages or irregular unions, when aggregated with all marriages in four villages, appear to have decreased from about 30 per cent to 20 per cent of all marriages over the past fifty years. The wide variation between villages before 1945

has decreased, and there has been a tendency for all villages to approach a mean after 1945 (cf., Figure 6.2.2). The non-bhagat rate of irregular unions remains higher than the bhagat rate. An important reason for the difference may be that non-bhagat husbands are poorer than bhagat husbands, and non-bhagat wives have less to lose economically if they go to another man. The frequency of irregular unions, on a village basis, correlates with land shortage in the villages, suggesting that such unions are encouraged by poverty.

The smaller percentage of bhagat marriages which are irregular may be explained by the slightly greater wealth of bhagat or by the bhagat tendency, conscious or otherwise, to imitate some of the mores of higher caste Hindus, including prescription of elopement. Figure 6.2.2 illustrates the changes in the rate of love marriages or elopement since 1935 for the four villages.

Figure 6.2.2. Frequency of irregular unions (natru).

Percentage of all
marriages which are
natru

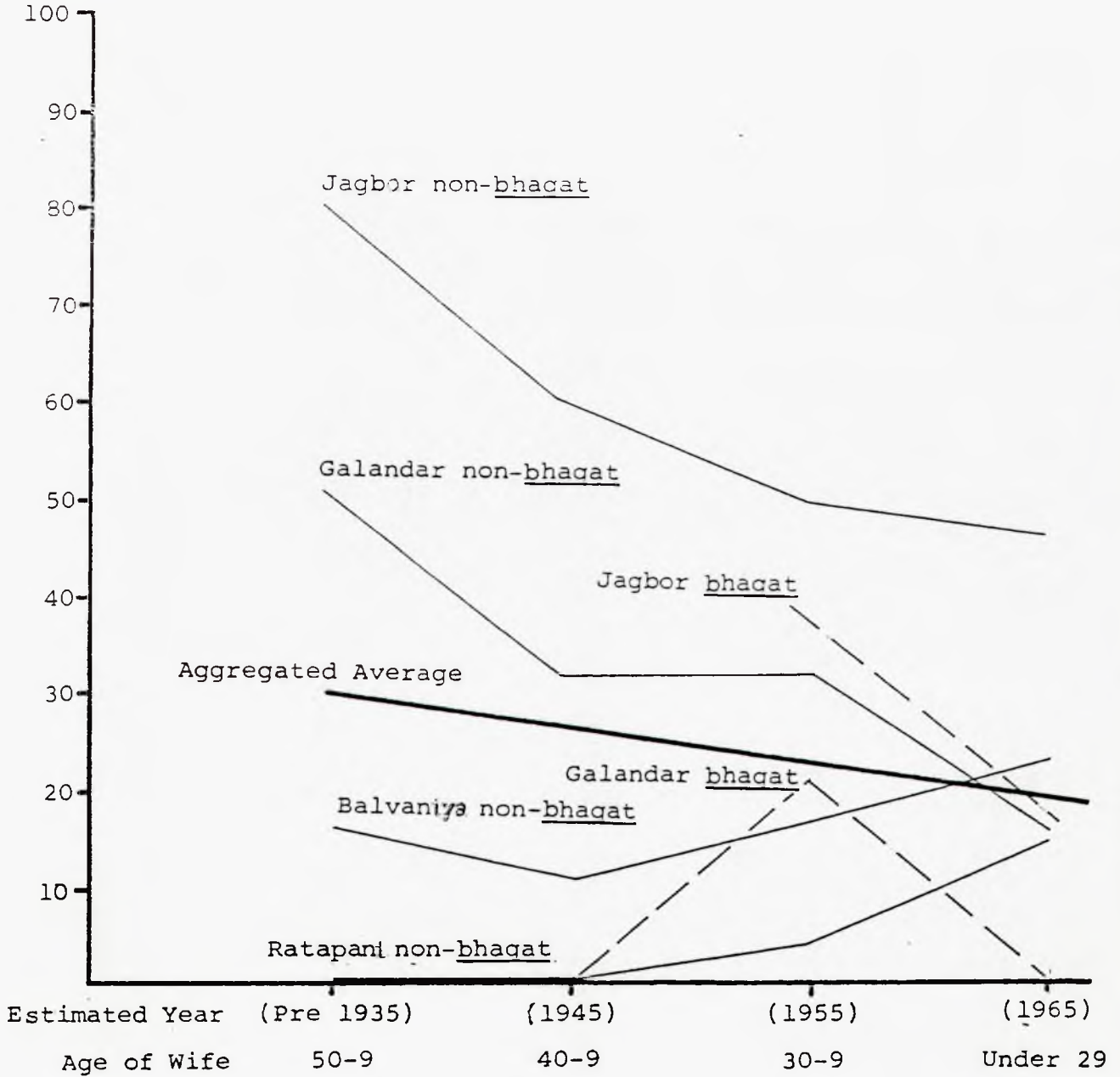


Table 6.2.4 documents variations in brideprice during the history of living informants in villages of western Dungarpur. Data were collected using government voters' rolls, which show the names and estimated dates of birth of all adults in a village. (See FN 1) People have a remarkably detailed knowledge of the brideprice and jewellery paid for their own wives, and also for their relatives' and neighbours' wives in the village. People thought it was natural that I too would be interested in these matters. Informants had only a vague idea of the date of their marriage, but it was possible to analyze data historically by assuming that all wives married at fifteen years of age, an assumption that cannot be far from what actually occurred. (See FN 2)

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1. At first I encountered difficulty obtaining accurate information from Bhils I did not know well concerning the amount of brideprice they had received for their daughters. It was usually underestimated. Part of the explanation may be the cultural self-consciousness of perpetrating a brideprice system when surrounded by a society practising dowry systems. This self-consciousness has also been reinforced by actions of the State in the past. The 1942 Annual Report for the State of Dungarpur lists fifteen prosecutions for receiving illegal brideprice payments (dapa) and Rs. 2,538 were imposed, of which fines Rs. 282 were realized [Report on the Administration of the State of Dungarpur, Government of India, Jaipur, 1942.]
 2. In 1959, the average age of 415 Bhil women in southern Rajasthan was 13.3, 14.4 and 15.1 years, depending on whether they were of the third/second-ascending, or first generation [R. Ahuja 'Marriage among the Bhils,' Man in India, vol. 46, no. 3, pp. 233-40.]

TABLE 6.2.4:

Average brideprice payments in rupees, to the bride's father, for marriage (vivah), or for irregular unions (natru), in four Dungarpur villages (own data).

Date of payment	1965-1981		1955-1964		1945-1954		before 1945	
	<u>vivah</u>	(<u>natru</u>)	<u>vivah</u>	(<u>natru</u>)	<u>vivah</u>	(<u>natru</u>)	<u>vivah</u>	(<u>natru</u>)
<u>Non-bhagat</u>								
JAGBOR	101	(800)	88	(170)	90	(500)	141	(150)
BALVANIYA	285	(425)	290	(450)	196	(300)	77	(200)
GALANDAR	320	(315)	351	(469)	236	(375)	300	no data
RATAPANI	288	(500)	190	(400)	325	(512)	no data	(500)
<u>Bhagat</u>								
JAGBOR	74	(500)	72	(300)	85	no data	no data	no data
BALVANIYA	200	(280)	300	(292)	340	(205)	53	no data
GALANDAR	319	-	308	(525)	209	no data	173	no data

The amount of compensation paid in cases of irregular unions or love marriages (natru) is usually much larger than brideprice paid in connection with an arranged marriage. It should be noted, however, that no compensation is paid in grossly hypergamous cases of irregular unions, and these cases were not included in the data on average payments, as no payments were involved, and it would therefore distort the averages. The payments for irregular unions therefore document the cases of hypogamous relationships.

Ethnographic reports of average brideprices paid in Bhil settlements, over time, suggest that brideprice was once much more substantial, in real terms. (See FN 1)

Since the nineteenth century, bhagat leaders have urged Bhils to pay either no brideprice at marriage, or a stipulated small amount. They have only achieved success in Jagbor, where most bhagat paid Rs. 67, Rs. 81 or Rs. 101. Bhagat beliefs have therefore had occasional success in modifying traditional economic behaviour. Most interestingly, it has also achieved lower non-bhagat brideprices paid in the same village. Elsewhere bhagat allegiance would appear not to have influenced behaviour in this regard, and there is little consistent variation, over time, between bhagat and other Bhils. The greater variations between, rather than within villages, would appear to underline the importance of village residence for cultural norms in practice. Identification with the status group bhagat alone, is therefore a poor indicator for predicting how much brideprice a man will pay for his wife. Village residence is a better indicator.

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1. Brideprice payments among the Bhils were reported to be Rs. 20 or six to twelve cattle in the Vindhya in 1880 [Kincaid]; Rs. 75 to 300 in West Khandesh in 1948 [Naik, n.d. pp. 76, 130] Rs. 700 to 1000 or ten cattle in Ratanmal in 1953 [Nath, 1960, pp. 64, 141]; Rs. 200 in the Udaipur District in 1962 [McCurdy, 1964, pp. 69, 320] and about Rs. 400, i.e. the price of one bull, in western Dungarpur in 1981 [own data.]

Concurrent with the decline in the real value of brideprice has been a large increase in the average amount paid for rakam, the jewellery presented at marriage to the bride, from the groom's family. On average, it has increased from Rs. 20 in 1940, when one was paid Rs. 0.5 for a day's labour (i.e. 40 days labour) to Rs. 2,000 in 1980, when one was paid Rs. 5 for a day's labour (i.e. 400 days labour). The implication appears to be that brideprice, given to the father of the bride, has declined rapidly perhaps because of the relative decrease in the value of labour to the Bhils, including women's labour, as land has become scarce. A greater availability of cash has been used on jewellery purchases by the groom's family, for the new household created by the marriage.

The raising of funds for both brideprice and jewellery purchased for marriage provides an indicator of the relative importance of close consanguineal kin, shared village residence, and of kin living in other villages. Bhils carefully list all those who give money for brideprice and jewellery purchases, their clan and ward, and the amount given. In a typical case there were 96 donations from members of ten different clans, both bhagat and non-bhagat, living in five different wards of a village, which totalled Rs. 441, and there were 24 relatives from 18 other villages who donated Rs. 313. The father of the groom and his brothers raised the balance of about Rs. 1500.

The material exchanges are cancelled upon the death of a woman who has not borne children, confirming the impression that a

strong aspect of marriage is that of a business agreement. (See FN 1).

In summary, the family, marriage and producing children, particularly sons, are important to all Bhils. Many aspects of kinship and marriage are also common to both bhagat and other Bhils, including those employed by government. For instance almost all Bhils reside in a village and marry outside their clan and village. The village seems to have been an important identity marker for many years. The importance of common residence in a village is an extension of the affective ties resulting from virilocal marriages, and from brothers living separately, but within communicating distance. Colloquially, marriage is often referred to as an alliance between villages.

Statistical surveys establish that there are differences between bhagat and non-bhagat marriages. Bhagat tend to marry more distantly than other Bhils, and are less inclined to marry along a north-east marriage chain which Bhils referred to, and which was confirmed by recording all marriages in four villages. Bhagat do sometimes marry non-bhagat, and exchanged women

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1. Two months after the niece of the postmaster I was living with died in childbirth, the woman who was reputed to be a witch visited and asked: 'Ye līvavālā, jeth, dhanī, kākājī, babhajī, te jātarejā ke laī qiyā?'. 'Have the elder brother, husband and uncles come and taken (the jewellery) back?'

between extended groups of agnates in two of the villages studied. Bhagat do not form an endogamous class. Other considerations, and not one's purity from belonging to the bhagat status group, are most important in establishing a marriage. Non-bhagat are more likely to form irregular unions than bhagat. The difference may be explained by the greater poverty of the Bhils who are not bhagat, or by a greater concern among bhagat for the purity of women. Membership of a status group is not absolute, but articulates differences which are important in negotiating marriages. The value of brideprice has decreased in historical times, and there may be economic reasons for the decrease. The economic value of women's labour has become relatively less important as land has become scarce because of population growth. In some cases bhagat beliefs have anticipated the economic reasons for change. Bhagat leaders of the bhakti movement have advocated the payment of small fixed amounts of brideprice, and their entreaties for reform have sometimes been heeded. The value of rakam has increased substantially.

Identification with the status groups occur between family groups, and within villages. The villages are important identity markers in themselves but within the villages status group membership indicates qualitative differences in many facets of the lives of men and women. Some of the qualitative differences suggested by status group membership are also associated with membership of a dominant clan in a village, or with engagement in a particular occupation.

6.3 Influences on membership of a status group - Clan membership

The Bhil clan (atak) is a patrilineal descent category. All Bhils must marry outside their clan. Marriage is virilocal. In a village, men tend to be surrounded by other households who are members of the same clan.

It can be established from Tables 6.3.1 to 6.3.4 that a traditional Bhil institution, the clan (atak), is important within a particular village for predicting whether or not one is bhagat (vegetarian). (See FN 1)

It is traditional to associate dominance with one particular clan in a village. Many Bhil songs begin by mentioning the name of a village, and then asking: 'Which clan has the power in the village, and which man has the power in that clan?' The tradition appears to be important in contemporary Dungarpur. The four villages surveyed each tend to be dominated by one or two clans. Usually there are also other clans in any particular village, but these are represented by much smaller numbers. An ancestor of a

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1. A.C. Mayer [Caste and Kinship in Central India: A Village and its Region, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1960, pp. 166, 272] found clan branches were used mainly for ritual or exagomy but notes that Rajputs elsewhere had strong agnatic structures. Shah and Shraff [M. Singer, ed., Traditional India: Structure and Change, The American Folklore Society, Philadelphia, 1959, p.53] state that in each Rajput State the governing authority rested in the hands of the hereditary chief.

minority clan often first moved to a settlement by becoming a resident son-in-law (gher zamai) of a member of one of the major clans of the village, even though, in northern India, villages are exogamous and marriage is normally virilocal.

A division of the villages into bhagat and non-bhagat family groups according to clan establishes that clan membership is important for allegiance to the bhagat status group. In Jagbor most (56 per cent) households belong to the two largest clans. There is an almost absolute tendency for bhagat identification to be clan based. With the exception of one household, all other households identified with the same status class as did other members of their clan in that village.

TABLE 6.3.1:

Jagbor bhagat (vegetarian) and non-bhagat family groups by clan membership.

	<u>Bhagat</u>	Non- <u>bhagat</u>
Bhagora clan	17	-
Josiala clan	-	12
Pandvala clan	5	1
Five other clans	-	17
TOTAL	22	30

Table 6.3.2 lists the number of bhagat and non-bhagat family groups in Galandar. The Table lists a large number of clans, but if one analyzes Galandar by means of its constituent wards, there

is a consistent pattern of one major clan for each ward. For instance the thirteen Ahari, and two Karadi family groups, live together in the one ward. None of them are bhagat. This pattern of one clan group dominating in a particular area, but living near a smaller number of one or two other clans, is consistent with nineteenth century accounts of groups of related Bhils establishing themselves in virgin territory, and farming it by means of shifting agriculture.

In Galandar as a whole, 70 per cent of family groups belong to the one clan, the Katara. Almost all bhagat are drawn from the numerically dominant clan, and most bhagat live in or near the Talab, meaning 'reservoir' ward. This ward is built around a ruined Siv temple, which was partly rebuilt in 1981. There is an ancient embankment nearby, hence the name 'Talab'. Between the embankment and the remains of the temple lie the hero stones described in Chapter 3.4. The ward is therefore apparently the oldest settled part of Galandar. It also has the best land in the village.

TABLE 6.3.2:

Galandar bhagat (vegetarian) and non-bhagat family groups by clan membership.

	<u>Bhagat</u>	Non- <u>bhagat</u>
Katara clan	57	228
Karadi clan	2	38
Ahari clan	-	16
Damor clan	-	15
Kother clan	-	10
Kalauua clan	2	1
Eleven other clans	-	39
TOTAL	61	347

In Balvaniya 58 per cent of households belong to one clan, and five of their households, all members of one patrilineal sibling set, and all neighbours, are bhagat. There are twelve other clans, the largest are the Katara clan, comprised of 15 households. Five other clans have both bhagat (vegetarian) and non-bhagat households. However, the bhagat of Amaliya clan dispute the authenticity of the other clans' purity. The Amaliya say that the other clans are not bhagat.

TABLE 6.3.3:

Balvaniya bhagat (vegetarian) and non-bhagat family groups by clan membership.

	<u>Bhagat</u>	Non- <u>bhagat</u>
Amaliya clan	5	66
Katara clan	1	14
Derdun clan	-	8
Karadi clan	4	5
Manat clan	2	1
Roat clan	2	1
Seven other clans	1	13
TOTAL	15	108

In the new government settlement of Ratapani, the only bhagat household constructed a large kacca (packed mud) temple, painted white, for Kalka Mata, next to their house in the village. The household head called himself both bhopa (sorcerer) and bhagat. His brother cared for an older temple of Ramdev, in the village. The family belong to the Manat clan, who together with a larger clan comprise 55 per cent of households of Ratapani.

TABLE 6.3.4

Ratapani bhagat (vegetarian) and non-bhagat family groups by clan membership.

	<u>Bhagat</u>	Non- <u>bhagat</u>
Khuntiya clan	-	31
Manat clan	1	20
Eighteen other clans	-	42
TOTAL	1	93

The basic pattern, therefore, is for one numerically dominant clan, or at Jagbor and Ratapani, two numerically dominant clans, to comprise between 54 and 70 per cent of the total population. These dominant clans never live in a ward by themselves, but always with a few members of other clans, whose forebears sometimes moved to the area as resident sons-in-law, i.e. as husbands of daughters of members of the dominant clan. It is members of the dominant clan who elect to become bhagat. They thereby gain greater status than their meat-eating neighbours, and they also gain access to ideas from the greater tradition of Indian Hinduism, whose rich mythologies offer tentative solutions to the contradictions faced by those who have stepped up one rung of the long ladder of Indian hierarchy. The importance of the patrilineal sibling set, that is the clan as locally represented in the ward, to this existential decision to become bhagat, is nicely illustrated in Jagbor. Jagbor has the highest (42 per cent) proportion of bhagat. Here all members of the numerically dominant clan are bhagat. With the exception of only one household, all the members of any given clan here either belong to bhagat or non-bhagat households, but never to both.

Occupation

Pretension to otherworldly status through bhakti (devotion), by becoming bhagat and strictly avoiding meat and alcohol, by consuming only pure substances, is often related to the gaining of a government position, or the anticipation of gaining a position.

Most Bhil government employees, particularly school masters, are bhagat even though bhagat form a minority. The exception to this general trend are the forestry officers, whose superiors include Rajputs. Often Rajputs are not vegetarian. Bhil officials who are not bhagat usually are forestry officers, although there are also some school teachers who are not bhagat. Two Bhil college lecturers in Dungarpur and Banswara also openly state that they are not vegetarian, and that they drink alcohol. But they have read about meat-eating by people of high status outside India, and about countries where marriage was not determined by caste.

True piety amongst Bhils demands not only vegetarianism and total abstinence from alcohol, but also prescribes that food and water may be consumed only from brass containers from other bhagat. A bhagat therefore needs to have some wealth, in order to afford the brass implements. The bhagat of true piety would refuse to take even tea from a teastall at a bus stand or in a town. Such piety would often present practical difficulties for any Bhil living for long periods in town, whether as a teacher or

migrant labourer. Many bhagat are teachers employed by a government service increasingly dominated in southern Rajasthan by vegetarian Brahmin and vegetarian merchant castes. (See FN 1) Another source for Bhil bhagat are rich peasants who can afford the brass kitchen utensils that bhagat require. Rich or middle peasants may use their new religion to articulate their relative economic advantage, or to provide a partial resolution to the contradictions posed by their relatively high economic status in the village and their low purity status in the world outside the village.

From Table 6.3.5 it is apparent that most of the government officials in villages are bhagat, and that bhagat households are more likely to include a member who is a government official. In Jagbor, 17 percent of bhagat families include a government employee, and all government employees are bhagat.

TABLE 6.3.5:

Bhagat and non-bhagat families with members employed by government.

	<u>Bhagat</u> families with government employee (%)		Non- <u>bhagat</u> families with government employee (%)	
Jagbor	4	(17)	0	(0)
Galandar	6	(10)	7	(2)
Balvaniya	2	(13)	2	(2)
Ratapani	0	(0)	3	(3)

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1. N. N. Vyas, 'Social Processes in an Emerging Tribal Displacement Situation in Southern Rajasthan', Tribe, vol. 9, no. 4, 1976.

For the Bhils, the relationship between what to a non-Indian might seem the unrelated phenomena of vegetarianism and government employment, is dialectical, a 'discussion' which is continuously articulated, and at certain points in the discussion terms may be radically redefined. I asked one Bhil student boarding in Dungarpur why some Bhils in his village were bhagat and some not. He explained that Bhils became bhagat if their children were studying, as the parents hoped that this might provide a significant advantage for their children's chances of gaining government employment. The hypothesis was valid within his own family circle. His parents were bhagat. His uncle had been bhagat at marriage, but when his children left school, he reverted to the pleasures of meat and mahudi, much to the horror of his wife's parents. Rich peasants might become bhagat if they had children studying, but government did not explicitly recruit only Bhils who were bhagat, as Table 6.3.5 establishes.

Bhagat families are more likely to be wealthy, either from their employment with government, or from farming. They usually invest some of this wealth to increase production on their land, usually by means of an irrigation pump fixed to a well near their fields. Most pumps in the remote areas of Dungarpur are diesel powered, but are operated by electricity where this is available.

TABLE 6.3.6:

Ownership of irrigation pumps and government employment.

	Government officials with pump (%)		Pump-owners not employed by government (%)	
Jagbor	1	(25)	3	(6)
Galandar	3	(30)	7	(2)
Balvaniya	3	(60)	10	(8)
Ratapani	2	(100)	4	(4)

In three of the villages bhagat are more likely to own irrigation pumps than non-bhagat but this merely reflects differences in wealth, rather than in religion. All families where a member has gained government employment tend to invest some of their wealth in paying off a loan for an irrigation pump. Table 6.3.6 suggests such economic difference is not determined by the fact of being bhagat, but rather by income as a government servant. Those who are not government servants usually gain the ability to repay loans on irrigation pumps through one member of the family labouring outside the village. In Jagbor 25 percent of families with a government employee own irrigation pumps but only 6 per cent of the other Jagbor families own irrigation pumps.

Tables 6.3.1 to 6.3.4 established that clan membership provided some indication of one's bhagat status within any village. The proclivity to labour outside the village varies greatly between villages. Unlike clan allegiances within a village, there is no consistent pattern of bhagat or non-bhagat in any village being more likely to engage in labour outside the village. On the one hand many bhagat beliefs are congenial with beliefs of greater India. On the other hand the strict practice of these beliefs - eating and drinking only from brass utensils and only accepting food from other Bhil bhagat - as mentioned above - can present problems in cities.

TABLE 6.3.7:

Families with a member who had laboured outside the village.

	Families with a member normally labouring out- side the village (%)		Average cultivable hectares per house- hold in village
Jagbor	17	(33)	1.90
Galandar			
Gamv ward	5	(5)	
Talab ward	16	(17)	
Panc Mahudi	0	(0)	
Pattalai	0	(0)	
All Galandar	21	(5)	2.83
Balvaniya	2	(2)	2.87
Ratapani	38	(40)	4.45

Village or ward solidarity appears to be an important factor in labour migration statistically, and also according to observation. Bhils are more inclined to travel to Ahmedabad to engage in labouring if they are in a group, or if they already know of other Bhils who are living there. Given the low status of labouring in Indian society, those families with little land are more likely to send a member to labour in the cities. But there is large variation between and within villages, as Table 6.3.7 makes clear. People may labour outside the village if they know relatives doing so (Talab ward), or if many people in their village do so (Ratapani).

The basic pattern in the four villages is for some middle-income peasants, from one of the larger clans in a village, to be politically dominant in any village. They are more often than

not bhagat. Members of the dominant clans are most alert and outward looking to the spiritual and ideological benefits of becoming bhagat in a national Indian context. Aspiration to purity or otherworldly status, through a bhakti whose manifest and visible signs of devotion to pure practices are renunciation of meat and mahudi, is often related to gaining government employment, or anticipation of gaining government employment, in the southern Rajasthan context where vegetarian Brahmin and Vaisya castes occupy senior government positions. There is no evidence to suggest, however, that Bhil bhagat are more modern, or less modern, than other Bhils. Bhagat Bhils are no more likely than other Bhils to adopt technological innovations such as irrigation pumps. Technological innovation is rather a function of income from government employment, or occasionally, labouring in Gujarat. Nor does one's status as a bhagat determine the likelihood of one's participation in migrant labour outside the village. The main stimulus for this is land shortage for the particular household.

Dumont saw the twin concepts of purity and power, embodied in the Brahmin and Kshatriya, as important for ordering the Indian universe. For the Bhils, the otherworldly status of the bhagat and the secular status of the government servant are important for ordering the Bhil universe. But the concepts of bhakti and sarkar have only a qualified realization in any status group. The concepts are important, but the outcome of any situation is determined by the complex interaction of several different

factors, rather than by one's membership of a status group. But at marriage and other ceremonies and negotiations the bhagat and the government official appear as pre-eminent masters, as brokers of status within the village.

6.4 Brokers of status

A minority of Bhils are bhagat. Fewer are government officials. The Bhil heroes make manifest important myths about bhakti and government, whose relevance touches all Bhils. Only during the past one hundred years have any walked in any numbers along the paths interlacing and connecting the Bhils' villages. Yet the heroes not only promulgate myths among Bhils. The heroes also dominate traditional ceremonies. The manner of their domination, their skills of negotiation, their management of relevant facts and contrived consensus is apparent when one observes any significant ceremony.

Significant ceremonies are created by groups of families. Weddings and funerals mark respectively the establishment and termination of affinal ties. Weddings and funerals also define the outer perimeters of effective kinship, and the transactions at these ceremonies are carefully recorded in writing by a relative appointed for that purpose. For other participants, outside the village, detailed recording of a person's name and gift is not necessary, and guests are referred to by their village.

At funerals consanguineal relations are identified by name, so that a brother's son's daughter is referred to by name (Jiva bhai ni suri). Affines are referred to by their relationship to the deceased, for instance the party which

includes the deceased man's daughter is referred to as 'daughter's husband' (zamai). Most of those present know the villages of these affines, if they do not know their names. The practice of the ritual serves as a mnemonic for grouping people into their villages of residence, and designating these groups by a kinship term.

Both funerals and weddings, however, involve all of the residents of a small village, and the proximate residents of a large pal. Even a large village shares the one cremation ground, on the border of the jungle. Although all villagers may be involved, there is a core of significant relatives. Only agnates of the deceased (brothers and patrilineal cousins) for instance, shave their heads at a funeral, (See FN 1), and they articulate the relationship as kakababhana bhai, meaning patrilineal cousin, a relationship which is also important in joint land-ownership.

In collecting payments for brideprice and rakam (jewellery), in participating in weddings, or terminating at funerals the ties created by marriage, kinship and proximate residence are of

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1. Except for W. Koppers [Die Bhil in Zentralindien p. 268.] the literature only mentions that relatives are shaved [T. B. Naik The Bhils: A Study, p. 166; S. J. Doshi Bhils: Between Societal Self-Awareness and Cultural Synthesis, p. 193; D. W. McCurdy 'A Bhil Village of Rajasthan', p. 331.]

primary importance. Allegiance to a status group, whether the bhagat or government officials, or allegiance to both these status groups, is of secondary importance.

At both weddings and funerals there is a communal meal, and the commensality of the funeral and bridal parties establishes their formal equality, and their trust in not fearing witchcraft at the hands of the other party with whom they are respectively creating and terminating ties of affinity. As mahudi is banned by bhagat, the sharing of food assumes greater liturgical importance. There is therefore alternative sacramental use of mahudi or choice food in ceremonies conducted respectively by non-bhagat and bhagat families.

The gift of a brideprice and jewellery to the bride suggests a formal superiority of the bride's parents. On the morning after a wedding the groom gives a turban to his wife's brother, which also suggests the acknowledgement of a debt to the wife-givers, as does his gift to his father-in-law of a goat if a sansari and a further gift of money if a bhagat, on the divali festival following his wedding.

Funerals in part are a reversal of the normal order. All wear their dirtiest and oldest clothes. Women file before men, and both sexes cover their heads in their own village. Like marriage, however, they also suggest a superiority of wife-givers over wife-takers, all else being equal. (see FN 1)

1. D.W. McCurdy 'A Bhil Village of Rajasthan', p.334.

My observations agree with Koppers (See FN 1) when he reports that the sister's husband or father's sister's husband alone bestows a turban on the son of the deceased. It is by this public act that a man states, before witnesses from many villages, his debts to his affines and their immediate descendant for their agreement to bestow a wife on him.

Significant ceremonies involve families, and symbolic acts usually include sharing a disbursement of food. The bhagat and the Bhil heroes employed by government intrude on the potential equality which significant ceremonies may for a time suggest.

The formal bias in favour of gifts to the wife-givers, which is symbolized in the Bhils' use of a brideprice instead of a dowry system, does not mean that one party is always superior to the other. The families of both the bride and groom attempt to arrange a marriage with a family of at least equal status to their own. Superiority may be determined by a combination of factors, including religion, wealth and education. The tendency to marry people about equal to oneself is so obvious that Bhils usually do not need to articulate it. For instance the only person in Galandar with a Master's degree, a nephew of Janardan the deputy headmaster, said he could not marry the daughter of the local Bhil Member of Parliament because their family was too high. When I suggested to a Bhil college graduate from Jagbor that he marry the nubile (juvani) young daughter of the richest man in another village, he stated that his father wanted him to marry an educated girl. He added that Lalu, an employee of the

1. W. Koppers Die Bhil in Zentralindien, p. 271.

Forestry Department and the father of the girl in question, ate meat. Although Lalu asserted he was bhagat and proudly wore his sacred thread in his village and in the town, his religious status was sometimes a matter of furious debate within his village. Lalu's daughter finally married the son of a schoolteacher who taught in Lalu's village and returned to his village, Rasta Pal, at the weekends. He was not as wealthy as Lalu, but he was a bhagat, and his son planned to go on to college. Lalu did not accept any brideprice (dapo) for his daughter. She was given silver jewellery (rakam) by her groom, and gold jewellery by her father. The schoolmaster's gloss on the arrangement, in a strange mixture of Hindi and Wagadi, was that he was a poor, small man and Lalu was a great man. (See FN 1) Of course it is obvious that superiority in education is not the same thing as superiority in this-worldly or otherworldly status, but the separate hierarchies of these three fields interact in interesting ways, and these interactions are explored below. In western Dungarpur, success in one sphere has interesting implications for the other spheres.

The brokers of status must also take into account differences between Bhil villages. Jagbor bhagat consider themselves of higher piety than Galandar bhagat, who smoke, or in Wagadi 'drink' cigarettes, and keep dogs, animals which, if given the opportunity, readily eat meat.

1. 'Maīm qarīb nāno ādmī. Lālū motho ādmī he.'

Contemporary marriage ceremonies in western Dungarpur are similar to those described by McCurdy in a village north of Dungarpur District in 1962. Most marriages occur between April and June, typically in Vaisakh (April-May). This is general in north India. They therefore occur after the harvest and before the rains. They are initiated by the father of the groom and his close relatives travelling to the bride's village. Later the bride's family returns the visit.

Gifts are important for marriage and in part establish the difference between marriages and ephemeral secular encounters. Table 6.4.1 summarizes how the exchanges of a Bhil marriage differ from marriage payments in a caste village in north India. The Table suggests that the main difference is one of wealth. Wealthy Bhils, particularly those who are bhagat government officials, are likely to approach the elaboration of gift exchanges characteristic of caste marriages. (See FN 1) Bhils themselves characterize the difference as one of wealth rather than one of religion or association with the government. They state that 'rich' Bhils practise the elaborate exchanges of caste Indians while most Bhils cannot afford to do so. There is no absolute difference between the marriage prestation system of castes and of Bhils.

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1. Tambiah links the size of marriage presentations with permanency of unions. He distinguishes a north Indian tendency for hypergamy and dowries, from a Central Indian tendency for marriage from both sides to be fairly equal. [J. Goody and S.J. Tambiah Bridewealth and Dowry, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1973, p.98.]

TABLE 6.4.1:

Bhil marriage payments compared to marriage payments in a caste village. (See FN 1).

	<u>Payments by bride's family</u>		<u>Payments by groom's family</u>	
	BHIL MARRIAGE	(Caste Marriage)	BHIL MARRIAGE	(Caste Marriage)
		bride's kin	GROOM'S KIN	
		solicit a groom	SOLICIT A BRIDE	
Engagement				
(<u>sagai</u>)	BRIDE'S KIN	(bride's father	-	-
	SEND A	sends money to		
	VEGETABLE	groom and to girls		
		of his clan in		
		that village)		
Fixing of				
wedding date				
(<u>laqan</u>)	NOTHING SENT	(bride's family	GROOM SENDS	(groom's family
	MAHUDI OR MEAT	send clothing to	A PLATE, GLASS	send clothing)
	MAY BE GIVEN	groom's mother)		
	TO GUESTS			
Giving of				
daughter				
(<u>kanyadan</u>)	BRIDE'S	(bride's father	GROOM GIVES	(groom's father
	FATHER GIVES	gives groom	SARI, BLOUSE,	gives ornaments
	BED, GIRDLE	dowry and	BRIDEPRICE	and ribbons to
	AND LARGE POT	utensils)		bride
Other	BRIDE'S FATHER	(bride's father	GROOM'S FATHER	(groom's father
	FEEDS WEDDING	feasts groom's	INCURS NO	pays for groom's
	GUESTS	party)	EXPENSES (See	procession to
			FN 2)	bridal house)

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1. J. Goody and S.J. Tambiah, Bridewealth and Dowry, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1973, p. 90; O. Lewis Village Life in Northern India, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1958; own data.
 2. Bhikka Bhai, the local Bhil member of the national parliament for Dungarpur and Banswara, and the only Bhil to own a car, does pay for his sons' wedding processions according to Bhils in western Dungarpur.

In most marriage negotiations, bhagat and government officials are important.

The exchanges listed in Table 6.4.1 refer to the daughter of a sansari Bhil man who married a bhagat wife, and himself converted to vegetarianism fifteen years later, just before attempting to arrange the marriage of the eldest of his six children. His eldest sons, however, were infamous for their mahudi drinking, and would eat meat whenever they could obtain it. Such exchanges suggest some of the negotiations between groups of patrilineal kin in different villages when they are forming an alliance through marriage. In March 1980 I accompanied the headman (gameti) from one Galandar ward and three of his patrilineal cousins including the father of the bride, to negotiate a marriage in Ratapani. This was in response to a February visit to Galandar by the groom's father's kin of Ratapani. Both parties made a special point of claiming they were bhagat, although this was not completely true in the case of the bride's party, and untrue for the groom. After pleasantries were exchanged, the bride's party got down to the main issues. Were there any government servants in the groom's extended family? How much land did he have, how many brothers? Did his family own a well or an irrigation pump? The gameti made a special point of ensuring agreement that the bride would not have to do paid labouring work after marriage. The gameti was a prominent Galandar bhagat, and led the negotiations. He was careful to check the information he received from the family of the potential groom with third parties.

The subsequent ceremony for fixing the date of the wedding (lagan) provides an opportunity to demonstrate how political negotiations pervade traditions, and show the articulation of the different roles of people claiming to be bhagat, or government servants. The ostensible purpose of an engagement ceremony (lagan) is to fix the date of the wedding with the aid of an astrologer. The Bhil's trust in astrology in these matters is shared with other Indians. In April (Vaisakh) 1981 in Pal Galandar there was the lagan of parties who were sansari and did not pretend to be other than sansari. Nevertheless a prominent bhagat, of the same clan as the bride but from a different ward, officiated by writing in red the name of the groom and bride, and by tentatively proposing a suitable date for the marriage ceremony. The groom himself was absent, and the elder brother of the groom accepted the wedding date. The groom's party included a man identified by his clothes, his wristwatch, and by the Bhils present, as a 'naukrivala', a government official.

Conversely on the bride's side the leader of negotiations was Janardan, the most educated man in Galandar, and a deputy headmaster in a nearby village of non-Bhils. Janardan is bhagat. Although he lived near the bride and was of the same clan, he was only distantly related to her. Janardan is the younger son of the headman (gameti) of the bride's ward. An elder cousin of a very old man who was not related to the bride or groom but lived in the same ward, a 'Bhagat Maharaj' or bhakti leader from a ward nearby, and the headman of a second

adjacent ward arrived by chance later. Janardan knew the economic situation of the bride's family, and was able to quickly assess the economic situation of the groom's family. A group of the politically significant men on each side separated themselves from the main party. It was, however, Janardan who decided that the brideprice (dapo) would be Rs. 350, and there would be three pieces of jewellery (rakam) paid to the bride. It was the headman (gameti) from a nearby ward who announced to the assembled party that 'This is the custom of our village' (See FN 1) After this Rs. 106 was given to the bride's father's younger brother as part payment, and counted by the headman and another senior man of her ward.

After agreement was reached, the bride was then brought weeping from the inside of her parent's house. The weeping articulated her ambivalence over her losing her ties with her parents and brothers in order to gain new ties with a husband, and ultimately, with their children. The solidarity of brothers was then symbolized by the bride's younger sister tying a coloured thread around the wrist of all her 'brothers', manifestly defined as comprising all the men of her village who were present at the ceremony. The bride's younger sister then marked all the brothers and uncles of the absent groom together with his father's sister's husband, with a tilak on their foreheads. The groom's party then distributed raw sugar to everyone, and the bride's parents gave tea to the four senior men among the guests. There is a wish to distribute gifts. It is the poverty of most Bhils which restricts them to gifts of tea for senior men.

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1. 'Yah amārā ritirivāj he'. McCurdy also noted the importance of consensus, of being influenced rather than of influencing, of sensing community support, for leadership among the Bhils. [J.P. Spradley and D.W. McCurdy Anthropology: The Cultural Perspective, John Wiley and Sons, New York, 1975, pp. 371-2.]

In marriage negotiations Bhil government officials have an important role to play, because of their status, wealth and skills. The government servants are not prone to transform their traditional cultural practices, but are more inclined to play a dominant part in them. In the town, for the most part, their status, wealth and skills are relatively modest. It is in the village that their achievements are accorded greater respect.

Marriages have important economic implications for families. The details of marriage negotiations have something of a business transaction about them, even though they are described as a custom peculiar to their village by the brokers of status who manage the transactions, and who are usually bhagat or government officials. The marriage negotiations tend to be managed by relatives from these two status groups, if available. This is the case even if a marriage concerns only sansari households, neither of which have a member employed by government. To this extent the status groups, and the assumption of a hierarchy or inequality on which they are based, presuppose the existence of Bhils who are not members of the bhagat or government employed status group, rather than indicate a wider class into which all Bhils are merging.

It is the brokers of status who are most adept at resolving the conflicts that ceremonies address: of village exogamy, resulting in one party, almost always the bride, losing their kin for most of the year; of status, as, in the eyes of the two families forming an alliance by marriage, their respective statuses are

never evenly matched; and of conflicts in the relative value of men and women. These latter conflicts are tentatively resolved by pretending that marriage is an exchange between groups of men who manage the negotiations. The conflicts are also articulated in a different fashion by the creation of an underworld of female witches, who possess other-worldly powers.

Villages provide the context for meaningful actions orchestrated by Bhil bhagat and government officials, the brokers of otherworldly and mundane status. The bhagat and government official are sources of power within the village context. They are called on to manage important negotiations between village Bhils who are not members of the status groups. The government official's greater esteem can be traced to financial advantage. The bhagat on the other hand attempts a reordering of the Bhils' cosmology through bhakti. The pervasiveness of the values of bhakti and sarkar and their reordering of Bhil values bestows prestige on the preeminent bearers of these new values in the village.

The bhagat and government official, by their presence, by their critical role in significant ceremonies and by their references to Bhils' symbolic systems influence the reality of all Bhils.

CHAPTER SEVEN: SONG

7. The Pleasure of Song

The economy and society of Bhils has changed radically during the period in which Bhils songs have been recorded, from 1875 to the present. An analysis of Bhil songs reveals that they too have changed and developed during the past 100 years even though the Bhils' celebration of song looks to outsiders and to Bhils themselves to be one of the most traditional cultural markers.

The themes of the songs reflect a preoccupation with the problematical aspects of Bhil culture and with the culturally anomalous. These problematical aspects have changed over time. Songs are known by Bhils who are bhagat, and occasionally sung by Bhil government officials. Songs are celebrated, and sung, preeminently by Bhils who are not members of these status groups. Songs tell us much about the changing contemporary concerns of all Bhils, and provide a context for the Bhils cultural elaboration of bhakti and government. Together the songs, and beliefs and practices associated with bhakti and government, comprise a complex ideological system which allows Bhils to restate their relationships to a changing world and to each other.

Early Indian writers commented on the beautiful singing and dancing of the 'Bhillas' of central India. The earliest records

of their songs, however, date from 1875, when five were transcribed and translated in an appendix to the first ethnographic article on the Bhils, by Hendley, the surgeon to the Bhil Corps stationed at Kherwara. I analyzed 310 Bhil songs which have been recorded during the last 100 years. Only one, about a prospective bridegroom killed by his in-laws, was borrowed from non-Bhil, in fact Rajput, sources. The language of the Bhils, Wagadi or 'forest language', is close to the language spoken by non-Bhils in the towns. Non-Bhils do not understand the songs, unless they have lived in Bhil settlements for extended periods of time. Generally Bhils do not sing non-Bhil songs, and non-Bhils do not sing Bhil songs. They are therefore unique property of the Bhils. Bhil songs elicit greater participation from their audiences than written literature or sacred texts handed down by tradition. Songs are sometimes created on the spot by non-specialists. Except for sorcerers' mantra (sacred texts), and bhajan (devotional songs), they appear to have a short life. They make few cosmic references and do not argue a philosophical position. Bhil songs are particularly popular among Bhil sansari. The songs are dialectical in presentation in that first the men sing a line twice, then the women repeat the line, or slightly modify it. The songs usually form part of a dance performance. Bhils form lines of the same sex when dancing, and these lines describe the rotating halves of two circles, one male and one female, which share a common centre. The songs involve sound and thought, and also the external world affecting all senses. The songs bring to consciousness subconscious conflicts. They present a schema in which conflicts can be represented and to this extent contained, if not resolved.

TABLE 7.1.1:

The subject matter of recorded Bhil songs.

Sources of songs and year collected:	Hendley 1875	Census 1931	Koppers 1938	Phulji Bhai 1954	Kauffman 1980
Subject matter:	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Agriculture		2 (50)	16 (39)	9 (8)	2 (1)
Famine				7 (7)	3 (2)
Hunting				2 (2)	1 (1)
Tax				6 (6)	
AGGRESSION					
English	1 (20)		2 (5)	8 (7)	1 (1)
Banditry/ rebellion/ folkhero	1 (20)	2 (50)		13 (12)	14 (9)
Feud				10 (9)	2 (1)
Military defection				2 (2)	
Baniyas				2 (2)	1 (1)
EROS					
Adultery/ love/ elopement	2 (40)		3 (7)	9 (9)	50 (33)
Marriage			12 (29)	16 (15)	44 (29)
Birth			3 (7)	1 (1)	
TRANSCENDENCE					
Religion/ sacrifice	1 (20)		2 (5)	9 (8)	1 (1)
<u>Bhakti</u>			1 (2)	1 (1)	20 (13)
Holi			1 (2)	3 (3)	3 (2)
Fairs/swinging				4 (4)	4 (3)
Evil eye					2 (1)
Insult songs					3 (2)
Other			2 (5)	5 (5)	1 (1)
TOTAL	5 (100)	4 (100)	42 (101)*	107 (101)*	152 (101)

* Constituting percentages taken to the nearest decimal point.

There have been at least 310 Bhil songs recorded between 1875 and 1981. Table 7.1.1 classifies them according to their major concerns. The best songs deal with several themes, or a series of oppositions apparent in different contexts of Bhil life. The songs seem to deal with problematic or anomalous aspects of Bhil culture, as they change through time.

The five songs published by Hendley in 1875 provide an overture to some of the themes of later collections. (See FN 1) There is a song about the British. It exhorts the Bhils to fight the invaders - or more precisely it presents Bhils with a choice: 'Take your sword or fly', as 'the raja has run away.' (See FN 2) A caustic Bhil social criticism is evident here. The song states: 'The British want a 12 year camp and 13 years of taxes.' A second song satirizes established religion: one must pay the tax collector and guide when one wants to go on pilgrimage. As can be seen from Table 7.1.1 many songs concern perennial themes of love and war. One song of 1875 focuses on the Minas, an upwardly aspiring group of Bhils found in southern and eastern Rajasthan, including eastern Dungarpur. A Mina woman sings to her lover: 'God has made us a perfect pair, let us leave my vile husband.'

One hundred years later Bhils also sang of love and war. But there have also been changes in the preoccupation articulated in the songs, and the preoccupations seem to principally concern major

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1. T.H. Hendley 'An Account of the Maiwar Bhils', pp. 382-388.
 2. This may be a reference to the Dungarpur ruler Jasvantsimha, who fled to a Bhil settlement when Sindhia's troops occupied Dungarpur at the beginning of the nineteenth century (Chapter 3.1 above).

contemporary problems. One major problem for the Bhils over the last 100 years has been the transition from an economy based on slash and burn agriculture, pastoralism, and occasional banditry, to one based on intensive agriculture, supplemented, for some, by government service and labour migration.

In the local southern Rajasthan context different economies may promote contradictory values. Meat-eating, drinking alcohol, brideprice and greater relative freedom of women, demonstrated by divorce and widow remarriage, are celebrated features of the old culture. They fit poorly with the values of higher-caste Hinduism propagated by the town dwellers with whom the Bhils are now in daily contact. The songs reflect contemporary problems rather than simply describe contemporary life. For instance one song in 1875 provides religious support for brigandage -

'Mother Bhavani is pleased with you.

Sacrifice a goat to Mata.

Kill all the Rajputs.

If you rob Javalpur in the midst of the road..

Your name will be immortal.' See FN 1

The 1875 ethnography suggests the principal source of wealth was shifting agriculture and cattle rearing on the hills. The cattle were owned by men but herded by women, who also collected forest products. As Chapter Three makes clear, large scale brigandage

1 T.H. Hendley, op. cit., p.383.

had been contained by 1875. Shifting agriculture and cattle rearing was not mentioned in the songs recorded in 1875. Adultery, according to Hendley, was heavily fined and rare. In the 1875 songs, the largely pacified Bhils are exhorted to fight the British invaders or Rajput rulers, and women ask their lovers for help in leaving their vile husbands. After 1875 the themes of famine and banditry are often linked. The first provides justification for the second. Later still, tax and forced labour in a quasi-feudal economic formation become an issue, but disappear after 1948 as the political coercion of quasi-feudal policy is replaced by the economic pressure of a modern cash economy.

A reading of Bhil songs collected in Central India, south of Rajasthan, supports the conclusion that the representations in the songs do not usually describe contemporary social and economic facts but describe social and economic problems. In 1931 Venkatachar, observed that few Bhils had taken to cultivation in central India. Most were still a wandering population and as a rule had no fixed village. (See FN 1) 'Some take up the work of village watchmen and a great many are addicted to plunder and theft.' In sickness, calamity or to obtain offspring, they made offerings to the spirits and the forest was set alight. The 1931 Census continues: 'Gradually the States are getting the Bhils to settle and become regular cultivators and many now hold leases from the Darbar like ordinary agriculturalists.' The songs from Central India collected in 1931 are very much concerned with intensive agriculture and irrigation, at precisely the period when, in Central India, such innovation was more an option of the future rather than a reality of the present. In a 1931 song, the

1. 'An Ethnographic Account of the Bhils of Central India', C.S. Venkatachar, Census of India 1931, vol. 1, part 3, (Ethnographical notes by various authors), p. 57.

God Megh caused a devastating famine because 125 Damor Bhils raped his daughters. The Damors migrate from Gujarat. They are given land by their sister's sons. A vazier of King Bhoja allows them to settle and he and a Baniya give the Bhils grain and coin which the Baniya collects with interest. The song has the conceivably realistic basis of Bhils being encouraged to settle as agriculturalists, and borrow money from Baniyas. It reveals a fanciful narrative of Bhils raping divine princesses, then being punished by drought; impregnating the Baniya's wife; being slaughtered by the king; then through magic marrying the royal princess in revenge. The song provides sufficient familiar elements for identity, but also elements of fantasy to transcend an alienating situation of coerced agricultural labour. Women of other castes, or goddesses, provide an instrument for ravishment, cuckholding, or revenge. Bhils treat as objects women of higher beings - gods, kings and baniya. It is likely that the Bhil reality was the reverse.

A second 1931 song is about a Bhil and his wife starting an orchard. A Bhil lord challenges the farmer's ownership of the land, and a desai decides in favour of whoever could fish a well, in this case the Bhil lord. He borrowed seeds from the half-Vaisya, half-Bhil magician conceived in the previous song, but his garden was destroyed by King Bhoja, and the Bhil lord was forced to drive a cart for the goddess Bhavani. These two songs involve the same elements treated differently. The first involves sexual intercourse with outsiders. Bhils rape divine princesses and marry earthly ones. The second involves a married Bhil

couple. In the first King Bhoja gives land, in the second he takes it away. In the first Bhils win a fight and return to a hill, a divine place. In the second a Bhil loses a fight and becomes a cart driver for the Goddess. Although the elements have different signs - of presence or absence, they do define common issues: sexual relations between Bhils and outsiders, payment of feudal rent for farming, engaging in armed struggle with feudal lords, and the value of fishing or magic. Both songs end with the exhortation: 'Eat, drink, be merry and gain pleasure.' The problem of intensive agriculture underlies both songs. In both Bhils are unsuccessful farmers. In reality they were gradually changing to settled agriculture.

In a third song, a Bhil, his uncles (mother's brothers) and nephews (sister's sons), disguise themselves as Nagar Brahmins and attempt to steal cattle, who ask: 'is it milk or our flesh you would eat?' The theft fails but the Bhil rapes and impregnates the goddess Camunda/Bhavani, who offers meat sacrifices from twelve liquor stills to her half-Bhil child. In the fourth song a Bhil ruler of twelve village wards cuts his finger and gives a tilak to the King of Jhabua, who in return authorizes the Bhil to plunder. Both songs are concerned with the issue of plunder. There are also associations with divinity or royalty.

Songs recorded in 1938 show a great deal of interest in agriculture and marriage, and much less interest in aggression or banditry.

The German anthropologist Koppers spent eight months motoring through Bhil territories. Helped by a Dutch missionary who knew Wagadi, he published 42 songs in German, and provided Wagadi texts for most of his translations. In 1938 the situation of the Bhils was the reverse of the vegetarian Patidar studied by Pocock. The Patidar had to kill birds and animals eating their crops. The Patidar also pretended that they did not kill as they were an ambitious upwardly mobile Hindu caste. (See FN 1) Conversely non-vegetarian Bhils in 1938 pretended they were hunting when in fact they were merely guarding their ripening crops. 'Who has hunted, killed, de-feathered, chopped into little pieces this peacock,' sings one song from a rakhvali (guarding the crop) cycle. As noted in Chapter Three, rakhvali used to describe the extortion of protection-money from villages. Another song celebrates clubbing monkeys to death, and drinking daru. The lover was identified with the warrior in 1875 and 1931. In 1938 he is also identified with the reluctant farmer. Ploughing, one of the few agricultural activities always undertaken by men, takes place at the onset of the rains. It is then that a lady admirer sings to the ploughman in successive lines:

'Your rope-, ox tackle-, silk-, turban-, shirt-, clothes-, hip-, and fleece will get wet. Come to my nose ring, bodice, shelter, and waist belt.' (See FN 2)

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1. D.F. Pocock Mind Body and Wealth: A Study of Belief and Practice in an Indian Village, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1973, pp. 58, 78.
 2. W. Koppers Die Bhil in Zentralindien, p. 196.

The songs therefore suggest that the issue of settled agriculture particularly affected Bhil consciousness when their economy was being transformed to settled agriculture.

The relationships between Bhil and non Bhils have also changed significantly during the past 100 years. These changes can also be inferred from the songs.

Agriculture is established among the Bhils when Vedic Indra becomes an erotic ploughman (See FN 1), and the cow is born of a chthonic naga-snake (See FN 2). It is only according to higher-Hindu values that meat eating and grinding corn are contradictory. In reality and in the songs of 1938 their opposition is contained or masked. The Bhils in 1938 invoke a continuum of seven gods (See FN 3) from the female meat-eating Kalka-Bhavani to the male vegetarian Hanuman and Gauri Ganesh. A god, clearly Krsna playing with his flute near a fig tree, is called Mahadev, usually an attribute to Siva, who, in 1875, was recorded as the god of the Bhils.

Employers are told, in song, that during the sowing period of work they should let their workers rest (See FN 4). Intensive agriculture is portrayed as dangerous. One can receive snake

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1. W. Koppers Die Bhil in Zentralindien, p. 181.
 2. Ibid., pp. 195-6.
 3. Ibid., pp. 200-1.
 4. Ibid., pp. 319-21.

bites in the bean-garden. Another song concerns an almost gothic plough of snakes (See FN 1). The plough shares are scorpions. A cobra bites one ploughman and all 125 ploughmen flee. Many songs of 1938 therefore concern agriculture, but they also express ambivalence towards it.

Bhil songs of Udaipur and Dungarpur districts published between 1954 and 1956 in Wagadi with a Hindi translation by Phulji Bhai Bhil and Giridharilal Sharma cover many topics. They reflect a similar concern with contemporary issues rather than descriptions of contemporary situations. They discuss the introduction of well-irrigation. With one exception slash and burn agriculture is only conjured up through place names. (See FN 2) One song is even concerned with the release from evil on account of killing living things (See FN 3). By 1980 intensive agriculture and irrigation were widespread, and songs described tractors ploughing in villages, although tractors were unsighted in Dungarpur District during my stay.

At the political level the songs to some extent reflect changes in political realities. By the act of singing Bhils define themselves as Bhils in a beautiful way, and also to this extent

1. Ibid., pp. 250-1.

2. G. Sharma Rājsthānī Bhīl-Gīt, part 2, Rājsthān Visva Vidyāpīṭh, Udaipur, 1956, pp. 40-4.

3. Ibid., part 3, pp. 19-22.

express their opposition to other castes. The earliest songs, from 1875, are aggressively conscious of other castes. In later songs this opposition is weakened. In 1875 the Bhils sing 'Kill the Rajputs'. By 1954 Baniyas and Muslims are mentioned as objects of contempt, but also mentioned incidentally. Kings sometimes take land away but on occasion also grant it, and they may also be appealed to. Worship of Kali is combined with forced labour for the king. From 1954 other castes are sometimes mentioned incidentally, rather than merely symbolizing negative values.

Many songs begin 'Who is great, who is headman in a certain village?' He usually owns twelve cowstalls. But it seems that the status is achieved rather than inherited. Bhils value achievement over inherited rank. Some of the songs of 1938 to 1954 concern Bhil chiefs who became like kings. Overtly the songs associate chiefs and kings. Covertly they distinguish these different groups. The songs therefore identify sociological units relevant to the Bhils. After 1931 there is the frequent use of the phrase 'under whose control was such and such village' (kenu raj vaje). A person is identified as coming from a certain clan of a certain village, usually of twelve wards. Then may follow a conflict over women or inter-group politics.

Bhils sing that Germany fought England because England banned German goods. They thereby assume that svadeshi, the local manufacture of cloth, would be important in every major conflict. By 1954 there are few songs about political revolts,

but several songs about tax revolts. There are two songs about Gandhi driving out the English. These songs promote the material advantages Gandhi will bring.

During the past 100 years, songs about settled agriculture, about political revolts, about tax revolts, about non-Bhils, and about great Bhils, and about Gandhi, have been improvised by Bhils guided by evolving contemporary concerns, by current perceptions of contemporary problems. On the other hand, fascination with Eros, with love and adultery and marriage, appear to have a more constant place in the songs. But even in this realm, there is undue preoccupation with the irregular, with what people wish would happen or fear that it should not happen, or with the major life-crisis of Bhil society, the wedding rituals of marriage that divide the two halves of the life-cycle. There are few narrative songs describing the mundane repetition of Bhil existence.

Eros - adultery, love, elopement and marriage (Table 7.1.1) comprises the largest category of songs collected between 1875 and 1980. A successful song weaves together more than one theme. One marriage song of 1938 celebrates the husband as lover, warrior and herdsman. It combines elements from male hero songs and love songs:

'O man of the Damor clan,
 Your villages are Dholan and Dhavararyan,
 Take a swinging shield and come here,
 From your hips there hangs a dagger with tassels.
 Your calves, my water buffaloes.
 Mount a white horse.
 Graze the cows on the Tamarind plateau.
 My life and your life are one.
 There is great love between us.
 Your fish and my roti.
 Let us graze the cows and live together.'
 [Refrain: the Damor is very impressive] (See FN 1)

The dialectical presentation - first the men sing a line twice, then the women - allows different propositions to be sung by men and women. Men may sing of the bad wife half roasting thick roti in a broken potsherd for a fat stomached husband who is beaten by his wife. The women sing of the good wife who carefully grinds the finest wheat for her beturbaned husband, and roasts sweet roti for her husband. The song defines a division of labour in marriage. The good and bad wife are not mutually exclusive, but opposed ideals. In reality most wives have both qualities.

1. W. Koppers Die Bhil in Zentralindien, pp. 311-2.

The marriage songs often refer to important relations for the Bhils - father, mother, father's-mother, father's elder and younger brothers, brother, sister and the elder-brother's wife are those most mentioned in song. Marriage songs suggest one party gains in the marriage exchange at the expense of the other. One song in 1980 threatens: 'The son of a low caste Muslim has come to fix a wedding date with you.' Many cultures possess insult songs sung at marriage. The songs rebuke the groom for his physical ugliness. In Galandar Bhils sing that the girl is marrying an in-law (vevai) who is a miser without rice, corn, lapsi (good food), or plate. The marriage is criticized in jest because of the faintly incestuous aspect of marrying one's in-laws. The critical public issue is to avoid a poor groom rather than an ugly one. In another song, it is claimed that gifts to the bride (rakam) double when there is a marriage in your own family, suggesting either that the family is greedy or is marrying down. There is the opposition of brothers, illustrated in the joking between the husband's younger brother (devor) and the elder brother's wife (babhi). One long song celebrates the devor's amorous exploits with women apart from his elder brother's wife, which eventually lead to his death. Another song relates a blow by blow description of a fight between husband and wife. There is also the ideal of bliss in love and marriage. In other songs the girl weeps at marriage. In 1980 and 1981 the bride sings of her ambivalence about going to her father-in-law's house. Yet in marriages of the gods the situation is reversed. At the house of the cloud god the daughter-in-law eats the best wheat

and sleeps on the most comfortable bed. In another song the husband appears as victorious warrior, and his wedding party surround and capture a hill. He ties his bride up and puts her on a horse.

Although many song concern illicit love - adultery or elopement - in everyday life illicit love is secret and uncommon. A line recurring in many 1980 songs is:

'Without a lover there is no pleasure in life, my lady friend.' (See FN 1)

Another song asks the bride whether before marriage she asked permission of her father, mother, brother and lover.

The mela, the fair or festival, is also a festival of song. But festival time is atypical. Any particular festival only occurs once a year. The pleasure of the festival, the anticipations with which they are held, are atypical of normal non-festival time. Also atypical of normal social relations, people gather outside their village, outside their networks of kin, at a site deemed by other castes to be sacred. Consistent with the pattern of preoccupation with the atypical, the mela is chiefly an occasion for songs of eros.

1. 'Dostī vagar koī ne māzo āve helā pāminī'

Songs of the mela contemplate adulterous fantasies:

1. 'Talk to me a little bit, girl Kaliya.
 2. It comes to you like that, or doesn't it, girl Kaliya.
 3. Just like a husband and wife coupling, that is the
pleasure, girl Kaliya.
 4. Talk to the boy at once.
 5. No other day comes like this day.
 6. There is no pleasure without Kali.
 7. Talk to me in the intervals.
 8. With two lovers there is twice the pleasure.
 9. No other day will ever come with such pleasure.
 10. No pleasure comes without Kali.
 11. There is a wife, so why is he going to different
territory?
 12. In the interval talk to me.
 13. "I like it, slowly, slowly."
 14. No other day will ever come with such pleasure.
 15. There is play at the festival.
 16. It is the pleasure of a husband and wife coupling.'
- (See FN 1)

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1. 'Asī asī maī keva dije sorī Kāliyā.
 2. Jase heke jas te āve sorī Kāliyā.
 3. Jaisā jorī vaisā vaṭ hai sorī Kāliyā.
 4. Ārvāṇye phoran keva dije sorī Kāliyā.
 5. Hevo dāḍo koi ne dāḍe āve sorī Kāliyā.
 6. Kālī savāi koīne māzo āve sorī Kāliyā.
 7. Vaisī vaisī maī keva dije sorī Kāliyā.
 8. Dabal dostī dabal māzo āve sorī Kāliyā.
 9. Hevo māzo koīne dāḍe āvhe sorī Kāliyā.
 10. Kālī savāi koī ne māzo āve, sorī Kāliyā.
 11. Sate bāṇye bīje tākvā zāye hai sorī Kāliyā?
 12. Hera merā maī keva dije sorī Kāliyā.
 13. Mananya he rāḡe rāḡe, sorī Kāliyā.
 14. Hevo māzo koī ne dāḍe āve, sorī Kāliyā.
 15. Melā no khelnā re sorī Kāliyā.
 16. Hemā jorjyavālā vaṭ hai.'

In such songs there is an intersection of ecstatic time (that day) with a particular person (the girl Kali) and illicit pleasure, here euphemistically called the pleasure of a husband and wife.

There are many contemporary examples of Bhils singing of the anomalous. In 1979-81 Bhils sang about men with black umbrellas. I doubt if any Bhil owns one. They sang about their boy friend with the motor car. The only Bhil with a car was the local parliamentary representative, who was also a grandfather. They sang about the boy with a motor scooter. There were only two Bhils with motor scooters in the Dungarpur District, both were college lecturers. Bicycles, in song, were particularly associated with erotic abduction; 'one night on a bicycle there will be a coming together' (See FN 1). In Galandar, there were five bicycles. Most were owned by middle aged men.

Lévi-Strauss noted that the Asdiwal myth exactly transcribed reality at the level of geography, technology and economy but interwove real and imaginary sociology (See FN 2). The Bhil songs are almost the opposite. They mention villages in Dungarpur and Banswara. They also mention exotic places such as Delhi, England, Germany, to which few Bhils have travelled. In technology and economy they tend to mention the most

1. 'Ekā rāta saikal mātē melo helā pāminī.'

2. C. Lévi-Strauss 'The Story of Asdiwal', Structural Anthropology, vol. 2, Allen Lane, London, 1977.

problematical elements: banditry during pacification; intensive agriculture and irrigation when the economy is in transition; and now tractors, black umbrellas, cars, motor scooters, radios, and telephones when these are novel and unfamiliar. The historical depth of the songs is shallow.

The Bhils' pleasure in song may be reinforced by the lack of fit between their traditional values represented by meat-eating alcohol-drinking divinities and modern urban Hinduism. The contradictions faced by Bhils in southern Rajasthan are great. In song these contradictions are simplified. Usually the songs do not achieve Hegel's third term, synthesis. The songs bring together opposed elements, and they concentrate on problematic aspects of changing Bhil societies. They define a Bhil universe of meaning, which refers to both the actual and the possible.

Most of the songs Bhils sing are created and recreated by their audiences, who are usually young people. The sorcerer's (barwo/bhopa) songs, and bhajan are exceptions to this general pattern, but their effectiveness may be indicated by them. There is an obvious difference between the sorcerer's private consultations and the public performance of the songs. But the sorcerer's private treatments and use of chants suggests why the rest of the corpus of Bhil songs is effective. Traditionally sorcerers are called to their profession through a striking experience in illness or in a dream (See FN 1). Their practice assumes that mental health and ill health are a function of an individual's reciprocal acceptance by his kin,

1. M. Hermanns Die Religiös-Magische Weltanschauung der Primitivstämme Indiens, Band I Die Bhagoria Bhils, Franz Steiner Verlag, Wiesbaden, 1964, p. 119.

neighbours and village community generally. Most sorcerers have an unsettled and neurasthenic disposition, and fear dying prematurely, or have been critically ill when young. Sorcerers therefore tend to be men who have seen death (See FN 1). In other cultures some would-be shamans are mentally or physically sick and suffer from epilepsy. The affected person is faced with two alternatives: either he dies or rescues himself by becoming a shaman. An important characteristic of the shaman is his ability to shift his level of consciousness while he is in trance. 'His normal consciousness is blocked and scenes from the mythology and religion of his people appear in his subconscious ... With the aid of the shamanism the collective psyche of a group of people is brought together, and they are confident they can overcome their own psychoses.' (See FN 2).

The literature for Bhils elsewhere in Central India suggests forty years ago the sorcerer was masterful and important, a culture-bearer of the Bhils (See FN 3), who provided a certain form of practical integration of contradictory systems (See FN 4). His treatments for physical ailments are still sought. They are often used together with less accessible modern medicine.

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1. Ibid., p. 261.
 2. H. Nachtigall 'The Cultural-Historical Origin of Shamanism', in A. Bharati The Reality of the Extra-Human Agents and Audiences, Mouton, The Hague, 1976, pp. 315-6.
 3. A. Bharati The Ochre Robe, Doubleday, New York, 1960, p. 191.
 4. C. Lévi-Strauss Structural Anthropology, Penguin, Middlesex, 1977, p. 184.

The importance of song for Bhils may be connected to a Bhil belief in the efficacy of the mantra (sacred incantation) which is sung in private contexts by the non-bhagat bhopa (sorcerer). His practice combines rapport, intimacy and touch in a treatment whose meaning is apparent even when the words of the mantra are not comprehensible to the audience.

For instance in October 1980, the little daughter of the Brahmin headmaster of Pal Galandar was vomiting and suffering from acute diarrhoea. Two of his kid goats had died over the previous days, apparently because of the same ailment. At 8.00 p.m. my host, a sorcerer, and myself, went to the Brahmin's house. His sick daughter was laid across her mother's, then her father's laps. The sorcerer talked a great deal, and in his initial conversation gained rapport and intimacy. He then chanted the following mantra, a standard recitation, in three stages.

He first invoked Hanuman and stroked off the illness by moving Nim leaves along the body, head to foot, and then tapped the leaves on the ground. The mantra then begins by invoking Bar and incarnations of Visnu:

<u>Jay Bār, bhaj dhanī</u>	Victory to Bar, the Master
	Dispenser,
<u>dholī dhajāvālā</u>	who appears with a white flag.
<u>lajā nā rākhnārā</u>	Protector from shame,
<u>nejā nā dhanī khamnā karū</u>	Forgive, master of the lance.
<u>bhūl cuku māph karī</u>	Forget, forgive.
<u>jay Revājī Gangājī Gotamjī</u>	Victory to Rēva, to the Ganga,
	to Gotam,
<u>ḍakorjī Kuberjī Raṇchorjī</u>	Dakor, Kuber and Ranchor,

kālājī Kesāriyājī

to black Kesariya, to Samlaiya,

sāmliyādhani

Kāsī na nāth dvārkā na dhanī to the lord of Kasi, to the
master of Dvarka.

The mantra then connects happiness, health and purity. Black Kesariya, by his speech and word, dispels the wretchedness of those suffering:

pavan mel utāre aisī māphak The atmospheric wind unloads
filth in this way

phūl jevu phorū kare It makes it light as a flower.

The Bhils have appropriated the ancient Indian idea of internal and external winds:

vāyro vāhaliyo vāyro

The (internal) wind causes

jālkīyo

swelling, causes burning,

vā ulkīyo vā kaltarīyo

It causes fiery pain, it
causes derangement.

The mantra then invokes Muslim saints, Krsna, and 78 Hanumans, including the Hanuman of Pal Mandav.

In the second stage the sorcerer revolves a bunch of Nim leaves, whilst squatting on the ground next to the patient, and recites the story of 'sister' Malena. 'Malena' literally means 'female gardener.' Each line of the narrative ends:

marūyo ramī āvum (See FN 1) 'I come racing along the path'

-
1. Dr. Sharma told me that he understood Maruo to be the name of some sort of game, and the same phrase means 'I play Maruo,' [personal communication].

Malena, garlanded, buys a red shawl from the shop of a Baniya, and buys a headshawl and scarf from the shop of a Bohra. She addresses both Baniya and Bohra as 'husband's younger brother'. Because of her mode of addressing men of a different caste, and her travel to distant places, commented upon in the mantra, there is a suggestion of promiscuity in Malena's behaviour, also inferred by descriptions of her:

āḍe peran pere, ubā peran
rang rangīlām hambāe
līlā pīlā rang hai
shatrī bhānt rang hāi
līdhā sole saṅgār
saṅgī haṅkhī ne hambāṅī
jāy lambā māraṇā

She wears tight clothes.
 She gets ready for every colour.
 It is green and yellow.
 Colours are of 36 types.
 Adorned with 16 decoration and
 well-dressed,
 Sister goes a long distance.

Sister Malena then visits God, who is guarded by Hanuman. She first claims she is a female ascetic, not a witch, but then boasts:

mālīk hu mānas caltī jāuṃ..
mālīk vāhul povan hākī
mānth ḍalā cadhāvī
cakkariya povan cadhāvī
kāpnīyā povan cadhāvī
dhujnīyā povan cadhāvī
jālkīya ulkīyā kaltariyā
baltariyā tūtanīyā agniyā

Lord I am going to eat men ...
 Lord the atmospheric air will call
 I will take possession of their
 heads,
 I will take possession of whirl-
 winds of air,
 bursts of air, shaking winds,
 fever
 alternating with vomiting.
 They will become enflamed, suffer,
 diarrhoea,
 they will explode, they will

<u>sunniyā</u>	become contorted, have twitching pains.
<u>āde tāva cadhāvu āde sīkā</u>	I will cause fever to take
<u>soḍu</u>	possession of his body,
<u>shatrī bhānt na povan</u>	I move 36 types of air, I move 66
<u>hāmku sāmsadh povan hāmku</u>	types of air.

Sister Malena, as Bhavani, then brings death and sickness to the world. In the third part of the mantra, the sorcerer invokes the good sorcerers Jivaniya and Hiryo. They come bringing all the weapons of the gods, the branches of the Nim tree, the swastika of the saint and medicines from 108,000 saints. The sorcerer, holding Nim leaves, 'strokes off' the illness moving his hand from the head to foot of the patient. The mantra finally states that almighty goddesses require the meat of goats and buffaloes, their lungs and heart, to cure disease. And it is the issue of meat-eating which radically distinguishes sansari from bhaqat Bhils.

The Brahmin headmaster of Pal Galandar feared witchcraft from maleficent Bhils. The sorcerer told the Brahmin that only half the Bhils of Pal Galandar were bad, meaning ill-disposed or envious towards him and his modest superiority in wealth. The sorcerer was able to demonstrate his own commitment to the well-being of the Brahmin and his family. The next day the Brahmin also obtained some medicine in Dungarpur town, and his daughter recovered. The Brahmin headmaster was uncertain which treatment was more important for effecting recovery. Bhils have a greater trust that the sorcerer's mantra are effective.

In songs and dance, by word and thought, by music and communal action, Bhils summon up the anomalies of their existence, the irregular, the perplex, the problematical, the bizarre. By singing they identify and control these situations. Personal fears and aspirations are projected communally into experimental action through song.

The sorcerer works in more intimate situations, and on occasions of more acute psychic or nosic need, the chants, which may not be understood, bestow the sickness with an anthropomorphic form, and to that extent control it. His concern, his empathy, his aura of specialist efficacy communicate messages which appear to share the suffering of the patient and therefore to lessen it.

The opposite of the private therapeutic confidences of the bhopa and his patient is the public and celebratory singing and dancing of the Holi festival. All expatriates of the village labouring in Gujarat, bhagat, non-bhagat, peasant Bhil, government official, daughters of the village returning from their husbands' houses, all dance to celebrate the unity and equality of their unambiguous status as equal children of the village, as gamvala. The dancing steps of most of the village vigorously circumscribe a group of younger men dancing, prancing, with drums whose beat orders the rhythm of the encircling dancers. The Holi seems to have gained in importance since Hendley, in 1875, wrote that 'the Bhils keep up the Holi and Dasahra as they are then afforded opportunities of drinking to excess, and so indulging themselves, that at these

seasons they appear more like beasts than men'.(See FN 1) One hundred years later Holi was a sedate affair.

Holi is a principal festival of songs, and the major festival of the year. It occurs after the harvest and has aspects of a folk dance. Many participants return to a village which is foreign to them for much of the year. Married women return from their husband's villages, and over recent times, labourers return from Gujarat. College and secondary students return from the hostel in town. Government servants, who tend to live where they are posted, return from near and far to their village. The rest of the regular inhabitants of the pal celebrate a solidarity which may not always be maintained throughout the year. At Holi, differences between different Bhil status groups are obscured, and commonality emphasized, by communal festival.

At Holi dances, repeated for seven days, the women's movements of their lezam chains, which are imported from Bombay, sound and look like the movements for sifting baskets of newly ripened grain. The circle described by the women's dancing moves horizontally and is contained by the circle described by the men's sword dancing, which moves in vertical jumps. Both men and women dance to the same rhythm, beaten by male drummers in the centre of the circles. The green and yellow and red of the women's dresses, and blouses of these colours, and the black blouses also celebrated in song, form a moving wall of colour surrounded by bobbing males, dressed usually in white, with white or yellow turbans.

In one Holi song the women sing, in effect, that they are

1. T.H. Hendley op. cit., p. 351.

central and therefore dominant; the men encompassing them and armed with swords, dispute this. The Holi play provides an opportunity to reverse the normal order of things. Both sexes draw opposite conclusions from rituals created by mutual cooperation. Potential for conflict is contained. Holi involves all age-groups in the community. It may involve all those born in the village, even though they no longer reside there. And in its moments of joyous celebrations differences between Bhils are forgotten.

Navratri, occurring in October, almost exclusively a festival of young boys and girls, is also a principal occasion for song. One old man, a sorcerer (bhopa) with long hair, led a group of boys jumping and dancing near the shrine of Mataji in Galandar, singing of maya (illusion). Sometimes the young boys and girls would form two circles. The girls would affectionately touch the boys' staffs and engage in conversation with them.

Songs articulate certain conflicts and thereby to some extent control the conflicts. Young Bhils in particular are champions of song at Holi and on other festive occasions. For they are faced with conflicts between dependence and independence, between various workforces: rural or urban, labouring, government employment, or independent cultivation, and between the various status groups they may aspire to.

Songs can be composed by any Bhil and sung by all Bhils. They provide a satisfactory counterbalance for many Bhils to the hierarchies developed around bhakti and government. Songs often address the problematic aspects of their contemporary cultures evolving through time. They have addressed the confrontation of other castes, of English, Rajputs and Baniyas.

Songs are accessible to all, but they are composed by an artistic elite, and sacred songs or mantra, which have therapeutic powers, are known by only few Bhils. There is some analogy between the status achieved through knowledge of songs, and the status achieved by bhagat and government-employed Bhils. Songmen draw on a superior knowledge of a cultural medium which is pervasive and popular. Bhakti and sarkar are also widely diffused among Bhils, but the power of these concepts is more successfully grasped by the bhagat and government employed, than by other Bhils.

In the past songs addressed the problem of changing one's way of life in order to undertake intensive agriculture. They have continued to reflect a lively interest in the cycle of eros, in love and adultery, and in that great transition-rite of a Bhil's life cycle: marriage. Songs about new technology are consistent with a preoccupation with the anomalous. By identifying the problematical fantasies of eroticism, objects unknown and objects to be feared, Bhils define their reality and to this extent comprehend it and control it. This process of comprehension and control may well be a rich source of the Bhils' pleasure in song.

Song appears to Bhils and non-Bhils as a characteristic of their culture despite it's concern for the novel and problematical. Popular sansari song makes occasional references to the paraphernalia of government, to taxes and technology, but it is to a large extent untouched by both the concepts bhakti and government in any direct fashion. By contrast most other parts of the world view of most Bhils are affected by notions of bhakti or government. The conceptualization of time and space provides an example for study.

CHAPTER EIGHT: TIME AND SPACE

8.1 Three notions of time and space

No single concept, neither the concept of the imminent world (sansar), devotion (bhakti) nor government (sarkar), has an exclusive hegemony over any area of practical life. Every Bhil is aware of different sets of ideas which define time and space. Whether Bhils draw on one or another set of ideas depends upon circumstances. The ways of talking about time and space may be seen as influenced by three traditions: a traditional 'tribal' Bhil way of viewing the world, a world-view deriving from bhakti, and a world-view associated with a modern nation state.

Bhil words for time and space are not limited to ritual contexts, but are used in Bhils' everyday lives. The ways of talking about time and space are not usually deeply laden with metaphysical salience, nor are they superficial and devoid of significance. Rather they lie in a middle range. This chapter discusses variations in Bhils' cultural perceptions of time and space, and draws on linguistic evidence and observed behaviour. Among the Bhils, distinctions of time and space can be associated with different patterns of behaviour which are variously conformed to by different groups of Bhils.

In both Hindi and village Wagadi, the 'forest-language' spoken by the Bhils, there is found the practice of measuring time in distance from the present, as illustrated in Table 8.1.1. In

Wagadi spoken in villages, which is the language of the Bhils, as opposed to the Wagadi spoken by the dusri jati, the caste Hindus in the towns, the same system is extended to reckoning in years. This method of organizing time may be called egocentric, on the analogy that the basic principle is distance, in time, from the moment, day, or year, of the speaking subject.

This method of ordering time, in distance from the present, is consistent with the ideology of Bhil sansari songs, which constantly refer to the pleasurable moment, which usually has a sexual connotation. All traditional songs begin with:

Raīne kevo bole 'having rested they sing in this way'. In everyday speech dhīre raīne means 'wait a minute'. Many songs contain cliché lines, such as:

hevo dāḍo koī ne dāḍe āve 'Never does such a day as this day
come.'

evo māzo kane vane āve 'such pleasure very rarely comes.'

hevo māzo koīne dāḍe āve 'Such a day, with such pleasure,
will not come (again).'

It is to the existential reference of the moment of intense pleasure of sexual orgasm that many songs constantly refer. Extremes of pleasure and enjoyment may be marked by the hyperbolic expression ako dādo (the whole day). On the other hand, the adverb dadu (daily) marks abnormal behaviour in the village, where life is not regulated bureaucratically. The

emphasis on the pleasurable moment in Bhil ideology may partially explain the grammatical feature of village Wagadi, dividing the future into immediate and non-urgent tenses.

The existential appreciation of the pleasurable moment, repeated constantly in sansari Bhil songs, contrasts with their contemporary life, which is often felt to be miserable. Their own general experience of time is conditioned by progress through a life-cycle i.e. childhood, youth, marriage, establishment of a separate household, reproduction and death. The death of small children from disease is always possible. Few people live past sixty. The temporality of life is apparent. The concentration on the pleasurable moment is therefore anomalous.

TABLE 8.1.1:

Time as distance from the present.

Bhil Wagadi	āj	kal	pāmna dāḍa	phele dāḍa
Hindi	āj	kal	parson	(tarson)
English	today	tomorrow/	the day after	in three
		yesterday	tomorrow/	days/
			the day before	three days
			yesterday	ago
Bhil Wagadi	on	por	parār	phelevar
English	this year	next year	year after next/	after three
		/last year	year before last	years/
				three years
				ago

TABLE 8.1.2:

Divisions of the day.

	<u>Approximate time</u>	<u>Activities</u>
velo	4.00 a.m.-6.00 a.m.	Women grind corn, licit sexual activity in house, illicit sexual activity in forest, set out to visit other villages, women wail for recent dead.
-	6.00 a.m.	Drink tea.
havā	6.00 a.m. -12 noon	Men commence work, visit in own village.
-	12 noon	First meal of day.
bopahar	12 noon-3.00 p.m.	Meetings, ceremonies, rest time.
gulasu	3.00 p.m.- 5.00 p.m.	Continue work in fields.
atamnya*	5.00 p.m.-6.00 p.m.	Return from work, only visit if staying overnight.
-	6.00 p.m.	Evening meal.
rāt		
(dāḍo bude)	6.00 p.m.-4.00 a.m.	Sleep, witches active, <u>bhajan</u> on full moon.

* Cf. atamna west, ugamna east.

Some support for the notion that rhythms of social life influence categorization of time is found among other cattle herders and agriculturalists. There are some similarities between the conceptualization of time among the Nuer, cattle herders and agriculturalists, and Bhils, who traditionally practised shifting cultivation and reared cattle. The Nuer have words for one and two years before this year, and different terms again for one and two years after this year.

The period between 4 a.m. and 6 a.m. is particularly significant for the Bhils, as it is for the Nuer, but for different reasons. For the Bhils this period is of economic, sexual and other significance. It is the time when women start to work, when illicit sexual activity could take place in the forest and licit sex may take place in the home. Women wail for the recent dead at this time. Almost all women live in their husband's villages, and wailing is loudest when a widow might be accused of witchcraft by her deceased husband's kin.

TABLE 8.1.3:

Days of the week.

<u>Wagadi</u>	<u>(Hindi)</u>	<u>English</u>	<u>Bhil names</u>	
			<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
Somvār	(Somvār)	Monday	Soma/Homa	Somlī/Homlī
Mangalvār	(Mangalvār)	Tuesday	Mangla	Manglī
Buddvār	(Buddhvār)	Wednesday	Badhia	Badhī
Bṛhasvār	(Bṛhasvār/ Guruvār)	Thursday	Ratna	Ratnī
Hakravār	(Śukravār)	Friday	Hakra	Hakrī
Thāvor	(Śanivār)	Saturday	Thāvra	Thāvrī
Dithvār	(Ravivār)	Sunday	Dita	Ditī
ek aṭhvāju	ek haftā	one week		

TABLE 8.1.4:

Months of the year.

		<u>Festivals</u> <u>Agriculture</u>	
Jeth	(Jeth)		
		June	
Ahad	(Āshād)	Divāho	R ploughing, sowing
		July	A
Srāvan	(Śrāvan)	Navarāto	I
		August	N
Bhadrano	(Bhādrapad)		S
		September	
Āho	(Āsvin)	Dāharo	<u>kharīf</u> (autumn
		October	harvest)
Kartak	(Kārttik)	Divāli	ploughing, sowing
		November	
Margser	(Mārg Śīrsh)	Uttarano	
		December	
Pauhe	(Paus)		
		January	
Māgh	(Māgh)		
		February	
Phalguna	(Phalgun)	Oli	<u>rābi</u> (spring
		March	harvest)
Saiter	(Caitra)		Marriages
		April	
Vaisakh	(Vaiśākh)		
		May	

The Bhil penchant for categorizing time in distance from the present suggests this pattern could be related to an emphasis on the enjoyable moment. Three days before the present and three days after it, together with the present day, comprises seven, a sacred Hindu number. Seven is also the length of a week, important in many societies with markets. All Bhils use a weekly and monthly calendar adopted from the Hindu calendar. The naming of certain days, months or seasons by the same words, forms the periods of time into cycles. To the extent that they refer to their weekly and monthly cycles, Bhils draw on a cyclic idea of time. Many Bhils also name their children after the day of their birth. Bhils so named carry with them a constant referent to a particular moment in the weekly cycle which is common in agricultural communities with markets. Their name refers to a universal cycle and the individuality of a particular day of birth.

The fair or mela marks a non-lineal order of time and an equality of social relations, it also indicates a different type of cyclical time. The non-festival time of work is marked by these gaps of festival-time, which take the participants out of ordinary time. At festivals, Bhils participate in the time cycle through the rhythm of the dance, by which they also occupy a place in space.

In conversation, Bhils stress the anomalous behaviour which is characteristic of the mela. This includes the dakamdaka - the pushing against the crowds of nubile young girls attending the fair, the rangrasiya or Ferris wheel, offering a new centrifugal experience in space, and the delightful foods and possible sexual adventures available during the festival. It therefore offers Bhils a chance to celebrate, in archetypal fashion, the enjoyable moment.

The mela expands Bhil consciousness of time and space. In everyday conversation mela thaize means 'become crumpled'. The abnormal proximity of large numbers of young nubile human beings at fairs provides opportunities for arranging illicit sexual liaisons at night. The fair often therefore appears as a motif in popular songs. The occasions for mela or festivals, however, are organized around the Hindu lunar calendar. The organization of time suggested by the social fact of the fairs looks forward to bhakti and nation-state notions of time.

The emphasis on the full moon in bhajan celebrations reverses the importance of the day and of daylight for all Bhils. This importance is emphasized in an agricultural community without electricity. Work occurs in the early part of the day. Major festivals, such as Holi, occur principally during the day. The value placed upon the day, and of daylight, is apparent from what happens when daylight is abnormally lost, as during an eclipse, such as occurred on 16 February 1979. There was constant talk about it before and after the event. Bhils in

Galandar would not leave their houses, that day. Normally Bhils tend to be frightened of the dark and do not travel outside the house at night, except because of gross emergency, such as the impending death of someone in the house. Night is the time of witches, and travelling anywhere in the night leads one to be suspected of witchcraft, or susceptible to it. As Bhils say 'I do not go out at night' (rate mae ne jawu).

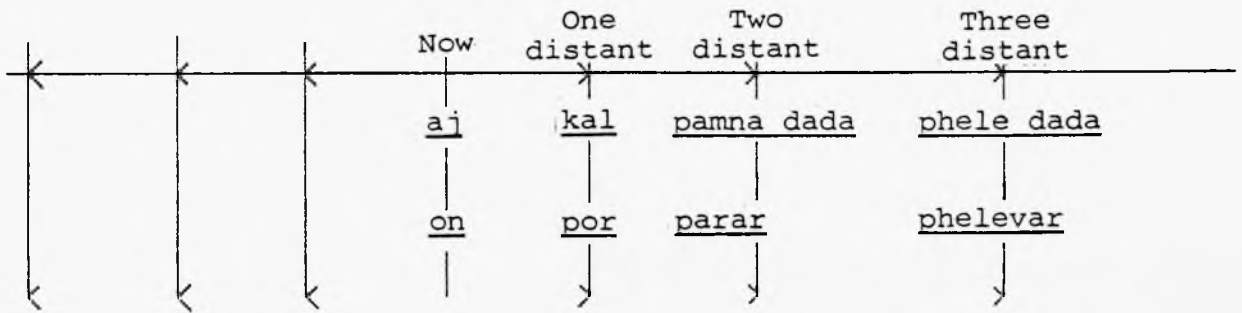
It is only in marriage ceremonies and bhajan, which usually occur during the full moon and characteristically end with a communal meal at daybreak, that the dangers of the night are transcended by invoking other powers: of the fertility and solidarity of a new marriage, and the powers of bhakti and the Hindu gods which become imminent at bhajan celebrations.

The consciousness of the pleasurable moment evoked by Bhil sansari songs is replaced in bhajan by many complex ideas. The bhajan potentially offer Bhil devotees (bhagat) transcendence over time. The lunar cycle is central to bhagat conceptions of time, as bhajan celebrations occur on nights of the full moon throughout the year, apart from months of cold weather and during the rains. The diagrams of Figure 8.1.1 illustrates different conceptions of time, and ways in which they can be reconciled with each other.

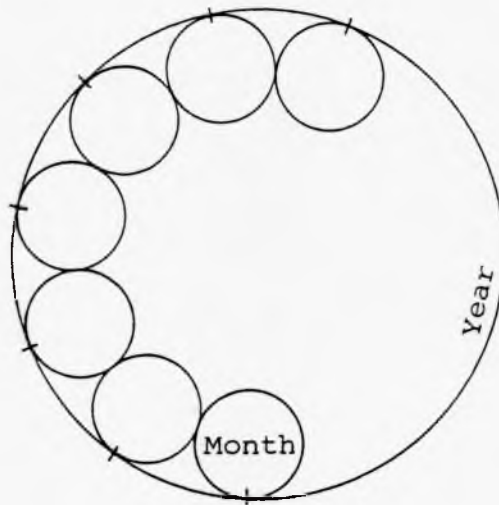
Figure 8.1.1

Different conceptions of time.

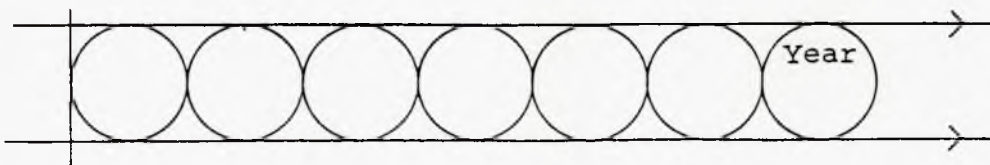
Sansari, egocentric time:



Bhakti, lunar based time (bhajan on seven full-moon nights of the year):



Post-Independence linear government time, which can incorporate the other two systems:



For Bhil government officials and teachers, time is principally organized by the six day working week and one day of free or autonomous time. Bhagat officials often participate in all three time worlds. As teachers or petty Government servants, they live in a village, but are organized by a seven day week. As part time landowners and farmers they participate, and their families work within the context of, the annual agricultural calendar and its festivals. How appropriate then for the bhajan festivals to recur at the full moon, for the twenty-eight day lunar cycle can be fused into the annual cycle or fission into four weekly cycles. It is at these lunar-marked intervals that bhagat celebrate an expanded consciousness. It is marked by new concepts of space and time, such as 'world era' (yug). At present we are in the fourth world era. The bhajan sometimes celebrate an apocalyptic expectation of the good or true era (satyug). It will be realized in the future by worshipping the true teacher (satguru). It can also in part be realized now by true religious behaviour (sate dharm).

Bhakti ideas of time, unlike the puritanism of 19th century England, (See FN 1) do not assist in a transition from traditional to bureaucratic organization of time. The prime agencies for introducing these modern notions into the village are the school and relief labour. Relief labour introduces employees to a distinction between their employer's time and their 'own' time. Time becomes a currency, it is not passed, but spent.

1. E.P. Thompson 'Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism', Past and Present, no. 38, 1967, pp.61-87.

Government service is coveted in part because of the money and power a government position brings. Rural Bhils have unrealistic perceptions of Government service. As one Bhil told my host: 'He will obtain government service, and get money for having a rest.' (See FN 1) The Galandar Council Chairman (Sarpanch) had more contact with Government than other people in the settlement. He asked me how much the local Collector and Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister, were paid, and also whether they did any work. The Council Chairman therefore had a naive view of Government. Because of centralization of Government power, the Collector in fact regularly continued with his office work until late into the night.

Bhil teachers and forestry officers need to know clock time for starting and ending work, for organizing the school curricula of those they teach, or for catching buses which run on a broad approximation of clock time. The nearest public transport to Galandar, where I lived, was a bus that stopped 3 kilometres away, at between 10.50 am. and 11.30 am. each day. Those with watches can 'time' their arrival, those without would usually call about an hour early to be certain of not missing the bus. The Bhils who carried the symbol of this new order of time had the suffix -sahab added to their name, as did non-Bhils who also possessed a wristwatch and whom it was advantageous to mark with respect. By contrast, bhakti leaders usually did not wear a wristwatch, and were marked by the title maharaj. The

1. 'Sarkārī naukrī malhe, ārām karhe ne paise malhe.'

visible manifestations of the title of sahab were an irrigation pump, a bicycle, radio, better clothes, of western appearance, and, most decisively, the wrist watch. This symbol of a new order of time was sufficiently overdetermined (See FN 1) for villagers to attempt to borrow any old band and watch face, even if it contained no working parts in it, when about to be photographed, or for young men aspiring to marriage to wear watches even if they did not work. The modern equivalent in metropolitan culture are the doctors who carry calling devices on their lapels or the businessmen with cars equipped with telephones. Their time is of a higher order of value than our time.

Watch time represents time as a unified circular mathematical progression. It is an appropriate symbol of government time, which tends to refer to a proximate future in this life. It also divides the day equally into two cycles of twelve hours. In modern industrial society, time equals money, and the new structuring of time, organized by the need for monetary remuneration, contradicts the idea of time as structured round the pleasurable instant. Travel is made possible by the technology of the modern State, the bus, railway or aeroplane. It tends to be measured in money rather than time. One village, for instance, may be a Rs. 8 ticket away from another. Clock time and geographical space can therefore be reduced to monetary value.

1. On the term overdetermination, see L. Althusser For Marx, New Left Books, London, 1977, pp. 252-3.

All Bhils live in several different time cycles. All Bhils plant foodgrains and plow fields, or if employed by government, supervize these activities, in anticipation of a subsequent harvest, and invest in their son's brideprice in anticipation of seeing grandsons. They live for the pleasurable moment, and also orient themselves to weeks and lunar months and years and lifetimes.

There is a difference of emphasis, a difference in use, made of different notions of time by the various status groups. There is a sansari tendency to measure time from the pleasurable present, whether it be in days or years. In the village, direction and parts of the day are determined by the sun. Bhils also use cycles, months or days of the week, but they bestow a special individuality on weekdays by naming people after their day of birth. At mela (fairs) Bhils celebrate the pleasure of the moment. The mela are regulated by the Hindu calendar, and promoted by the modern State. The bhakti movement has introduced some ancient ideas about time. It provides a theodicy for suffering, a remembrance of a golden human past, and a promise of a transcending religious experience. Clock time has become identified with the new government order of the sahab. In the village these three systems can coexist uneasily. In the town, older systems may become unused if not forgotten.

Bhils may draw on different paradigms of space, depending on their circumstances and beliefs. The house is a basic reference of children and adults. The word for house (gher) has multiple associations for all Bhils living in a village. 'Houseowner' (ghervala/ghervali) is the most common means of addressing

husband and wife. Bhagat who live frequently outside the village have a more expansive conception of 'house' (gher). Janardan the deputy headmaster referred to his brother and brother's children, who live about one hundred yards from his own residence, as part of his household (mare gher may). His brother, on the other hand, who was bhagat but who had not obtained government employment, refers to the residence of Janardan and his father as 'his big house' (mare motho gher). The house provides the ambit of activity for small children if one includes the veranda and the surrounding fence. The mud walls of the physical building enclose cattle during the night, bins for storing food, and two large stones for grinding corn. People usually prefer to sleep on the enclosed veranda at the entrance to the walls enclosing food and cattle unless it is winter, or they are recently married. In one Bhil riddle, the house becomes a metaphor for the vagina, and the penis and testes are called three brothers. (See FN 1) The house is the ultimate source of many things. It defines the person, and establishes the family. For the child, the house and its immediate precincts bound space. For the adult the house, or home, has strong emotional associations of domestic sphere and economic support.

Part of the sansar (the imminent world) is an acute consciousness of direction. One of the first questions one may

1. 'In sexual intercourse one brother enters the house, two wait outside.'

be asked is 'In which direction is your home or village'. When a Bhil meets another Bhil whilst travelling, the first form of greeting repeats a pattern found among Australian Aboriginals; Both Bhils and Australian Aboriginals ask: 'where have you come from?' and 'where are you going to?' Direction, like time, is principally organized by the sun, the dan bavsi (father of the day), 'east' and 'west' are called 'sun-rise' and 'sun-set', (cf. Tables 8.1.2 and 8.1.3: the divisions of the day, and directions.).

Village residence is important to Bhil conceptions of identity, to social practices, even to dialect. Village residence is also important for Bhil notions of space. Marriage involves alliances between villages, and affinal ties are maintained by constant visits from one village to another. The organization of space involves directions from one village to another. Occasionally the name of a village may be supplemented or substituted by a nod or a hand pointed in the appropriate direction.

Beyond the spatial orientation of the next village is the site of the festival. Festivals occur at special moments in time and at special points in space. Most fairs (mela) occur between September and November, after the rains have ceased and the autumn (kharif) harvest has been gathered. Some fairs also occur at the time when the spring (rabi) harvest is being gathered, and Holi, the major festival of the year, is celebrated. This period also marks the beginning of marriage ceremonies, which continue up to July. (cf. Table 8.1.5)

In the period 1979-81 there were 19 annual mela in Dungarpur or on its borders. By far the largest of all is the Banesvar, which is held on an island at the junction of three rivers on the Dungarpur-Banswara border. In the nineteenth century it was discontinued for 16 years due to a landownership dispute between the rulers. It was reinstituted in 1867. (See FN 1) There are few references to mela in historical records. In 1899 there were no mela due to the famine, in 1900 Banesvar and Lilapani were held. (See FN 2). In 1961, there were 13 mela held in Dungarpur. (See FN 3). Bhils confirm that mela have increased in number since Independence. Bhil mobility has consequently been extended. When attending fairs, or visiting relatives, most Bhils cut across country, and consciousness of direction is important now, as in the past.

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1. Administration Reports of the Dungarpur State for the Year 1867-8, Rajputana Mission Press, Ajmer, p. 69.
 2. RFD, 1901 Internal Branch A, Proceedings, June.
 3. Rajasthan District Census Handbook, Dungarpur, Government of India, Jaipur, 1961, pp. 53-55.

TABLE 8.1.5:

Mela held in Dungarpur, or on its borders, in 1980. (See FN 1)

MAGH	PHALGUNA	SAITER.....BHADRANO	AHO	KARTAK	MARGSER
February	March	August (Summer, rains)	September	October	Nov.Dec. (Winter)
Banesvar-Siv (Nava Toprā)	Sītlā Mātā (Tonkvārā)	Gangeshvār (Gāmri Āhārā)	Hadmatiyā (Pāl Māṇḍav)		
Bhauneshvar (Oḍa)		Jhijuvar (Bīchivāra)	Gujeshvār (Paṛḍlī)	Nilapāni (Hathod)	
Mātājī (Bīchivāra)		Kālājī (Mewara)	Kālājī (Punjpur)		
Astamī (Sisod)		Vijaya Mātājī (Modpur)	Kṛṣṇa (Sāmlajī)		
Pancam-Siv (Bhavaneshvār)		Jala-Siv (Ragod)	Ganeshjī (Khervāra)		
* Āmlī-Hanuman (Navagām)			Ambariya-Siv (Barōti)		
OLI		NAVRĀTRĪ	DIVĀLI		
	harvest			harvest	

* held near the Dungarpur border in Gujarat

Were it not for the fairs, a Bhil who is not bhagat or a government official would spend most of his or her life in his own village, or visiting relatives in a limited number of other villages. But fairs open up a much larger range of places one can properly visit. In fantasy, this diversity of potential destinations has erotic connotations.

1. Location of mela, or nearest village, are in brackets.

One song, which commences 'There is water everywhere, son's wife', relates how the pleasure of a husband and wife coupling came to a girl at Biju, near Kherwada, and asks if she went to Bombay. The song then relates that she went mad with sexual pleasure at the Ambadiya fair at Baroti, that pleasure came at Cokhli near Dungarpur, that she went alone and united with a boy at Cungi Naka near Dungarpur. Colour was scattered at Ragela, near Sagwara, her bedding was torn at Garmala, east of Bicchivada, and her ribbon was torn from her hair. There was colour at Kader, there was a sunrise at Mazola, near Dungarpur town, from whence she went to Manatalai. In my observation and in intimate conversations I had with boastful young men, such behaviour, even in the most daring of young ladies, belongs to wildest fantasy. But it is significant that these fantasies are given concrete locations in villages and fairs. In the other reality of mundane experience the pleasure of a husband and wife pair is limited to one house (the husband's) and one village most of the time.

Bhajan sing of sacred places, such as Mathura or Kasi, where God was seen in the shape of Brahma. The terms of reference which define bhagat space are as broad as those defining sansari space. But bhagat spatial referents are not invoked to attain comprehensive magical power. They comprise part of a complex of religious ideas which includes a notion of sacred place, where the high Hindu gods are imminent. Rivers are also important in Bhil bhakti songs, as they are in Hinduism

generally, as places of especial sanctity, and efficacy in purification. In the practice of the festival, they are places where all castes and tribes can bathe. Occasionally Bhil songs abstract this notion of sacred place, as when they ask 'From what country (des) does bhakti come? Bhakti comes from the fort of love (manta qarh).' Bhaqat also know the divisions of space and time of sansari Bhils, but because of their access to a different field of meaning and experience, sansari notions are less important.

Similarly Bhils employed by government also may understand and use sansari and bhaqat notions, but those employed by government can afford to travel frequently by bus, or purchase a bicycle, and travel along the roads which radiate from the capital Dungarpur like the spokes of a wheel. They may even have visited Jaipur or Delhi at government expense. Government programs and institutions have had some influence on all Bhils. The education system has introduced impersonal ideas of time which are not linked to an agricultural cycle or an anticipatory moment. Education has also introduced ideas of impersonal space, of new names of distant places where one has no kin or even festival associations. In recent years, two different rallies of Bhils from Dungarpur have visited Delhi en masse to lobby for and then against the Congress-I Government of Indira Gandhi.

There is much evidence among the Bhils to support Durkheim's argument that the rhythm of social life determines concepts of

time. (See FN 1) Most Bhils draw on at least three different types of notions for reckoning time and place. Bhils also practise different rhythms of life, which are sometimes contradictory. The ideal form of these different patterns can be schematized as:

FIGURE 8.1.2:

Different Conceptions of Time and Place.

<u>sansari</u>	own place egocentric and now now time	bounded by kinship links
<u>bhaqat</u>	sacred place, lunar based and cosmic time	bounded by Hindu religion
government	bureaucratic sovereign territory, bureaucratic linear, impersonal time	bounded by the nation state

Critical concepts of time and space are established and reinforced in the village, and will continue to be important while Bhils continue to live in villages. Concepts of time and space associated with bhakti and government are important for

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1. E. Durkheim The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1976, pp. 10, 440-1.

Bhils because they have imposed or articulated new rhythms of social life on many Bhils. They include a monthly ceremony at which bhagat Bhils may realize Krsna, and a new, impersonal mechanical organization of time, associated in particular with the daily life of the government employed, and a new organization of space, organized or influenced by the nation state. The new ideas of time and space to some extent have influenced all Bhils. But the temporal and spatial notions associated with bhakti and government are best articulated by bhagat and government officials. Their patterns of behaviour are often different from other Bhils.

Just as bhagat and Bhil government officials are usually wealthier and have higher status than other Bhils, one might argue that there is a corresponding hierarchy of concepts of time and space among the Bhils. One could depict sansari notions of time as predominantly short term. One could depict their notions of space as predominantly limited to the distance walked in a day to the two or three neighbouring villages of one's affines. For bhagat, the lunar cycles are of particular importance. Celebrations at the occasion of the full moon refer to transcendent ideas of space and time, to world areas and distant sacred places. In Bhil villages government is associated with modern technology. It offers both objective measurement and unlimited extension of time and space, through the wrist watch, and a cumulative calendar, through government measurement and recording of village landholdings, through the superordination of national states.

Most Bhils, however, do not reach the heavens sung of in ecstatic moments of bhakti celebrations, and perhaps few aspire to them. Few Bhils are of direct consequence in national government. I am only aware of three Bhils who have travelled overseas. Few Bhils have any direct dealing with the many distinctions in time and space, which can be relevant to government. More real to most Bhils, including bhagat and Bhil government officials working in villages, are the agricultural cycle, the networks of kin, and the notions of time and space which are useful in the village. In these contexts, elaborate bhagat and government notions are less relevant. They may be referred to on occasions, but they are not superordinate to most Bhils' notions of time and space. In other words there is some ambivalence about any hierarchy of temporal and spatial notions among Bhils, and it may be preferable to describe the use of these various notions as relative to context.

CHAPTER NINE: DEVOTION

9.1 The Cultural Implications of Devotion (Bhakti)

The thesis has described cultural attempts of some Bhils to create a meaningful world. A major issue confronting Bhils is the problem of hierarchy/rank/status, which is a predominant value of the surrounding Indian society and also of concern to Bhils. The Bhils' appropriation and development of bhakti confronts Indian hierarchy. Bhakti is not only an attempt by Bhils to find God, to realize oneself, but also involves self-realization in a social context. Practices such as abstaining from meat and alcohol are not absolute, but they are statements by some Bhils that they are different from other Bhils. The pure practices of some Bhils share common assumptions with the pure practices of other castes.

Because of the historical evolution of bhakti, discussed in Chapter Four, Bhils do not perceive bhakti as articulating their subordination to other castes. Bhil traditions celebrate bhakti leaders who were Bhils. These leaders do not self-consciously follow the practices of high castes, but draw on an Indian spiritual heritage. For the Bhils, bhakti is a potential religious and philosophical system with many social implications. Those Bhils who seriously follow the path of bhakti have some of the characteristics of a sect. (See FN 1)

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1. M. Weber The Religion of India: The Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism, translated and edited by H.H. Gerth and D. Martindale, The Free Press, New York, 1958, p.6.

They may attend celebrations on nights of the full moon, at which they sing and dance to the newly-discovered gods of the greater Indian tradition, to Krsna, Ram and Sita, and to Hanuman. It is principally at these celebrations that ideas associated with the bhakti movement are promulgated. During the intervals between the full moon celebrations, other practices such as vegetarianism, are adhered to, sometimes ostentatiously. Both the beliefs and practices have implications for the status of Bhil bhagat in relation to other Bhils and to other Indians. Bhagat are to various degrees aware of these implications, and encouraged by them.

The context for the practical program espoused by the Balvaniya Maharaj ('great king', meaning 'bhagat leader') is one of extreme physical hardship, which jeopardizes the maintenance of traditions. For instance before a bhajan in Balvaniya a Maharaj related how his granddaughter had died in childbirth a few weeks before, mainly because of inadequate diet and lack of medical attention, due to poverty:

- (Mahārāj:) 1. 'The father went and brought his daughter
home for the birth of her first child.
2. The old man's top hair has fallen out.'

- (Mahārāj:) 1. 'o bāp, kholo parāvanā (See FN 1) giyo.
2. doho talro thāī giyo to.'

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1. kholo parāvanā: In the seventh month after conception, a father goes to his son-in-law's house, and puts coconut and rice in his daughter's hands there, and brings her home

- (his wife:) 3. 'First talk about the special grain.'
- (Maharaj:) 4. 'Today not even animals eat that grain.
 5. One grain has fallen into the big pot.
 6. So they will not succeed in food.
 7. At that time our headman died,
 8. Kacra Soma Kalauua, when the girl had the ceremony.
 9. The old lady (the girl's grandmother) was about to die.
 10. How could there be children?
 According to the wish of Ram, there will be children.
 11. Because of our evil times, the (girl's) old man and old woman do labouring work.
 12. Their children today terrify everyone.'

- (his wife) 3. 'pelā ajmo (See FN 1) karāvnā nī bāt kare he.'
- (Mahārāj) 4. 'pelo anāj ājkal janavār nahī khāta.
 5. cālu tāvrā mae eno kaṇ paṇjo.
 6. te cālu khāvu apphal jāhe.
 7. hevā mae amārā Gameti sānt hājā he.
 8. Kacrā Somā Kalāuua surīne vāt kholo parāvaṇo,
 9. dūhī marvā hutī sura thāta ahe.
 10. māro Rām karhe, te sure thāhe
 11. ne pāp dūhā dūhī ne mazdūrī kare.
 12. ene sore āj hanḡla ne ḡarāve.'

1. ajmo: grain grown outside Rajasthan, used for special growth of children.

The Balvaniya Maharaj then related how his son-in-law, the father of the dead girl, was attacked by the (deceased) girl's husband and family:

1. 'Uncle, my son got married after he had dug a well,
2. and drank the water. They both drank water...
3. Then six or seven people were there [from the deceased girl's husband's family]
4. Each one slapped [the girl's father] over the face and asked "How did she die?"
5. Did they throw her down and stamp on her?"
6. We all went to his place
7. and they did not listen to anything he said.
8. "Wait, I will teach you a lesson" [they said]
9. In the afternoon we all came,
10. the three of us, and he came.

1. 'kāke mārā sorā pannāvī ne kuo khanī
2. ne pānī pīvādju. Be pāi didu...
3. ata so hāt jan atha,
4. ne ek ek thāy vāzī aha to marī gayī ahem
5. nīce phēk diyā hatā aur māthe sarīgiyā athā
6. ama hetā giya ate iyām
7. ne sab keju te ne mānñā
8. 'ubo re, tamāre māzo zuo hām.'
9. bopahr mae āvigīyā,
10. tan jana keak jāine pelo lāi āvjā

11. We went in the direction of the Mewara [police station],
two [of us] went.

12. We went there, but we turned back.'

(His wife:)

13. 'They stopped talking [to these people, the deceased
girl's in-laws.]

11. laīne qiyā Mevārā hārū ībe

12. imne qiyā, ame pāsā āvjā.'

(His wife:)

13. bolvos chorī diyo.

Some Bhil may superficially imitate the outward forms of bhagat life. Other Bhils have developed bhakti in the context of the Bhil Village where they live. The Balvaniya Maharaj did not deny his Bhilness. He had married his daughter to a non-bhagat. He aspired to wealth. He taught right behaviour (vegetarianism and sobriety) in the classroom of the local school. He was a complex and sensitive man, and also chief articulator and mediator of some of the contemporary conflicts facing the Bhils in a changing world. The conflicts concerned consumption of pure substances and correct behaviour which was predicated on other Bhils consuming impure substances and behaving incorrectly. They concerned belief in reincarnation in the face of other Bhils' disinterest in such beliefs. They concerned a different social context, a redefinition of self which thereby implied one's radical difference from Bhils who were not bhagat. Because the marks of his bhagat status were

comprised of such basic elements as the food one ate and the substances one drank, the Balvaniya Maharaj's bhagat consciousness was with him always. It chiefly came to the fore at festivals of the full moon celebrated in the white painted kacca (packed mud) temple built onto his home.

Bhagat celebrations during the night of the full moon, which are central to the practice of bhakti, may have developed from earlier sansari festivals which have since disappeared. North of Dungarpur, near Udaipur, there have been accounts of all night wakes (jaqran). At the wakes, there were characteristic shakings, then self-flagellation with chains, which recall some of the practices of some bhakti celebrations in western Dungarpur. A major difference is that at dawn a goat was sacrificed in the sansari festivals, in contrast to the communal vegetarian meal eaten by bhagat. (See FN 1) Central to the monthly bhakti celebrations are the opportunities for changed states of consciousness. The changes are promoted by communal singing and music, and sometimes drugs and dance, until one is possessed by the God. The Balvaniya Maharaj also offered private counselling to devotees and their wives. He exhorted both men and women not to drink alcohol and to keep faith and trust. He also exhorted the women to learn the art of grinding flour. 'Your suffering will be removed while you repeat the name of Ram,' he told his acolytes. Although the bhajan involved some women from some villages, they generally involved fewer women than do marriages, funerals, Divali, Holi, mela and other festivals which are participated in by the whole village. Bhajan therefore indirectly introduce a new distinction between men and women.

1. D.W. McCurdy 'A Bhil Village of Rajasthan', pp. 233-234.

The credo given to his acolytes on a night of the full moon by the Balvaniya Maharaj recalls Govindgiri's preaching to the Bhils' seventy years earlier. The credo has direct behavioural implications:

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|----|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. | <u>Bhagvān no nām liyo</u> | 'Adopt God's name, |
| 2. | <u>khetī karo</u> | Cultivate the fields, |
| 3. | <u>jūto ne bolo</u> | Do not tell lies, |
| 4. | <u>dāro mās ne khavo</u> | Do not consume meat or alcohol, |
| 5. | <u>jīvan nakhī karo</u> | Do not take any life, |
| 6. | <u>hinsā nakhī karo.</u> | Do not commit any injury.' |

The Balvaniya Maharaj expounded elements of a bhakti philosophy in the bhajan during one night in April 1981. He vividly recalled their situation of poverty, the basic importance of food and drink, and alluded to Bhil aspirations towards generosity. Ideas from the Indian great tradition, such as karm, illuminated the present and provided some hope for the future. In conversation and in worship, the Bhil bhakti leaders use ideas from the Indian great tradition to attempt to reconcile their situation of poverty.

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|----|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. | <u>Dhīre dhīre em hai,</u> | 'Slow and steady, |
| 2. | <u>ki jāre dukh lāqī</u> | it is such that |
| | <u>giyo hai</u> | |
| 3. | <u>āpre mārje ghere</u> | when trouble strikes |
| 4. | <u>ujer karāve</u> | to ruin our house, |
| 5. | <u>āpre kātho pare</u> | it is hard to face. |
| 6. | <u>khāvā vālā khāī qiyā,</u> | The eaters are eaten away, |
| 7. | <u>pīvā vālā pī gayā,</u> | the drinkers are drunk away, |
| 8. | <u>ito bañjū nahī</u> | so we did not make anything. |

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|-----|--|--------------------------------------|
| 9. | <u>Khāī khāī ne</u> | To the starving beggars
(we give) |
| 10. | <u>khone paī rejā</u> | what is lying in the corner. |
| 11. | <u>āpre to em hai</u> | We have such habits |
| 12. | <u>ki āpare te koi alāe</u> | that we give whatever we have |
| 13. | <u>na hamjā.</u> | don't you understand? |
| 14. | <u>Āpre bījū hū alāh,</u> | What else can we give |
| 15. | <u>narel alāh,</u> | only cocnut. |
| 16. | <u>Āj bījū hu paṇ alāh,</u> | Today what else can we give, |
| 17. | <u>sab moqu thāī giyu</u>
<u>hai.</u> | everything has become
costly.. |
| 18. | <u>mārā karm no ke maljo</u> | My fate is such that |
| 19. | <u>avo dukhī atu.</u> | we are suffering. |

Pocock suggests that the message of bhakti is caste transcendence that is never put into practice. (See FN 1) But bhakti beliefs do have important practical consequences. Bhakti beliefs explain to Bhils why they are near the bottom of a hierarchically ordered series, and offer them a strategy for upward mobility. There is the immediate incentive of being able to think of oneself as better than Bhils who are not bhagat, and better than non-vegetarian castes. To the Bhils, sobriety and vegetarianism are the most immediate markers of the bhagat. Devout and sometimes fanatical bhagat leaders proselytize these observances. Bhakti offers a means for achieving merit by good work rather than by birth.

1. D.F. Pocock Mind, Body and Wealth: A Study of Belief and Practice in an Indian Village, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1973, p.105.

The proscription against meat and alcohol is combined with a spiritual program of worshipping Ram or Krsna and performing bhakti. There is the promise that 'one day you will see God, leading to the Victory of our luxurious life (thet). Worship God, you are God.' (See FN 1) The bhakti leaders state that 'witches cannot bewitch Ram'. Medieval Christianity also acknowledged local spiritual powers, and found ways of incorporating them into superordinate beliefs.

It is because of meat-eating, or in the bhakti leader's hyperbolic rhetoric, because 'demons eat the flesh and bone of elephants', that we are now in the Kaliyug, the worst of the four world eras. In the Satyug, or good world era, men lived for 1000 years, they became engaged when they were 400 and married at 500, and conceived children by looking at each other. This idea also occurs in Buddhist scriptures.

Bhakti is also, however, a new means to search for pleasure:

<u>Bhaḡvān dukhiyo ne sukhī karjo,</u>	'God make the sorrowful happy,
<u>bhakt Bhaḡvān ne sukhī rākhjo,</u>	God keep the pious happy.
<u>sāu dāḡa nabhem tare, ek</u>	You have to worship for 100
	days,
<u>dāḡo Bhaḡvān yād karehe.</u>	then God will remember you
	one day.'

1. Bhaḡvānjī pūjā kare, tū hī bhaḡvān ho.

The ceremonies on the nights of the full moon transform Bhils' relations to their mundane life, and also transform their relations to other Bhils, the non-vegetarian sansari Bhils. Other ceremonies held on nights of the full moon, such as the ceremonies of marriage, may also transform relations between the diverse family groups which are brought together.

In the bhajan sings about the sowing of a seed to grow a whole fruit. When it is hollowed, it makes a musical instrument on which one can celebrate bhakti:

1. vālājī sonā ne kudālī khārā Dig a furrow with a golden
hoe,
khodvā re lo good sir.
2. vālājī rūpāle ne pālo Have it dug, with silver as
khodvo re lo compost, good sir.

This instrument is then used to explain the meaning of karm:

3. Rāṇā dasme daṇe tumarā On the tenth day the pot was
bādhvā re lo taken, O King.

4. Rānāji āje anā tumarā O King today the great King
judājudā lekh pare mahārāj. makes a separate destiny for
that pot.
5. Rānāji karme karmā no judā O King there is a separate
lekh paḍiye. destiny produced for each
karm
6. Rānāji ek sādhanā ne kāverī O King, one wise man will
cross
Gaṅgā dhirāt karhe he. the Ganga river,
7. Rānāji ek hi kāvaḍiye tiradh He crosses along the Kavedi
kare lo. river, o King.
8. Rānāji ek hi komer tīrth O King there is only one
tīrth sair kare lo. vehicle, walk over the crossing
9. Rānāji ek hi komer kalāl O King, there is only one
gher bhāti galere lo. vehicle, the goods (for
distilling) are rotting in the
Kalal's house.

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|---|---|
| 10. <u>Rānājī komeṛ nā judā judā</u>
<u>lekh pariya re lo,</u> | O King there is a separate
destiny for each vehicle. |
| 11. <u>Rānājī likhyo re enā lekh</u>
<u>bhāv bhāv na re lo.</u> | O King the destiny of
everyone' existence has been
written. |
| 12. <u>Rānājī ek hi kāyā do do</u>
<u>avāsṛa re lo,</u> | O King there are two
manifestations of the one body. |
| 13. <u>Rānājī komeṛ judā judā</u>
<u>lekh pariyo.</u> | O King there are separate works |
| 14. <u>Rānājī ek re kamere duniyā</u>
<u>ni kāma thī karī re lo.</u> | O King in one action the world
was created. |

The bhajan then explains that two royal children may have completely different destinies. Because of their karm, or actions in a previous existence, one son may rule a kingdom, another may sell pieces of wood. The implied suggestion is that Bhil and non-Bhil may also have completely different destinies.

There may also be radical differentiation between Bhils. The bhajan ends by singing victory to Ramcand, to the God of Samlaji, to the God of Kesariya, and to the auspicious circle, which is those Bhils who have chosen the path of devotion.

The bhagat interest in rebirth appears to be stimulated partly by a consciousness of contradictions in the distribution of wealth. Worship is focussed on a few gods. New concepts are introduced into the Bhils' world view. They include the unworthiness of the supplicant, and other ideas such as gun, the constituent elements of the universe, pap, sin; and karm action, religious action, or destiny. Karm can be ripe or unripened, but it has to be suffered. (See FN 1) There is evidence for bhakti transcending caste divisions. In Balwaniya some non-Bhils attended bhajan particularly if troubled by illness. In Galandar an Assistant Engineer of the Suta caste donated Rs. 2000 towards the repair of a shrine.

The psychological appeal of bhakti relies not only on the offer of transcending or explaining a miserable worldly lot. It also presents images with which Bhils can identify in order to transcend their mundane existence. These images include the transformation of the unadorned body into the gloriously clothed body of god. For instance a long and beautiful bhajan sings of the ornaments on every part of the body of the god Chudala, who comes from the Himalayas in his coloured tunic with ornaments around his waist and fingers, his fifty-one necklaces,

1. 'Mārā karm na lekh bhugtvā pare' (The writing of my karm has to be suffered.)

his earrings, his turban, his glorious forearms and biceps and with head jewels. 'Take pleasure in Hari', (See FN 1) is the chorus line of this bhajan. As well as taking pleasure in Hari, we are told to 'take great and small amounts of pleasure.' (See FN 2) Dress and jewellery are of great importance to both Bhil men and women. An aesthetically pleasing and bejewelled god is consistent with Bhil notions of the good (asal), which, like the classical Greek phrase 'good and beautiful' (καλὰ καγαλόν) combines notions of good behaviour and aesthetics. Head jewels referred to in the bhajan are worn by men at marriage. The God Hari therefore represents an ideal form for every Bhil at his own time of glory, during the marriage ceremony.

The young girls who herd cattle in the mundane world of Bhil villages are also idealized in bhajan. Bhajan sing of female cowherds (gopi) as devotees of the god Krsna. In mountainous Bhil villages such as Jagbor, the landscape recalls the fourteenth century Bhagava paintings of Krsna playing with cowgirls. In contemporary Dungarpur, children and young unmarried girls often herd cattle during the day. Where there is jungle, this occupation presents some opportunities for erotic indulgences. The bhajan which Bhils sing on nights of the full moon are therefore resonant with symbolism. In mountainous western Dungarpur Krsna's chief sobriquet is 'mountain-holder'. Bhil houses are perched on hilltops and adorned with white flags, like the temples of Gokul. Krsna, the cowherd of 360 cows, pursues love-affairs, but also protects the

1. 'Harī harī ler karo mahārāj.'

2. 'Gaṇā thorā ler karo mahārāj.'

honour (nak literally 'nose'), of his house. Bhajan address Bhils' aspirations and their situation, and provide a means of explaining and transcending that situation.

Recruitment to the bhakti movement is guided by certain social and economic considerations and constraints. Bhagat of especial piety do not accept food, even tea, in any town. They are therefore likely to be confined to villages, and only make brief visits to town.

In Weber's terms, bhagat are a status group, not a sociological category, as they live an allegiance to an ideal which has no ultimate boundaries. Bhakti offers identification and temporary transcendence of worldly conditions. The resplendent appearance of their gods fits well with Bhil values. Bhakti expands Bhil consciousness of time and space, by introducing notions of world eras (yug) which progressively deteriorate. Consciousness of time and space is expanded but not transcended beyond sacred moments. These have a specificity in time (the nights of the full moon) and in space: a white-painted kacca (packed mud) temple, usually built on to a Bhil house. Vastly expanded conceptions of money are also introduced. The Balwaniya Maharaj tells his acolytes to 'worship with Rs. 125,000'. (See FN 1) By contrast my sansari host in Pal Galandar, who was a sorcerer (bhopa), sung chants about buying dresses for Rs. 0.25.

1. 'Savā lākh rokaḍo laī namem namāe.'

Bhakti theodicy offers an explanation of inequality. The practice of bhakti also provides a new elaborate hierarchy among and between Bhils. A Brahmin teacher in a village would consider it important whether or not his Bhil neighbours were bhagat. Urban castes, however, tend not to take seriously Bhil claims to be bhagat. Although bhakti theodicy presents an opportunity of transcending caste differences, in practice it often adds to social differentiation by dividing Bhils. The hierarchical differences between bhagat and sansari are often explicitly acknowledged by the bhagat title of Maharaj (great king), or by rituals. At a funeral of a sansari man in Galandar, his son distributed 10 paise to the five bhagat present. They ostentatiously refused it, but were gratified by the symbolic use of money to indicate their ritual superiority.

Bhakti in practice is an important marker of status, or rank, in the village. There are visible signs of the house of a bhagat - white flags at Jagbor and Ratapani, yellow turbans, and white-painted kacca (packed mud) temples attached to the houses of some bhagat at Galandar and Balwaniya. Devotion to the path of bhakti leads to elaborate differentiation between bhagat and non-bhagat, and among bhagat themselves. Jagbor bhagat do not smoke (in Wagadi 'drink') cigarettes or keep dogs (which are associated with meat-eating), and consider themselves more pure than Bhils of Galandar, who smoke cigarettes and keep dogs. In Balwaniya bhagat members of one clan who have built a temple onto their house do not acknowledge other clans in the village as bhagat. There are also

gradations of purity within the one family. Janardan, the deputy headmaster of the secondary school near Galandar, his sister, who was a petty government official, and his brother's son, are not allowed in to the kitchen of their parents' house, or allowed to touch cooking utensils, because they come into contact with impurities in the town where they work.

A search for God through bhakti and zealous, ostentatious avoidance of meat and alcohol, is a path open to all. But its practice has significant implications for establishing one's status as pure, and therefore superior to those who are impure, or less pure than oneself. Status is signified by many visible activities, including the consumption of pure substances, such as food and drink into the body. Status thereby obtained is important in negotiating arrangements for marriage, undertaking marriage or funeral ceremonies, or celebrating communally the imminence of the deities. The hierarchical rankings stated, or subtly or chauvinistically proposed by one's many actions within the village, intersect in intricate ways with other rankings elaborated by economic status, by family lineage, by one's clan's standing in a village, by one's modernity, by one's success in obtaining government employment. Because bhakti's implications for status and rank, bhakti in practice is never absolute, but relative. Many of the measures of status and rank involve exchanges of food and money.

CHAPTER 10: FOOD AND MONEY

10.1 The significance of food and money

Although the bhakti movement appears to most observers, and to Bhils themselves, as a radical break with the past, it also has built on older traditions. It addresses itself to major Bhil concerns, and provides a means of achieving status ratified by superordinate powers. Food, and other alimentary interests, the incorporation of the pure products of the imminent world into the body, are of vital interest in establishing one as a bhagat (devotee), among the Bhils.

McKim Marriott writing from an empirical and interactionist perspective, proposes that purity and pollution are necessarily complementary, even for Brahmins. Association with 'the body' and 'meat' decreases rank. Marriott concludes a study of an Uttar Pradesh village: 'A cardinal assumption of ranking in such statements about food could be formulated very simply: givers of food and other substances are higher, receivers are lower. Marriott also notes other factors which are important to caste ranking. 'Values such as independence or power and luxurious display are also prominent in villagers' talk about the main kinds of food transfer other than transfer of garbage and faeces.' Moreover receipt of land, animals and money is prized, Marriott claims, for 'transactional' reasons: 'they are convertible at will into food, or service, or into many others

among the desired things of life. Accepting them involves a clear gain along with only the slightest degree of subordination.' Intercaste transactions are 'a kind of tournament among the 24 teams which make up the village's society.' (See FN 1) A later article develops this thesis, and proposes that 'in the game-like actional displays .. the players have at stake also the preservation and transformation of their own nature.' (See FN 2)

Because Bhils live in dispersed settlements near jungles or forests, disposal of garbage and faeces is not undertaken by third parties. Bhils do not have the elaborate symbolic systems which have been developed around food by the Brahmins. They tend not to live in intercaste villages. They also lack the Brahmins abundance of food. But Bhils also emphasize the importance of food. Eating is of primary importance to all Bhils, and perhaps typifies the most active of waking activities, the opposite of sleep, as when a father asks his sick child: 'Do you want to eat. That's enough, just go to sleep.' (See FN 3) Eating or sleeping are the two contrasts, in polite conversation, for activities undertaken indoors, unlike most activities, which are undertaken outside the house. Bhils usually eat inside their

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1. M. Marriott 'Caste ranking and food transactions: a matrix analysis' in M. Singer and B.S. Cohn, eds, Structure and Change in Indian Society, Aldine, Chicago, 1968, pp. 138-157.
 2. M. Marriott 'Hindu Transactions: Diversity without dualism', in B. Kapferer, ed., Transaction and Meaning, ISHI, Philadelphia, 1976, p. 112.
 3. Khāvu he - bas eva hutizo.

houses, or in privacy under their verandas. Fear of envy from hungry onlookers is a motivating factor for eating in private. (See FN 1) As well as being contrasted with sleep, eating is one of the most vigorous of waking activities. The expression 'You are fit to be beaten with a stick' uses the verb 'eating'. (See FN 2) Eating, like sex, is an aggressive life-affirming activity, which is normally secret and private. Conversely sickness is associated with not eating, and serious sickness is defined by it.

The importance of food is highlighted by the avoidance of all food when fasting. Fasting (ekanu) is a symbolic act of particular import in villages where food is short for most Bhils. Fasting avoids, absolutely, the possibility of consuming substances into the body during dangerous liminal periods. Fasting may be undertaken by pious bhagat at a full moon, by bhagat or sansari Bhils at certain festivals such as Daharo, or at a funeral by all patrilineal cousins, (kakababhanabhai) of the deceased. The fasting at a funeral is consistent with other symbols of reversion at funerals. All wear old, dirty clothes, women and men cover their heads and faces. Yet one could also argue that the elaborations around food and fasting are consistent with a wider Indian pattern. Certainly the Bhils believe so. Bhils believe that their customs, which sometimes

1. Pocock notes that Patidars in Gujarat also ate secretly inside their houses for the same reason. [D.F. Pocock Mind Body and Wealth: A Study of Belief and Practice in an Indian Village, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1973, p27.]

2. 'Gehlā khāvā lāyak ho!'

include fasting, are practised by all castes, including Brahmins, Rajputs and Baniyas. 'You have seen (it), this is our custom, in India' (See FN 1) was stated to me at the conclusion of one funeral ceremony. There are exceptions to the regime of fasting during important periods of liminality. A deceased boy's young siblings ate at one particular funeral I attended. Their cousin who returned to Galandar for two days also ate, because he was studying at Dungarpur College. 'He is studying, so he doesn't fast', I was told. (See FN 2) The importance of food and its symbolic elaborations are common throughout India. For Bhils some of these elaborations may be overridden by more important concerns, such as the need for those studying to eat, as they hope to gain government employment, and will not do anything to jeopardize that opportunity.

Because of the importance of food, a binary division of this dimension of life (vegetarian food versus non-vegetarian food) assumes major importance. Not eating (meat) is the principal definition of a bhagat. I was greeted in one village by the expression 'bhagat Maharaj'. This was quickly contradicted by those accompanying me: 'he is not a royal bhagat, he eats (meat)'. (See FN 3) 'Eating', by extension, means 'eating meat'. Although vegetarianism is prescribed by bhagat, there are disadvantages to it. My host explained: 'We do not eat meat, so we are weak'. (See FN 4)

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1. 'Tame zujha, ye amāre ritīrivāj he Bharat mem.'
 2. 'Bhane he, otliye ne ekānu he.'
 3. 'Bhagat mahārāj ne, vah khaie.'
 4. 'Ame ne khāte, otlus duble.'

But again, bhagat concern about who one accepts food from may have developed from older Bhil patterns of only eating with families with which one was related. I was told not to eat at a certain house because of the danger of the suspected witch who lived there exercising power through food. In the greater tradition of Hinduism avoiding commensality outside one's caste is based on a paradigm of purity. In a Bhil village, radically limiting who one accepts food from, is reinforced by a fear of witchcraft.

Food (commensality) and sex (endogamy) are interrelated throughout the Indian subcontinent. (See FN 1) Bhils may associate the two in everyday speech. 'I eat two different sorts of roti bread' means 'I have two wives'. (See FN 2)

In its necessity and pleasure, food resembles sexuality, a resemblance not lost on the Bhils. An everyday greeting is to ask: 'Are you in pleasure? - Yes. What sort of pleasure comes? - Lots and lots of pleasure is coming.' (See FN 3) The pleasure referred to is a well-being constituted in part by a good flow of the basic commodities of life. Mazo, the most common word for pleasure, is close phonetically to marso, chilli, which is the essence of enjoyable food, and closely identified with pleasure.

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1. cf., N. Yalman, Under the Bo Tree: Studies in Caste Kinship and Marriage in the Interior of Ceylon, University of California Press, Berkeley, pp. 94-5.
 2. 'Mu be be rotla khāu.'
 3. 'Tame māze mēe hoke? Hau. Kevo māzo āve? Kaik māzo āve.'

Most Bhils only eat with other families if they are related to them, or if they could conceivably be related to them in the future. Bhils would not therefore eat with people with whom they could not countenance sexual relationships. There are other metaphors of association between food and sexual relations. Kissing is only practised between a mother and child. Homologously it is only by lactation that two people (mother and child) exchange bodily food. For Bhils food is perhaps the most necessary, regular and enjoyable of all activities. It is also used to control the earliest notions of space for the Bhil child. A mother might tell her child: 'Where are you going? You have to eat'. (See FN 1) In the village, the Bhils' two daily meals and the daily drink of tea for men, occur at boundaries of Bhil divisions of the day. These boundaries were discussed in Chapter Eight. The few Bhils who live in town are wealthy enough to eat three meals a day. But the town-dwellers also have different notions of time.

The higher gives to the lower, the bhagat may occasionally prepare food for the sansari. The reverse is never the case. A bhagat wife would provide food to a sansari husband. In practice she would be unlikely to provide or prepare food for his relatives. Marriages between vegetarian and non vegetarian cause complications. The sansari lecturer in the town of Dungarpur complained to me that when his bhagat wife's family, meaning her parents or siblings, came to stay with him, they would cook outside in his backyard, rather than suffer the impurities of his kitchen. His secular power and status was sufficient to gain the daughter of an ambitious bhagat family.

1. 'Keā zāo? Khāvu he.'

It was not sufficient to induce his in-laws to eat inside his house. Occasionally such divisions could have tragic consequences. Another daughter of the same family was married to a sansari schoolteacher. She threw herself into a well in Galandar, and drowned, in part because of the constant strains of a marriage between a pure vegetarian and an impure eater of meat.

A pious bhagat prays before eating. His meals comprise ritual actions and his foods are used in ceremonies and festivals. Substances consumed by sansari also have elaborate import. They are the heating foods of meat, eggs and fermented alcohol (mahudi). Mahudi is to food as feminine is to masculine. The words for both male and female sexual organs also have feminine endings. Grammatically mahudi is female and food is male. Before mahudi is drunk, one repeats the mantra 'Jay mataji' (Victory to the Mother). Married women drink only in their parent's house, and it is on these occasions that they might renew old acquaintances with village beaux. Mahudi in this context suggests illicit sexual activity. Consumption of mahudi is limited to sansari Bhils, and almost defines them. Most Bhils can seldom afford to buy meat, or are seldom able to catch it in forests devoid of game. Food may be either pure or impure, mahudi never is.

Together, eating and drinking define the essence of existence. I initially introduced myself as wanting to write a history of the Bhils. The word 'history' (itihās) had no meaning for the Bhils, even though I explained that other people had written a history of the Rajputs, and I was subsequently introduced around western Dungarpur as writing about 'customs' (ritirivaj), which was immediately defined by the Bhils, on every occasion, as 'how people eat, drink, raise crops and so on'.

Because of the different foods of bhagat and sansari, the signal items of exchange at ceremonies are also different for these two groups.

Bhagat use coconuts at ceremonies. They are an exotic well-protected fruit which produces milk, and comes from outside the Bhils' villages, like bhakti itself. Bhagat also use choice food, such as lapi sokar (ghee and flour, with rice), and money, in marriage, funerals, and other rituals, such as a son-in-law's gifts to his wife's parents. Sansari Bhils use meat, the gift of an animal, or mahudi on the same occasions. (See FN 1) The signal items of exchange in public festivals such as Holi are now vegetarian. Meat was eaten at funerals in Galandar until 1950, and was secretly consumed at the Daharo festival until 1979. The Deputy Chairman (upasarpanch) of the Galandar Council was shunned when he was drunk for a Holi celebration in 1981.

Food, or tea, divides the time of day for all Bhils in villages. The year is also divided by the Hindu calendar and its festivals celebrate the mythology of the greater Hindu tradition. Most Bhils however are only aware of the names of the mythic heroes. One Bhagat in Galandar explained to me that at Daharo Ram killed Ravan. At Diwali Ram returns home. Many Bhils are not aware of the mythology. The year for most Bhils is

1. Cf. O. Pertold 'The Liturgical Use of Mahuda Liquor by Bhils,' Archiv Orientalni: Journal of the Czechoslovak Oriental Institute, Prague, vol. 3, no. 2, 1931, pp. 400-407.

therefore divided by their practices rather than their beliefs. Part of the practice of all Bhils which marks the seasons of the year in the village is the different seasonal foods they consume. Because meat is now expensive and scarce, bhagat and sansari diet is similar for normal time outside of ceremonial time. Qualitative differences are often as much due to differences in wealth as to differences in religion.

Important ceremonies involve an intermingling of signal items. The two groups bhagat and sansari do not occupy separate domains. Homa Katara became drunk one night, and fought, mainly verbally, with a neighbour, an elderly widow related to Homa by marriage. The dispute was settled the next morning by Gotam Bhagat, the village ceremonial leader (gameti) of the ward in which the dispute took place, and another bhagat gameti of an adjoining ward. First the gameti ate rice, then the sansari men who were present ate rice, and drank mahudi from the leaf of the kankara tree. Homa did not eat, but drank his last half bottle of mahudi, the cause of the disturbance. He was then passed a lota of water by his daughter, and he vowed never again to drink mahudi.

A growing population in a finite area of land imposes additional pressures for sober living within an Indian cultural context. Jagbor has the least land, and the greatest percentage of bhagat, but even here both Mataji and Sita-Ram are worshipped. Disputes which occur outside an extended kin network in Galandar are settled in different ways, and are discussed in Chapter Eleven. They do not involve sacramental use of food or alcohol.

Foods may vary in abundance and purity, and be radically divided into vegetarian and non vegetarian. Money too is incremental, and marks a radical difference if derived from salaried employment by government. Money, like food, is of particular interest to Bhils. This interest reveals much about Bhil pushes against hierarchy and pulls towards egalitarianism. In contemporary western Dungarpur, perhaps even more so than food, money is a signal item of exchange. It indicates quantitative differences between men. It can be used to compare all humanity and may therefore suggest their unity. A Bhil proverb states; 'a plough is the husband of the earth, and money is the husband of man.'

There are indications that money has long been of deep concern to the Bhils. The establishment of the Mewara Bhil Corps at Kherwara in 1840 pacified the region and also had other important effects. A detailed history of the Corps noted: 'The regular pay and pensions circulates quite a large sum of money through these penurious petty Estates.' (See FN 1) There are other historical glimpses into Bhils' lives, which suggests that money was important. For instance two pieces of paper were found in a Bhil's quiver last century. One listed 18 debtors who owed from Rs. 0.75 to Rs.5. The other listed a daily account of expenditure totalling Rs. 3.12, over eleven days, spent on

1. RFD, Assistant Political Superintendent, Hilly Tracts, Mewar, File No. 4, 1919, p. 74.

flour, pulse, ghi, gur (molasses) and tobacco. (See FN 1) The picture is consistent with the contemporary custom of recording details of all financial transactions at marriages, funerals and other festivals.

It is obvious to all Bhils that money readily translates into food. My host once asked me if I had eaten three rupees, when he meant roti, as I paid for my food in the former medium. Lalo Forester Sahab was called motho, which could mean big, but also meant fat. In fact he and the Brahmin headmaster, and their wives, although not obese, were the stoutest members of the village. The principal reason was that they were the highest earners of income, and spent more than the average Bhil on food.

In contemporary western Dungarpur, food and money are universal ciphers of difference and similarity between men. Any stranger is likely to be quizzed on the foods he eats, and if he is employed, his monthly salary, in rupees, into which any currency is convertible. Money measures differences in space and also differences in time. The Patvari, the keeper of the land records, who lived in a village near Galandar, had told the

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1. R.C. Temple 'Glimpses into a Bhil's life', Indian Antiquaries, vol. 21, April 1892. Such examples argue against McCurdy's suggestion that there was a novel shift from reciprocal exchanges to money-based market exchange among Bhils of Udaipur only after a road was built near the village in 1935. [D.W. McCurdy 'Saving on loans in tribal India' in J.P. Spradley and D.W. McCurdy Conformity and Conflict, Little Brown and Company, Boston, 1974, p. 432.]

Bhils that each hour in an aeroplane costs Rs. 300. A ticket for a ten hour flight to Australia, which I made clear was provided by my university, not myself, was therefore Rs. 3000. Distances to Bombay, Ahmedabad or villages in Dungarpur, were measured by the cost of a bus fare to the destination. Money is therefore a powerful measure of distances in space.

Labouring is valued by wages paid on a daily basis. Government relief work does not provide food for labourers, only cash. During 1980 there was a dispute in Galandar because Lala Forrester ceased paying his employees with a midday meal and wages, and henceforth paid them only in cash. When I laboured for him I was paid Rs. 5 a day. In the meantime the Congress I government was re-elected, in part because of a promise to pay government relief workers Rs. 8 per day (about 5 kg. of wheat or \$US 1), which was subsequently implemented.

Government employees are paid by a salary calculated on a monthly basis. Money therefore measures units of time. It values one's days or one's months. Bhils are also bitterly aware that different people are paid at different rates. Money measures activities in the world of the village and in the world outside the village dominated by government. Few things cannot be measured by money. A family's wealth is of major importance in marriage negotiations. Wealth, whether in land, an irrigation pump or government employment, can be estimated in monetary terms. Marriage and funeral ceremonies both involve the recording, by a relative, of the gifts in cash or kind of every participant. The services of the sorcerer (bhopa/barwo), which are usually delivered to a non-relative, in my

observation never involved a gift of money. His attempt at reconciling contradictory systems was in part effective because he stood outside them.

Food is a primary need, and has been elaborated into signal items of exchange between groups, to mark purity and status. Money is also highly desired. Because of subsistence oriented farming, money does not have quite the same remorseless necessity as food has. Scope for gaining money is principally from labouring outside one's village, or working for government as a salaried employee, or on relief labour. Money is of such importance that it has gained symbolic value in most ceremonies.

The most significant means of gaining money is from government service, and government service is particularly coveted as a means of gaining money. Yet money is not an end in itself. It seems to be most prized because it promotes control of secular affairs. Money may ensure reproduction, initially through life-supporting food, then through a viable and successful marriage. Money allows access to the privileges of non Bhil society. It allows one to bedeck oneself in style. Encompassed by an hierarchical society, Bhils use money to measure their superiority to other Bhils in secular affairs, and one's equality with non Bhils. Money is principally associated with a superordinate power, the power of the sarkar (government). Food and money are important to Bhils because they make statements about other-worldly and this-worldly status, about bhakti and sarkar in practice. But bhakti and sarkar are

effective because they are embedded in exchanges involving the signal items of food and money.

Just as food, which has no intrinsic implication of inequality, makes statements about status because of a given social context, similarly money, in the context of the Bhil village, can be a precise measure of difference. Difference between humans is verified in numerous transactions, at marriages, funerals, and the intervening trials and vanities of life. The practice of bhakti is principally elaborated around food and drink exchanges. The practice of government is elaborated by means of money.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: GOVERNMENT

11.1 The cultural implications of government (sarkar)

The historical evolution of changed relations between British and Bhils has been described as it occurred during the nineteenth century. The military defeat of the Bhils indirectly encouraged the development and flourishing of bhakti during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Military resistance was by then confined to sporadic outbreaks.

Bhils have been progressively discouraged from violent protest, and encouraged towards economic conformity. Before Independence political protest mobilized Bhils but was organized by non-Bhils. After Independence some Bhils have participated in the benefits of Independence to a greater degree than others through government employment. All Bhils have internalized various notions associated with sarkar, (government/authority). The process by which Bhils' consciousness is pervaded with notions of sarkar is described here and the cultural implications of government are considered.

A class of middle-ranking peasants has developed among the Bhils. Bhils who have secured government employment are members of the class by virtue of their additional income. The

employment of some Bhils by government in the four villages studied, and in most villages in southern Rajasthan, is also culturally significant.

Some Bhils have been employed by a modern government since at least 1840. The Mewara Bhil Corps incorporated Bhils into a national system of government and transferred some income to those Bhils. Government employed few Bhils before Independence. The gains made after Independence were preceded by political agitations before 1947 which were sometimes extensive. In 1905 Svami Govind supported an organization called Samp Sabha. The organizers called for the boycotting of foreign goods, growth of national industries, and revival of village pancayats. (See FN 1) Its failure has been attributed to its members coming from royal clans (rajgharana) who were high State officials. (See FN 2) Later political agitation was more popularly based and was more successful. In 1921-22 the Bhils of Dungarpur and neighbouring states revolted against taxation. (See FN 3) Motilal Tejavat, a non-Bhil, organized a Bhil rebellion. Police burnt Bhula and Balodiya villages and fired on Bhils in Rohera in May 1922. The Rajasthan Seva Sangh sent two men to conduct an inquiry in May 1922, and they reported that about 1800 people had been killed. (See FN 4) Following the atrocity, Motilal Tejavat's movement gained momentum. He dressed himself like the Bhils and organized gatherings of them in Udaipur and Sirohi. Tejavat was arrested in Idar in June 1929 and jailed for seven

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1. R. Singh, Purva Adhunik Rajasthan, Udaipur, 1954, p.320.
 2. B. Ramchandra, Amar Sahi, Jaipur, 1968.
 3. RFD, Political Branch Records, 1929, p. 276.
 4. R.M. Chowdhry, Vartman Rajasthan, Ajmer, 1968, p.73. RFD, Political Branch, 10 May 1929, Letter No. 821.

years without trial. (See FN 1) Vanvasi Seva Sangh, formed by Rajasthan Brahmins in 1940, urged Bhils to press for democracy. (See FN 2)

Tejawat, in accepting food from Bhils and living with them, signified a communality, a new equality, with other castes. Such symbolic acts were effective, and heralded significant change realized by the achievement of Independence.

Bhogilal Pandya, a Dungarpur Brahmin, continues to be remembered by Bhils because he ate and lived with them. He started the Praja Mandal to press for mass support, was jailed in April 1946, then released following public agitation. In June 1947 State officials raised Ranawala school and abducted the teacher. Bhogilal Pandya went with 45 Bhils to Jhutha, undressed, and challenged the police, who allowed the teacher to return to school. Pandiya was arrested in the same month. (See FN 3)

The political agitation eventually achieved Independence, which has brought tangible gains for some Bhils. In Galandar people point out that Lalo was a bullock driver before Independence. He is now employed by the Forestry Department and the richest man in the Pal. Government employment has been the major factor in the creation of a group of middle-income peasants like Lalo.

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1. Rajasthan, 6 June 1940.
 2. Navjivan, 6 June 1940.
 3. Navjivan, 3 February 1947, p.54; R. Pande, Agrarian Movement in Rajasthan, Delhi, n.d.

They have secured their employment because a percentage of government positions, equal to the proportion of Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes in Rajasthan, is reserved for those groups which appear on a government schedule. Except for a few Bhils employed as staff of Dungarpur and Banswara Colleges, and the local Member of Parliament in the National Assembly, most Bhils of southern Rajasthan continue to live in villages, even if they gain government employment. Their salaries are insufficient to support residence in a town, but are an important supplement to their farm income. In almost every village there reside some Bhils employed by government as teachers, foresters of petty officials. They are referred to by other Bhils with the suffix -sahab added to their names. Their salary allows them to buy or borrow money for an irrigation pump. They are marked by their western-style clothes, wristwatches, bicycles, transistor radios, and the gold jewellery of their wives. Families with a member who is a government employee tend to marry other such families. They are from the masses but not of them. Like their fellow villagers, but different from them. They bear witness to the social fact that personal rank only partially conforms to caste rank. (See FN 1) Low has called them rich or dominant peasants. In western Dungarpur there are few rich peasants whose wealth is not supplemented by government employment. Government income is used to secure an irrigation pump or additional land,

1. M. Marriott 'Hindu Transactions: Diversity Without Dualism' 1976, p.133.

and government officials are not so much dominant in themselves but dominant because they are the carriers of a new ideology of a nation state. (See FN 1)

The political changes achieved after the Bhils pre-Independence struggle have altered the way others designate Bhils. Bhils' designation of themselves has also changed. In government reports they are generally referred to by the politically significant label 'Scheduled Tribes'. The Bhils in Dungarpur, although not in Banswara, where they form a larger proportion of the total population, prefer to refer to themselves as Adivasi (=Aboriginal) when dealing with government, or in local situations. (See FN 2) For instance the 'Adivasi Navayuvak

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1. The end point on the continuum was the Bhil who was a lecturer at Dungarpur College and lived in town. By his wealth, education and mobility he had more in common with the Brahmin headmaster in Galandar than with other Bhils, and he and his wife would often spend much of their brief visits to the village with them. The main tie he had with other Bhils was marriage. With the Brahmin, there was similarity of occupation. His friends tended to be other Lecturers who were members of Scheduled Castes, or Muslim.
 2. In Dungarpur District, 65 per cent of the population are identified as Scheduled Tribes. Of these, 51 per cent identify as Bhils, 17 per cent as Mina, and 32 per cent are "unspecified" Scheduled Tribes. In Banswara district, 76 per cent of the population are Scheduled Tribes. Of these, 84 per cent are Bhils, 12 per cent unspecified and 3 per cent Mina. [Bainc mark, pp. 16-17.]

Mandal' (the Aboriginal Youth Organization), established by Bhils, held a meeting at a village near Galandar in March 1981 and invited by leaflet 'all Adivasis, educated, uneducated, old, youths and mature people,' to attend.

Weber noted that the chief attraction of democracies is that they tend to give the masses the illusion of popular control, although it is a special class of politicians which undertakes the governing. (See FN 1)

The modern nation state, by political rhetoric, by collection of data on such things as land ownership per individual or family, by payment according to national wage scales in the standard medium of money, implicitly suggests that different groups, and even different individuals, could conceivably be equal. Implicit equality even extends to gender difference. Government organization of labour does not favour distinctions between men and women, as it employs both to do the same work. By contrast there was uproarious laughter among school masters at the thought of Hurji grinding corn when his wife deserted him for 10 days to live in her parents' house. In agricultural work, just as in festivals, men and women generally undertake separate tasks. Employment by government either as relief labourers, or as teachers or clerks, ignores the male: female distinctions of agricultural work. Although employment of women as government employees is exceptional, the few cases do demonstrate a

1. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds, From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1974, pp. 105, 224.

potential irrelevance of gender, and a new equality of individuals. All government employees are living examples to their fellow villagers of an ideology of caste emancipation which could be achieved in the future, but which never comes. There is the certain knowledge that things have got better for some Adivasi, but the numbers of those Adivasi whose situation has been improved are limited.

The new class of government employed Bhils is bilingual. Hindi competence is a requirement for government employment. The language of government and schooling in Rajasthan is Hindi. The son of Lalo Forester, the ambitious Ravi Sankar, was employed by the Forestry Department. He told me when we first met that he 'knew very little Wagadi.' Janardan, the Deputy Headmaster, spoke Hindi to his cousin when discussing government matters, such as the possibility of transfer to another school. The handsome Sambhu, poet and songman, is married to the Bhil nurse stationed at Galandar. He earns Rs. 550 a month, and his wife Rs. 450. In a conversation with my host he spoke largely in Hindi. He rambled on about how he could build a pakka (stone) house in Udaipur (near his village) for Rs. 100,000, 'First Class' (borrowing this term from English). There could be three rooms along the front, a bathroom, latrine and garage. But instead he would get a loan, a 'Scheduled Tribe loan' (borrowing the English phrase), to buy a truck and make Rs. 900 a day, or Rs. 500 net. His large radio cassette, the envy of all in the village, had cost Rs. 2,700, as he told those who cared to listen.

Sambhu was an interesting combination of old and new. Unlike many Bhils employed by government, Sambhu eats meat and drinks alcohol. He is married to two wives, as his first wife, who lives with him in Galandar, is childless. He visits his second wife at weekends and holidays. Sambhu knows many songs, and is a master of dances. He has a continuing fascination with the gadgets of modernity. He often talked about travelling in an aeroplane, and taking the flight from Udaipur to Ahmedabad (the cheapest available flight). Although known to urban castes as 'Bhil', Sambhu's horizons are far broader than the soldiers of the British Bhil Corps last century. Sambhu, and also the Bhils of the Mewara Bhil Corps last century, one presumes, have a commonality of interest in two cultures. They appear Bhil to the society they work in, and modern, an agent of government, to the villagers they live with.

The term sahab defines a person and their immediate family as non-labourers. The Chairman of the Village Council (Sarpanch) had a naive view of government. Mrs Gandhi had spoken at a mass rally at Dungarpur before being reelected. The Sarpanch asked me if she did anything apart from travel and talk, if the Prime Minister (Pradhanmantri) was more powerful than the President (Rashtrapati), if the Collector in Dungarpur did no work. The Sarpanch asked me how much a Prime Minister, engineer, headmaster or Collector earned and commented: 'They get money for just

resting.' (See FN 1) Even to the Chairman of the Village Council, therefore, the government official seemed removed from the normal rules of life, and the necessity of labour. The fact that some fellow Bhil villagers were government officials made the abnormal livelihood of the official more acceptable, but no less puzzling. The Council Chairman was not naive about his own circumstances. He owned 15 bighas (1.4 hectares) of land, and observed that if one of his four sons did not obtain government employment through education, then in the future eating and drinking (khawu piwu) would be difficult.

The village Chairman did not receive a salary. Those who did receive government salaries were part of the village and apart from it. During the struggle for Independence, Bhogilal Pandiya and his Brahmin family played a leading role. They performed bhajan mandli, the singing of bhakti songs, they established schools in several Bhil pal including Galandar, they ate with sansari Bhils, and slept next to them. Caste emancipation was strongest at a revolutionary moment in Indian history. Conversely, those who worked towards the liberation of the Bhils were also ambiguous culturally. Nowadays Bhils employed by government are more likely to have a wrist watch, or bus fare, and therefore to call on modern notions of time and space. They may rent a room in another village or town during the week, and return to their own village at the weekend. They are more likely to be aware of, if not believe, ideas from the

1. 'Paisā male ne ārām kare.'

Hindu Great Traditions. And apart from the exceptional Sambhu they are less likely to sing Bhil songs.

Lalo Forester Sahab participated in the Holi celebrations in Galandar. At Holi dances men and women form circles rotating around an inner group of drummers leaping into the air. Lalo showed great terror when I tried to put my drum on his shoulders. Bhils realize that the culture of an official is different from their own. When the brilliant young Dungarpur Collector from south India joined us at playing Holi in Galandar in 1981, and at my instigation beat a drum, Bhils did not believe he was a Brahmin. They questioned whether his wife, who had danced with the women, was really his wife. So remarkable did their dancing seem to the Bhils. The identification of the new class of Bhil middle-income peasants with other Bhils may be limited in some respects, as Lalo's reluctance to beat a drum with other Bhils suggests.

There is ambiguity in the culture of Bhil government officials living in villages. Facility in one sphere may mean ineptitude in another. Janardan Katara, the most educated man in Galandar, did not know his clan God, although such ethnographic details are carefully listed in the literature on the Bhils. He dismissed this lack of knowledge by saying: 'If you trip over when you are walking only then do you think of Mata Karher.' (See FN 1) The reality is that Janardan benefited from living

1. 'Hentā thepher lage to thaī parto mātā karhe.'

in a village on an official's salary. On occasions Janardan, earning Rs.550 a month from teaching, would console my host who was paid Rs.100 for his duties as postman. Janardan told my host that my host had enough work, food, fields, and clothes (the basics to ensure reproduction). But the gnawing suspicion in both their minds was that he was missing out in a hierarchical contest.

Could the beliefs and practices of four villages in western Dungarpur be suddenly transformed by a social revolution? Respect and awe for the power of the sarkar is extensive. Perhaps 100,000 Bhils attended the 1979 rally in Dungarpur to hear Mrs Gandhi. It was almost as if the deference due to royalty had been transferred to the people's representative. Police and military forces, although not used for most of Dungarpur's history, apart from critical periods, reinforce the power of the State. Little violence was observed in Bhil villages between 1979 and 1981. Members of one clan may exact compensation for a sheep stolen by another clan, and threaten to go to the police. On another occasion the police were called the morning after a minor fight between individuals from two different clans at celebrations prior to a wedding.

Political awareness in contemporary Dungarpur is greater than that recorded by McCurdy in 1962 in a Bhil village near Udaipur. (See FN 1) Political support can be volatile. Following Indira

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1. In 1962 McCurdy noted that Bhils in 'Ratakote' made frequent visits to Udaipur, and Bhil children wanted to be truck drivers, factory workers or government employees. The Council took a petition about the forest to Jaipur, and the headman went to Delhi for a meeting with the government. Two men had worked for three months in Ahmedabad, but otherwise no one had travelled further than 50 miles. [D. W. McCurdy, 'A Bhil Village of Rajasthan' p. 462.]

Gandhi's visit to Dungarpur in 1979, Bhils voted massively for Congress I. At the end of March 1981, an estimated 2,000 Bhils from Dungarpur district, mostly men, some women and children, went to a rally in Delhi to support the farmers lobbying against the Congress I government. Some time before, 16 buses, which could have contained over 1,500 people, had travelled to Delhi to support Indira Gandhi. These examples are exceptions to the normal cycle of life in villages. The tendency to mobilize against government is limited. There is little questioning of the system of government itself. The influence of government is pervasive, but it is epiphenomenal to agriculturally-based village life.

Bhils have agricultural work during part of the year. They have continuing family support, community solidarity, festivals and hence opportunities for transcendence. The consciousness of Bhils for most of the time is not as exploited labourers, but as owners of land and houses, as husbands, and buyers of jewellery.

An additional factor in political control is the educational system now pervasive throughout Dungarpur. Education offers all Bhils the hope that their children may gain government jobs, and allows all Bhils to identify with those who have. The education systems of many modern nation states expend considerable effort teaching children to know a motherland or fatherland. This was also apparent at schools in western Dungarpur. Identification as an 'Indian', taught through song in primary schools, is of limited application, apart from the rare moments when a Bhil meets a tourist, or even more rarely, travels overseas. One of the main functions of education elsewhere is to train a workforce for industrialization. This aim seems relatively

ambitious when considering the outcome of schooling for most Bhils in western Dungarpur. One immediate consequence of the educational system, however, is to break up, and hence control, time. It is primarily as managers of a new concept of time, rather than as trainers of an industrialized work force, that the school masters in the Bhil settlements of western Dungarpur are successful. Education is in the vanguard of the modern State, and also brings distinctions of complex society. It includes for instance sports such as volleyball or football, played by the non 'jungly' among Bhils attending school. It involves a new bureaucratic regime of rules. It promises achieved status based only on ability and performance. It celebrates competition. Education is not effective in its stated objectives for most Bhils, as schooling rates are low. Less than 30 per cent of Bhil boys between six and eleven years of age attend school.

The institutions of education with their new regime of time, and graded work indoors, conducted in Hindi rather than the Bhils own language, Wagadi, contradict the family - centred, agriculturally-based life. Government-employed Bhils manage the contradictions of values and lifestyles, and benefit from them. Values developed in an expanding, labour-hungry economy of shifting agriculture can conflict with modern government policies such as family planning. Janardan, a deputy headmaster at the nearest secondary school, was the most educated man in Galandar. He had three daughters and one son. He desperately wished for another son. His wife, who he said had no choice in the matter, had two miscarriages in attempting to fulfil his wish.

In western Dungarpur it appears that modern technology is often associated with government. Assent to government, understood in its broadest sense, is in part supported by a fascination and optimism concerning technology. Money is also desired as a measure and instrument for obtaining the new technology. Items of the technology bring benefits of status and increased material wealth or comfort, or to use the Bhils word, pleasure (mazo). As Bhils have not fought in world wars, there is not the disenchantment with industrialization and technology which has sometimes occurred in industrialized societies.

Bhils are fascinated by the products of technology. They are celebrated in song, and often associated with eroticism. The motor car for the Bhils possesses fascination. The cost of cars in India is high, and magnified by strict government limitations on imports. The only car which ever visited Galandar brought the Collector, the highest representative of government in Dungarpur District. Jeeps occasionally visited Galandar, usually to bring a government officer. They symbolized a conjunction of three connected spheres: money, pleasure and government. The speed of a jeep or car provides freedom in time and space. It is only surpassed by an aeroplane, which also fascinates the Bhils, but is even less attainable for them.

Loan words reinforce the desirability and inevitability of government and associate government with modern luxuries and technology. Many of the English loan words in gamv Wagadi concern new technology. They may be borrowed direct from English, rather than through Hindi: rod, taim, busistand, mashīn, saikal, telephon, phutas, mashīs (matches), sigaret, lait (lantern). Others concern education:

mastar, iskul, clas. There are a few loan words that do not concern technology or education such as foren, meaning 'guest'. The fascination with the gadgets of modernity derives partly from their novelty. There is also a hierarchy of valued items determined to some extent by the unlikelihood of most Bhils obtaining them: a car, motor-scooter, radio-tape recorder, bicycle and watch. An economic rationality is also influential. Once Bhils had obtained government employment, a mashin (irrigation pump) was among their first goals. 'Is there an irrigation pump (in the groom's house)?' (mashin heka) was the critical first question asked by an ambitious woman married to a government servant when her relations were reporting on marriage negotiations for their daughter. The desire for an irrigation pump, or for a truck and a stone (pakka) house, is novel. But it also fits an older pattern of ascribed status for the Bhil warrior, whose fame resounded among his clan, who owned 12 cow stalls, who was victorious in battle and was celebrated in song. It is the accoutrements of status which have changed. The requirements for obtaining the new symbols of status and secular power are also different.

Concepts or innovations which can broadly be associated with government, the nation state or modern technology are therefore apparent to all Bhils in some form or other. But the understanding of these innovations is not equally distributed. Those Bhils employed by government demonstrably have a better understanding of them than other Bhils, and have gained greater benefits from them. In the context of the village, government establishes differences between people, while offering some Bhils the promise of equality with other Indian citizens.

Government also offers some hope to all Bhils for the future. But the status which government offers, unlike bhakti, has no hope of permanency or infinite bliss: hence the proclivity of the most successful government employees to turn at least part of their income and attention to rebuilding the temples in the villages.

Although some Bhils belong to the government employed status group, there is no absolute standing in one group. For instance a Bhil employed as a college lecturer once visited a village I happened to be staying in to buy some timber for his new two storey house in Dungarpur. He usually spoke Hindi, but on this occasion he was eloquent in gamv Wagadi. Although he owned a motor scooter, he chose to come by bus on this occasion, to emphasize his poverty, or in his own words to 'save petrol'. He walked with his wife's brother to visit a reasonably wealthy bhagat who lived on the edge of the forest in Pal Galandar. Deva Bhagat spoke, uncharacteristically, Hindi to the Bhil lecturer, and mentioned that Rs.18 a foot was the price of timber in town. He eventually extracted Rs.430 for half a truck load of timber. The lecturer had expected to pay Rs.350. After the he left Deva was elated. He offered me mahudi, but finally gave me tea in brass cups, insignia of his bhagat status. A status group is a mentally constructed reference point, and Bhils attempt to align themselves with different associations. The cultural presumption of this episode is that each party, the villager and the town-dweller, pretended to share or at least be aware of the other's culture. Both ultimately gained - the one a high price for his timber, the other cheaper timber than he could have bought in town.

This chapter has established three main points. First that the culture of Bhil officials is somewhat ambiguous, and that they may be bicultural. Second that some Bhils have developed biculturalism or cultural ambiguity since 1840 when employed in the Mewara Bhil Corps. Thirdly that the benefits in material compensation of government to Bhils for employment satisfactory to Bhils (as officials) extends to very few.

The thesis has established that consciousness of government among Bhils has been developed over a long historical period. Government and its associations have pervaded the consciousness of all Bhils in various ways, including their consciousness of time and space. Bhils have also come to associate government with secular status.

CHAPTER TWELVE: CONCLUSIONS

12.1 Cultural incorporation among the Bhils

The thesis began by examining the problem of cultural incorporation and by asking what happens culturally when an indigenous minority is encapsulated or surrounded by a society radically different from its own? The method for studying cultural incorporation was to examine the concepts bhakti (devotion) and sarkar (government) and the status groups 'bhagat' (devotees) and 'government officials', in their historical, economic, social and ideological contexts. Although the concepts of both bhakti and sarkar were presumably once foreign to the Bhils, they are of widespread and deep significance to contemporary Bhils in western Dungarpur. The associated terms 'bhagat' and 'government official' are applied with great earnestness not only to non-Bhils, but more often to Bhils themselves.

Bhakti is an ancient Indian concept. It may also have been known for long periods by Bhils. There are inscriptions dating from the seventh century A.D. which record the granting of land to non-Bhils in southern Rajasthan, and the building of temples. Bhils feature in local inscriptions from the thirteenth century

of our era. It is therefore likely that Bhils were aware of major concerns of non-Bhil society, of their military power and of their interest in religion, for many centuries. The earliest reliable accounts of Bhil beliefs date from the nineteenth century. At that time 'pure' Bhils distinguished themselves, on the basis of food criteria, from 'impure' Bhils in eastern Rajasthan. There are reliable historical records of bhakti movements among Bhils of Dungarpur later in the nineteenth century.

In classical Hinduism bhakti means loving devotion to God. It is a means of becoming God, either through identifying with Him (visistadvaita), or through realizing one's godliness (advaita). It is a path to a higher order transcendent reality (See FN 1). Among the Bhils of southern Rajasthan bhakti refers to transcendence of worldly consciousness, most likely to be achieved in celebrations of song, dance, and music on nights of the full moon. The Bhils have also defined the path of bhakti as involving abstention from meat and alcohol.

Bhakti is given particular prominence by the status group bhagat (devotee). One may be a member of more than one status group, and sometimes the edges are a little blurred. Bhagat abstain from meat and alcohol. They wear the sacred thread. They worship Sita Ram, the divine Hindu husband and wife celebrated in the Ramayana, the great epic of the Indian

1. R. C. Zaehner The Bhagavad Gita, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1973, p. 3.

epic. The earliest accounts of bhakti last century state that it has radical behavioural implications. All Bhils are free to adopt the appropriate behaviour. Because of Bhils social organization, bhagat beliefs and practices are usually shared by a family and enter into their considerations of marriage with other families. Adoption of bhagat beliefs and practices places one above those Bhils who have not adopted them.

The Bhil word for government (sarkar) also means authority in general. The term originally referred to the Rajput chiefs who exercised tenuous authority over some Bhils (see Chapter Three). In the nineteenth century the concept was extended, for the Bhils, to the British powers who indirectly controlled Dungarpur affairs. The concept referred to British suppression of Bhils, and to Bhil political integration into a wider political system. The British were forced to employ Bhils in a Corps established on the Dungarpur-Udaipur-Gujarat border in the middle of the nineteenth century. By this means Bhils gained income through association with authority.

There is also a status group associated with the idea of government, comprising those Bhils who are employed as government officials. After Independence some Bhils in every village began to gain government employment, as teachers, forestry officers or petty government officials. The notion sarkar therefore has a physical representation in every village. The government official has greater mobility than

other Bhils, and access to more information about the world outside the village. Because of his greater knowledge and greater income, the government official also has greater power within the village, than other Bhils. His relative wealth and power persuades Bhils that they too, or their children, might gain freedom from poverty and powerlessness. The concept of sarkar is known to all Bhils. The benefits of government are less widely distributed than the concept.

A study of Bhil history provides insight into the relationship between beliefs and society and into the processes of cultural incorporation. The history of the Bhils assists in explaining why bhakti became important at the end of the nineteenth century, and why sarkar, meaning the Indian government, gained in importance for Bhils during the twentieth century. The earliest literary references to Bhillas of central India in the seventh century, and the references to Bhils of Dungarpur region in inscriptions which date from the thirteenth century A.D., establish that Bhils were continuously surrounded by other societies. The societies are now named 'the other castes' (dusri jati) by the Bhils. Before the nineteenth century, there were dual economies. The Rajputs developed a system of quasi-feudalism to manage, protect, defend and expand the populations practising intensive agriculture in the fertile river basins. The Bhils hunted, gathered, and practised shifting agriculture in the less-fertile forested hills. The Bhils also extracted protection money from villagers and tithes

from travellers when the lowlands populations were poorly defended. Traditional Indian ideologies described Bhils as 'the Other'. They were represented as desirable sexual objects of Jain women and the object of dangerous abhorrent sexuality for Jain men. They were the object of enmity and alliance, alternatively, for Hindus. They were described as subhuman savage, and then, after military conquest, as paternalized children in British accounts. The representations of Bhils in Indian ideologies as the 'Other' perhaps explain why Bhils did not subsequently integrate into Indian society in any simple way.

During the nineteenth century British political dominance, still bitterly remembered by Bhils of Dungarpur, eventually resulted in radical economic changes, in particular, a shift to settled agriculture. Intensive agriculture came to be widely established among Bhils this century. The economy of contemporary Bhils is characteristically rural, and most Bhils own some land. Their economic circumstances allow Bhils to almost gain self-sufficiency. Lack of permanent opportunities outside the village confine Bhils within it. Migrant labour, or government employment for a few Bhils, subsidizes and supports most Bhils' residence in a village. Common residence allows them to participate in village ceremonies, marriages, funerals and festivals.

There is a broad sequence of different cultural responses to historical developments. In the early nineteenth century, Bhils had resisted the British. The British eventually conquered the Bhils only by establishing a Bhil Corps, and enlisting Bhils into the Corps. Political defeat was followed by major economic changes, as Bhils turned to settled agriculture during the latter part of the nineteenth century. It was at the end of this period that bhakti began to be widely promulgated among Bhils. Military resistance in the first half of the nineteenth century, which was unsuccessful, was followed by bhakti movements later that century which were considered nonpolitical, but which in fact represented alternative means of dissent and Bhil-assertion.

The new life of settled agriculture resulted in a reordering of the cultural worldview of Bhils. Political mobilization of a Bhil peasantry before Independence was followed by Independence, and the incorporation of some Bhils through government employment into the modern Indian State. During the past thirty years government institutions have been diffused among Bhil communities. More Bhils have also taken account of, or adopted, bhagat beliefs and practices. Certain activities and modes of cultural expression have become dominant in certain historical periods. The bhakti movement was a particular focus of power at the end of the nineteenth century. Government is a major contemporary focus of power. There also appears to be some complementarity between these two concepts. They represent alternative means of gaining other-worldly status and economic status respectively.

The terms bhakti and sarkar are not only concepts. They are created by daily interactions which occur in an historical context. They suggest different sorts of people, or at least different types of human behaviour. Bhakti and sarkar have had important practical implications for some Bhils since at least the nineteenth century. The bhagat and government employee represent alternative status groups. Bhils may choose to associate with either group, or both of them, depending on circumstances, or they may choose to emphasize a particular allegiance in a particular context. Bhagat often have an important role to play, even in ceremonies organized by non-bhagat. Bhils employed by government are dominant in many nongovernment areas of village life, including organizing traditional ceremonies or marriage negotiations.

Devotion and government are important because of Bhil concerns with other-worldly status demonstrated by pure practices, and with secular status, established by economic wealth and association with the power of government. The concerns are expressed by the concepts bhakti and sarkar. The concerns also organize beliefs and action in everyday life.

A Bhil's identity, his statement of relevant self, depends upon context.

Relevant unit of identification:

Descent:

	gender	house	descent	group	clan	caste	human
male	female	<u>gher</u>	<u>moto gher</u>		<u>atak</u>	<u>jati</u>	<u>manak</u>
	(<u>admi</u>)	(<u>berri</u>)					

Territory:

ward	village	district	country
<u>phada</u>	<u>gamv</u>	<u>tehsil</u>	<u>Bharat</u>

A status group which gives particular prominence to a particular identity may intervene at any point in these series of identifications with descent and territory. Because the concepts are concerned with other-worldly and this-worldly status respectively, a particular person, or house, could be associated with two status groups. He may be a government employee and bhagat. A status group gives particular prominence to a particular identity. The membership of a status group is not absolute. My host wore a sacred thread, and used it to testify to his family's bhagat status when arranging a marriage. Both families claimed to be bhagat. In fact neither were. My host drank mahudi and ate meat whenever he could.

Just as language can be analyzed discretely, as if it has an existence separate from the efficient but partial competence of any speaker of that language, so can the culture of the Bhils be

analyzed separately from the carriers of that culture. The Bhils cultural elaboration of bhakti and sarkar addresses basic assumptions of Indian cultures: concerns with purity and politico-economic status. The concerns bear some similarity to the great tradition's special regard for purity and power, represented by the Brahmin and Kshatriya. Bhils therefore have selectively adopted aspects, or equivalents, of the culture of dominant Indian groups.

The significant differences between the structures which establish the bhagat and government official and those greater Indian structures which established the Brahmin and Kshatriya include the Bhil's present lack of local organizational autonomy and the fact of achieved rather than ascribed status.

The development of the two concepts bhakti and sarkar among Bhils, and their elaboration through institutions, has been in response to transformations of their own society and of their relations with surrounding societies. The Bhils seem to have known of both ideas of bhakti and sarkar for many centuries, and certainly from the beginning of the nineteenth century. At particular historical periods a concept becomes more significant, and is elaborated and developed in institutional forms. It may serve as an explanation for significant action. The concepts are key parts of an ideology which provides meaning for all and benefits for some. Bhakti and sarkar address Bhil concerns with purity and status. In their local forms they could theoretically be realized by all Bhils. In fact they are

effectively realized by few. The institutions associated with the concepts appear to have come from outside Bhil society. They are recreated and internalized by Bhils, and may impinge on all aspects of Bhil life: on their consciousness of what they eat and drink, on their behoveness to money, or their attempts to secure material advantage or realize God. They are also a significant factor in marriage negotiations.

Concerns with purity are developed around rules for bodily consumptions. Concerns with government are articulated by interests in money. Food and money are supreme markers of similarity and difference between men. Bhils therefore use food and money to define and elaborate the concepts of bhakti and government. Bhakti and government are important because they impinge on the domains of food and money, which among Bhils have symbolic value, that is, attributes in these domains are rich in meaning, and have implications beyond these domains.

Eating only vegetarian food and drinking only non alcoholic beverages are the preeminent markers of the bhagat. Money is the most immediately desired consequence of government employment, which is a contemporary source of local power and secular status or rank, just as owning twelve cow-stalls and possessing fame which resounded in one's village marked the achievement of status before Independence. Government is also associated with technology and education. The principal perceived benefit of education is to provide access to government employment in the future. The monthly ceremonies of the bhagat under the full moon may have evolved from Bhil

all-night wakes which involved singing and trance states. Bhakti and sarkar are therefore new modes of expressing achieved status. They have developed in a society which has always admired achieved status.

Modern Bhil consciousness is not comprised of remnants of past beliefs, as suggested by Koppers' paradigm. (See FN 1) It comprises different representations, variously combined. One or more may be invoked, depending on the context. One can describe traditional Bhil notions of time and space, but these are interwoven with bhagat and government notions of time and space. All Bhils may to some extent draw on all three notions in various circumstances. Modern and traditional, bhagat and government belief-complexes may be contradictory. Song, a characteristic cultural medium for Bhils, simplifies and represents some of the contradictions facing Bhils. Bhakti offers the potential for socialized ecstasy in certain moments in time and space. It preaches a caste transcendence which is not achieved in practice.

Few Bhils are employed by government. Three to seven per cent of families in the villages surveyed had a member in government employment. Those who have gained employment and the consequential benefits are a focus for the aspirations of all

1. W. Koppers 'Bhagwan, the Supreme Deity of the Bhils', Anthropos, vol. 35, 1940-41, pp. 265-325.

Bhils. Notions of government are promoted through institutions of education, health, law enforcement and other government agencies.

Bhakti and sarkar are associated with the predominant institutions of Bhil society. They are perpetuated through time. They may change or develop rapidly and be popularized by a charismatic leader, such as Govindgiri or SurmalDas. They may change and develop more gradually, by government supported economic arrangements. Bhakti and sarkar explain the new world order, articulate major concerns, respond to Indian hierarchy, and are historically evolving.

The songs of the Bhils recorded over the past 100 years document a continuing Bhil interest in the anomalous, the liminal and the problematic, as they change through time. Other scholars have noted the importance of the anomalous in discrete cultures. For instance Mary Douglas, in her study of the Lele of Africa, has written about their cult of the pangolin, the small ant-eater. The Lele describe the pangolin as anomalous. 'In our forest there is an animal with the body and tail of a fish, covered in scales. It has four little legs and it climbs in the trees.' Like humans, and unlike other animals, it gives birth to one child at a time. It does not run away from humans when hunted, like other animals, but rolls itself up into a ball. The Lele, explains Mary Douglas, worship the pangolin because it mediates between humans and animals. (See FN 1)

1. M. Douglas Purity and Danger, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1973, p. 36.

Bhil bhagat and government officials also mediate between Bhils and non-Bhil society. To non-Bhils they are Bhils, and positions in government administration are reserved to them on that basis. But in the villages, much of their power and influence, sanctioned by the greater Indian society, derives from their difference from other Bhils.

Lévi-Strauss noted that fabricated articles were often used to designate Bhil clans, and argued that Indian tribes form part of a continuum between simple societies, which gain solidarity through an exchange of women, and whose clans or totems often bear the names of animals, and complex societies, which gain solidarity through exchanging services and may be organized on a caste basis. (See FN 1)

In developing the bhagat and government officials as status groups in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, modern Bhils have again adopted artifacts of the world of culture, rather than of the world of nature, to mediate between Bhil society and greater India.

Bhagat and government officials are dominant among Bhils because their relationship with Bhils is a metaphor for the relationship between Indians, and Bhils.

Indian:Bhil :: bhagat/government official: other Bhils

The metaphor for this relationship has evolved historically, after unsuccessful political resistance in the early nineteenth

1. C. Lévi-Strauss The Savage Mind, pp. 117-129.

century. The institutionalization of bhakti and sarkar through status groups has articulated and managed Bhil relationships with other Indians. Bhils are partially integrated into Indian society. Predominant institutions in their culture are similar to, and may be derived from, predominant institutions of Indian society. The hierarchy of the bhagat and government official status groups in the village bears some similarity to the hierarchy of the Brahmin and the Kshatriya in Indian society, apart from the loss of local organizational autonomy and the gain of achieved status.

There is no isolated, discrete, Bhil society which can be objectified and reified. The institutionalization of the concepts bhakti and sarkar bears on several relationships which face people who are called Bhils and live in villages. The relationships encompass those between 'tribal' and 'non-tribal', between pure and impure, between those employed and therefore aligned with government and those not, between those with power and those without.

Purity and alignment with government are created in the context of economic differentiation which has developed historically. Struggles to preserve independence and improve status have sometimes been framed in religious terms, sometimes not. The institutions of bhakti and government articulate and manage Bhils' relationships among themselves and with other Indians. Cultural assumptions about food, money, time, space, life, after-life, possession by gods and mundane states structure relevant distinctions and structure statements about rank or status. The institutions elaborated around the concepts

bhakti and sarkar are theoretically open to all Bhils, but in effect they are limited to a few.

A third major conclusion of the thesis concerns the bicultural nature of the Bhils who best gain access to institutions elaborated around the concepts bhakti and sarkar. Classical anthropological studies, in Oceania, Africa and South Asia, have described the economies, the political institutions, the cultures, of discrete tribal groups. Anthropologists wrote of stable political systems in Africa and elsewhere. (See FN 1) Effects of colonization and trade are noted in their early reports (See FN 2), but not studied in later monographs (See FN 3).

After field-work in eastern India, Bailey noted that the successful Kond politician had to manipulate different sets of political rules, but he also concluded that 'the middleman is despised in proportion to the disparity of the two cultures' (See FN 4) This study has found, however, that those Bhils who were most acculturated, who were competent in both the Bhil world in the village and the non-Bhil world outside it, fared best and also had the greatest status.

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1. M. Fortes and E. E. Evans-Pritchard, eds, African Political Systems, Oxford University Press, London, 1940.
 2. M. Fortes 'Culture Contact as a Dynamic Process', Africa, vol. 9, no.1, 1936. e.g. 'Apart from the Administration, no other contact agents are active within Taleland. The foundations of the native social system remain intact'.
 3. M. Fortes 'The Political System of the Tallensi of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast' In M. Fortes and E.E. Evans - Pritchard African Political Systems, Oxford University Press, London, 1940, p. 240.
 4. F.G. Bailey Strategems and Spoils, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1977, p. 171.

The complex and sensitive Balvaniya Maharaj who taught right behaviour and healed non-Bhils did not deny his Bhilness, but articulated a path for the future in a situation of change. Sambhu in Galandar combines old and new. He knows many older songs, and is a master of dances. He eats meat and drinks alcohol. He is continually fascinated with gadgets of modernity, and applies his knowledge and accoutrements gained from a non Bhil world to advance his status among Bhils. The Balvaniya bhagat Maharaj, and Sambhu, draw envy, behoveness imitation and respect from other Bhils, never contempt. Yet to the casual non-Bhil observer men such as these two might appear as ideal types of Bhils. Perhaps it has always been so. The most inventive, innovative and adaptive of Bhils have represented the future for other Bhils, and the past, or worse, for members of the foreign cultures they are grappling with. Although as Bhils they have been misunderstood by both groups they have achieved standing and status at least among the Bhils.

12.2 Theoretical implications

To recapitulate, the problem investigated was cultural incorporation. The method was to investigate contemporary Bhil fascination with bhakti and government, by means of studying historical, economic, social and ideological perspectives which bore on the topic. The theses proposed to explain consequential observations were that, firstly, Bhils historically have given special regard to the anomalous, the liminal, the problematical. Their behoveness to the anomalous assisted Bhils in comprehending and controlling this dangerous conceptual category. Their behoveness to bhakti and sarkar, to Bhil bhaqat and government officials develops because these status groups mediate between Bhils and non-Bhils. To non-Bhils, members of the status groups typify Bhilness. To Bhils themselves, the status groups typify achieved status.

Secondly, bhakti and sarkar provide a metaphor for the relationship between those Bhils with status and other Bhils. This relationship is homologous to the relationship between Indians and Bhils.

The third thesis, a consequence of the first, is that those Bhils who are most successful in adapting to the new situations are to varying degrees bicultural, and their allegiance to one culture at any time depends in part upon context.

The three interrelated theses allow consideration of some of the theoretical perspectives considered in Chapter 1.2. Srinivas's

theory of Sanskritization suggests Bhils should be adopting the beliefs and practices of higher castes, and that these beliefs and practices are static. Yet among the Bhils there has been a reaction against Sanskritic practices and the superordination of Brahmins.

In the village context some Bhils may assume greater purity or modernity than others. In other contexts, in other company, the same men might emphasize their identity as members of Scheduled Tribes, in order to secure concessions such as reserved positions in the civil service. As bhakti and sarkar in their institutionalized forms articulate status, the status groups are relative and depend on context. They could never be adopted by all Bhils.

In particular contexts some Bhils identify with a particular status group because other Bhils may not. The process is dialectical, rather than an evolutionary one.

Nor have the Bhils produced a McKim Marriott or a Brahmin ideologue, who has established by belief or practice a unitary Indian concept of superior value, where power is 'understood as vital energy, substance-code of subtle, homogenous quality, and high, consistent, transactional status or rank - All of these are regarded as naturally coincidental or synonymous.' (See FN 1) The concepts bhakti and sarkar have evolved historically in economic and social contexts, often in situations of difference, conflict and contradiction, rather than unity.

1. M. Marriott 'Hindu Transactions: Diversity Without Dualism', p. 137.

Bailey proposed that economic self-sufficiency distinguishes 'tribal' from 'caste' Indians. Bhils do prefer to grow subsistence crops rather than cash crops, and they live in villages where there are few other castes. Bailey also proposed that the successful Kond politician had to be able to manipulate different sets of political rules, but he proposed no scheme for relating the sets of rules with each other apart from economic self-sufficiency. He wrote: 'To give up or discourage drunkenness, to build their own temple and to take on other signs of Hindu respectability are acts which put the ball, so to speak, in the other court.' (See FN 1) But Bhil bhagat leaders or government officials would strongly resist the suggestion that they are playing a game. Their actions impinge on questions of survival and ultimate meaning. To them their actions are as necessary as food and money!

There have been complex and evolving historical relations between Bhils and the societies which surround them, and for at least 140 years, perhaps much longer, there has been no autonomous, consistently 'tribal', Bhil consciousness. The Bhils' culture has not developed in isolation, but in alterity, i.e. in conscious awareness of other cultures, (See FN 2) which they have attempted to selectively imitate, transform, or distinguish themselves from.

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1. F.G. Bailey Strategems and Spoils, p.156.
 2. Cf., Sartre's distinction between groups, acting in reciprocity, and series, an ensemble whose members are determined in alterity by others. J.P. Sartre Critique of Dialectical Reason, New Left Books, London, 1976, p.480.

Dumont's identification of predominant institutions which give their character to the social whole appears valuable in understanding the manner in which bhakti and sarkar have influenced Bhil villagers. The bhagat and the government employee in the local context of the village appear to bear some resemblance to the Brahmin, embodying in archetypal form status derived from religious purity, and the Kshatriya, the warrior, who embodies secular power. Significant differences are that Bhil statuses are achieved, not ascribed. Government employees may direct some of their earnings into acquiring land, and occasionally employ other Bhils, but their wealth derives directly from the State. They have no power apart from that vested in them by economic advantage. Economic advantage is bestowed upon them through their relationship with government, rather than through their subordination of a local population. These two predominant institutions of the Bhils are more democratic, and articulate their relationship to a nation state.

Temporary urban migration to undertake labouring by Bhil men, and some women, is apparent now, and Census reports refer to migration to Gujarat after the 1899 famine. But Meillassoux has argued that tribal societies are or may be perpetuated as cheap reserves of labour for metropolitan centres, and that radical cultural differences between the two may therefore be perpetuated indefinitely. Predominant institutions of contemporary Bhil society derive from outside of it, and the penetration of the concepts bhakti and sarkar to all levels of Bhil society argues against a perpetual tribal Indian society in Meillassoux's sense. It appears that hierarchical India is more given to a nationally consistent logic than Africa, where his thesis was developed.

A Marxist analysis might argue that bhakti and sarkar have become part of the ideology of an emerging group of Bhil middle peasants. Among the Bhils, the new class has merged some of their interests with other Indian middle-ranking peasant groups in similar situations. One could argue that there are an emerging group of Bhil middle-ranking peasants legitimating their status by religious or secular means. Such a class has not emerged by virtue of economic development, rather economic advantage has followed from political concessions. They have strengthened the power of the State, which now has a representation in every village. The institutions of government effectively discourage all Bhils identifying together as an oppressed class. The government employed and middle-ranking peasants are from the oppressed, but not of them.

Against any simple class analysis of the diffusion of notions of bhakti and government among Bhils is that associated ideas can not be precisely identified with a class defined by economic relations, and it is the lack of precision which is critical, and perpetuates belief in bhakti and government among many Bhils, including the poorest. Djurfeldt and Lindberg's phrase 'the ideology of caste emancipation' captures the anticipated diffusion of benefits from bhakti and sarkar to many Bhils. The phrase however perhaps overestimates the qualified nature of the status derived by any Bhils from bhakti and sarkar, and also overestimates the acceptance by non-Bhils of Bhil status gained by these means. Bhils tend to identify as members of the Adivasi jati (caste). Marriage outside the caste is extremely rare, whereas the thesis has documented and explained cases of bhagat marrying non-bhagat. Among the Bhils, solidarity and consciousness are never defined in class terms.

Caste identification cuts across any tendency to identify with other poor groups in India as an agrarian class. In addition, the concepts bhakti and sarkar are not limited to a particular status group. In theory they are universal values, affecting all; and in fact many poor Bhils are bhagat and gain no economic advantage from that fact. Bhils consciousness of themselves is rarely as an exploited peasantry.

There is little evidence that Bhils consider themselves an ethnic group, defined by common blood and territory, as one among many endogamous groups replacing a system of hierarchically sanctioned, occupationally organized castes. Bhils in the Dungarpur District rarely identify as Bhils, but as Adivasi (Aboriginal), a term which includes other groups with whom Bhils do not marry. Mostly Bhils find it more congenial to use new titles promoted by the nation state such as government official or bhagat, or the old titles of clan or village.

Bhils have no simple class or ethnic identity. For marriage purposes they consider themselves a caste (jati), and identification as a Bhil normally marks the outer limits of one's marriage choices. Rich or middle-income peasants, as employers, as owners of modest capital or property rather than as labourers, have certain class interests which are opposed to other Bhils. In other contexts, Bhils may identify as Hindus. 'Hindu may simply mean that they are not Muslims. It may mean people are total-abstaining vegetarians; or that they claim authentic knowledge and experience of other-worldly powers transmitted through a greater tradition, but realized with the drum beats of the bhajan which celebrate the imminence of the god-head.

Some Bhils may attempt to divide the universe into educated and uneducated, if they consider themselves among the former. Some Bhils may emphasize their role as government officials. The institutions of government promise an equality of opportunity at some future time. In practice they mark the difference in the villages, between those comfortably situated and those in need.

External influences may be incorporated into what are regarded as local indigenous cultures. An investigation of the development of bhakti and government among Bhils puts the old debate about differences between 'caste' and 'tribe' in a different context. It is this problem which has been the explicit or implicit focus of attention of most studies of the Bhils. For instance McCurdy considered the main problem is whether tribes are really distinct units or segments of Indian society.

He concluded that Bhils are not fully integrated into the caste system, that they fell toward the tribal end of a caste-tribe continuum, that they are moving toward a more integral place in caste society at a relatively leisurely pace, and that perhaps the transition will not be from tribe to caste but from tribe to a future mode of Indian society. (See FN 1)

In the contemporary context of the villages of western Dungarpur, however, the bhagat and government-employed Bhils presuppose the existence of other Bhils who are not bhagat or government employed. Bhils are not moving along a continuum. The Bhils' contemporary culture assumes the culture of the surrounding Indian society.

1. D.W. McCurdy 'A Bhil Village of Rajasthan', pp. 468-489.

Transformations and developments of bhakti and sarkar, concepts invented by non-Bhils, have provided organizing principles for contemporary Bhil culture. Because of their ambiguities and anomalies the status groups of bhagat and government officials have elicited special regard. The Bhil bhagat and government officials' relationship to Bhils is a metaphor for non-Bhils' relationship to Bhils. As masterful men, the bhagat and government officials are cultural entrepreneurs and brokers. Their successful operation within different subsystems of belief and practice, recalls the duality of the Indian gods themselves, or Gandhiji's genius in casting off the garments of an English trained lawyer, to draw on ancient symbols with deep and popular meanings. The mastery of the bhagat and government official comes from an understanding of the world outside the village, whilst being based in the village. A Greek scholar wrote two thousand years ago that Indian tribes are quite distinct from other Indians, but Indian peoples such as the Bhils of southern Rajasthan have clearly changed in the intervening period. (See FN 1)

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1. J.W. McCrindle India as Described by Megasthenes and Arrian, India as Described by Ktesias, R. Jain, New Delhi, 1885, 20-1, 23-4, 86.

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