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VI. Essay on the Bhills

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VI. *Essay on the BHILLS.** By Major-General Sir JOHN MALCOLM,
G.C.B. and V.P.R.A.S.

Read January 17, 1824.

The four divisions of Hindus, *viz.* the Priests, Soldiers, Merchants, and Labourers,† appear to have existed in every human society, at a certain stage of civilization; but in India alone have they been maintained, for several thousand years, with prescriptive rigour. The mixture of races, caused by the operation of human passions (beyond the power of rules to controul), which in most countries has tended to destroy such distinctions among the four primitive classes, has in India only extended to an indefinite number of tribes, or castes, exclusive customs and privileges, of which the lowest are as tenacious as the highest.

The institutions, the arts, and even the language of the Hindus, appear, at the earliest times, of which we have any general history, to have been more perfect than at present; but it is evident, that so artificial a state of society must have been, for many years, progressive towards that point, at which, in a very remote period, we find it had arrived; and it must have been grounded upon some prior structure of society, of which we have now no distinct knowledge. It therefore becomes an object to discover, if any fragments of that structure yet remain; and if they do, they are only to be traced by a minute investigation into the history, usages, and rites, of such tribes and families, as are now accounted among the lowest and most despised inhabitants of India. We may conclude, that, when the *Bráhmans* had established their superior rights and privileges, numbers of the inhabitants of India, who adhered to their own superstitious practices, would be deemed outcasts; and, as such, would be condemned to the most degrading occupations in society, or be compelled to fly to woods and mountains, in order to find refuge from persecution and oppression, in a life of poverty and privation. Similarity of condition, and the care of providing for their security, would produce union among men thus situated, and they would divide, according to circumstances, into separate families and tribes, who,

* *Bhilla* (vulgarly *Bheel*) is noticed in *Hémachandra's Sanscrit Vocabulary*, as the name of a tribe of barbarians. Wilson's Sans. Dict. *ad vocem*.

† *Bráhmans, Chetrias, Vaisyas, and Súdras.*

though contemned by the higher classes of Hindus, might in course of time be expected to amalgamate, in some degree, with those impure tribes, who, though sprung from the four privileged classes, have been subsequently degraded, on account of their spurious birth.

As we have no distinct account of the establishment of the Brahmenical institutions, we are ignorant of the origin of the pre-existing tribes, to which I have alluded; but of the illegitimate races, descended from the four primitive classes, we find frequent mention in the Hindu records. The *Chandála*, which includes many of the spurious classes, is stated by MENU* to have sprung from a *Súdra* father and a *Brahmení* mother; while a *Nisháda* or *Párasava* (both of which terms mean an outcast) is descended from a *Bráhmén* and a *Súdra* mother. MENU calls the *Chandála* the lowest of mortals, because he seems to have considered it a greater crime for a woman of rank to debase herself, by an impure connection, than a man.

Other authors† have noticed these general classes of outcasts; all of whom, though degraded, have continued to observe the rites, and to cherish the superstitious faith, of those from whom they are descended.

The chief difficulty in distinguishing, at this period, the tribes and families, which never formed a part of the Hindu system, from those which its temporary rulers have degraded or ejected, arises from the mixture which time, and the similarity of situation and habits, have produced between these two classes, whose original usages and rites were probably not very remote; for, from the construction of the Brahmenical system, it is evident, that the attainment and preservation of worldly power must have been the primary object of those, by whom it was established, and such motives would prevent them making any great change in the polytheism of India.

But even supposing this change was effected, men driven into a base or savage condition of society, deprived of all instruction, and born and bred in habits of toil and warfare, would naturally adopt and imitate the superstitions of tribes, which appeared to their rude imagination so far above them, in all intellectual attainments, as well as worldly enjoyments.

MENU terms the forbidden or spurious offspring of the four primitive classes of society "*Dasyu*" (or plunderers), a term which implies their

* MENU's Institutes; Book X. v 12.

† Mr. Colebrooke, on the authority of the *Játimála*, assigns the same origin for the *Nisháda* or *Párasava*, as has been quoted from MENU.

having adopted that life. It is agreed that these men, driven to despair, by being placed beyond the pale of the privileged castes, would naturally become the enemies of the society from which they were expelled. But it is not consistent with the art and wisdom, so evident in the whole frame of the Hindu system, to suppose that its authors would unnecessarily establish hostile communities, to disturb the general peace; and the allotment of trades * and professions to several of these spurious classes, contradicts the supposition. There must have been a distinct class existing in the community, upon whom these outcasts grafted themselves, before they were stigmatized by the lawgiver as plunderers; and it is singular, that, in the remarkable verse † of the RĀMĀYANA (which claims to be the most ancient of Hindu poems), the *Vyādh*, or fowler, is particularly denounced by its author, the sage VALMÍKÍ, for his inhumanity in killing one of two herons, ‡ which the sage observed enjoying themselves on the margin of a pure stream, in which he was bathing.

Enough has been said to shew, that we may expect to throw light upon the ancient history of India, from minute enquiries into the origin of the

* The goldsmiths, the workers in cane, and many other castes, are of spurious origin, and are noticed by MENU.

† “ Oh, NISHĀ'DA (VALMÍKÍ exclaimed), mayest thou never acquire long enduring renown. For, of this pair of herons, thou hast slain one, at the very moment it was intoxicated with “ love.”

This is asserted, in the poem, to have been the first stanza ever composed in the Sanscrit language; as we read, that, when “ VALMÍKÍ had pronounced these words, it struck him that he “ had uttered a very remarkable sentence; and reflecting on its structure, he observed to his “ disciple BHARADWA'JA, that it consisted of four feet of equal syllables, and then directed him “ to call it a *sloka*, or verse. The obedient disciple acquiesced, and they both returned to the “ hermitage; the sage pondering in the way on the nature of his couplet. On his arrival, while “ absorbed in deep reflection, arising from this event, he was honoured with a visit from BRAHMA', “ the Lord of creatures. VALMÍKÍ arose, and after duly reverencing the God, he exclaimed, “ ‘ By this depraved and ignorant fowler, has so much misery been caused! how wantonly has “ he killed the sweetly plaintive heron.’

“ BRAHMA' smiled, and addressing VALMÍKÍ, directed him to write the history of RĀ'MA, in “ such measured words as he had just uttered, in grief for the unfortunate heron. BRAHMA' then “ vanished from his sight, after declaring, that the RĀ'MĀYANA, he was about to write, should “ remain current amongst men, as long as the earth should endure, and that VALMÍKÍ himself “ should be rewarded, for its composition, by an abode in heaven, as long as height and depth “ could be predicated of that region.”

‡ The bird, mentioned in the original, is the *Ardea torra*, familiarly known, in India, by the name of *Paddy-bird*, from its frequenting the fields of that grain.

usages and superstitions of the lowest classes of its population; but this subject requires still more of our attention, from such knowledge being essential to give success to our efforts to maintain the peace and promote the prosperity of our Eastern empire. These classes are at once the most ignorant and most barbarous of the community; and we may rest assured, that all attempts towards their permanent reform will fail, unless grounded on an intimate acquaintance with their past and present condition.

I shall, after these prefatory observations, proceed to contribute my mite towards the accomplishment of an object which I deem so important, by stating what I know of the fabulous and real origin of the *Bhills*, a race of men inhabiting the mountainous tracts of *Candeish*, *Malwa*, and *Rajputana*.

The *Bhills* are, and deem themselves, a distinct people. There are so many different tribes among them, that it has been conjectured by some, that the general name of *Bhill* only denotes a confederacy of mixed and degraded races of Hindus, associated by political events and local circumstances: but, though there can be no doubt, that their strength has been increased, and their consequence raised, by recruits sprung from the prohibited intercourse of the primitive Hindu castes, there is every reason to believe that the original race of *Bhills* may claim a high antiquity, and that they were once masters of many of the fertile plains of India, instead of being confined, as they now are, to the rugged mountains and almost impenetrable jungles. There are authentic records of the *Rajput* sovereigns of *Jaudhpur* and *Udeypur* having subdued large tracts from the *Bhills*; and the countries now under the *Rajput* princes of *Dongerpur* and *Banswara*, may be termed recent conquests from the same tribe, who, though they have no longer their own chiefs, still form the mass of the population. The same may be said of all the *Rajput* territories, in the woody and hilly tract which separates *Malwa* from *Guzerat*, and the latter province from *Mewar*.* But it is in that wild and uncultivated country which stretches along the left bank of the *Nermada*, from the plains of *Nemar* to those of *Guzerat*, amid the *Satpurah* and *Adjenti* ranges, and among the hills of *Baglanah*

* The countries, above mentioned, extend from 20° to near 25° North latitude, and from 73° to 76° East longitude; but this is only in part inhabited by *Bhills*, whom we find in the neighbouring hills, whence they extend in one line along the mountains to the furthest limits of *Dongerpur*. They are also to be found in many of the smaller ranges of the hills of *Guzerat* and *Mewar*; but their favourite abodes are the woody and rugged banks of the *Tapti*, the *Mehi*, and the *Nermada*.

in *Candeish*, where this race have been least disturbed, that we may expect to find their usages most distinct from those of other classes.

The extraordinary custom, common to almost all the countries that have been mentioned, of the *tika*, or mark that is put upon the forehead of the *Rajput* prince or chief, when he succeeds to power, being moistened with blood taken from the toe or thumb of a *Bhill*, may be received as one among many proofs of their having been formerly in possession of the principalities, where this usage prevails.

The *Minahs*,* another degraded tribe, whose princes, till within the last nine hundred years, ruled over the country of *Jeypur*, are as tenacious, as the *Bhills*, in maintaining a ceremony, which, though declaredly meant as a pledge of allegiance, appears to be cherished as a memorial of former power. The right of giving the blood for this ceremony is claimed by particular families; and the belief, that the individual, from whose veins it is supplied, never lives beyond a twelvemonth, in no degree operates to repress the zeal of the *Bhills* to perpetuate an usage, which the *Rajput* princes† are, without exception, desirous should cease. The feeling of the latter is often accounted for by their fear of being polluted with the blood of an impure person; but it no doubt proceeds from a dislike, in some of these proud rulers, of being reminded, by this recurring ceremony, of the short date of their authority, and of the implied necessity of its being sanctioned and confirmed by the lowest of their subjects.

I found, on enquiry, that, though the above usage still existed in many principalities, it had in several been discontinued for one, two, and three generations. A minute investigation into the prevalence of it, or similar customs, that recognise the possession of the rights of these degraded tribes, would be useful in determining the degree of power they had formerly enjoyed.

There are many circumstances, which would authorise the conclusion,

* The mode in which the present rulers of *Jeypur* gained possession of this great and rich principality, is remarkable. An expatriated *Rajput*, of the *Kaichiwara* tribe, was adopted as his heir by the reigning *Minah* Prince of *Narwar*, and from him the *Jeypur* family is descended.

† The Princes of *Udeypur* are stated not to be desirous of the discontinuance of this usage, which they refer to a sense of gratitude to a *Bhill*, who saved the life of a prince of their family; a tradition, which prevents the pride of this high family being hurt, by a recollection, that the throne, they now possess, had ever a meaner occupant.

that the *Bhills* come from the countries N.W. of *Malwa*.* One of the strongest is, that the principal *rawels* and *bhats* (priests and minstrels) of *Rath* and *Nemar*, and I believe those of *Candeish*, come once or twice a year from the countries of *Udeypur* and *Jaudhpur*, to visit the tribes settled in the more southern districts.

The *Bhills* have a fabulous tale regarding their origin, which I have elsewhere stated.† This ascribes their descent to an intercourse between a celestial and terrestrial being. MAHÁDÉVA (we are told) became enamoured of an earthly beauty, and had a family by her. One of his sons, alike remarkable for his deformity and vice, slew the sacred bull of his father; for which sacrilege he was banished to the mountains: where he became the founder of a race inheriting his vices and his turbulence, which took the name of *Bhills*; an appellation that has been, in course of time, indiscriminately applied to the *Chandála* and *Nisháda*‡ (outcasts of spurious birth),

* Dr. Drummond, of Bombay, is of a different opinion. He considers the *Bhills*, as well as the *Kúlis*, to be originally inhabitants of *Guzerat* and the south of India. In the latter part of this conjecture I do not coincide; and I am confirmed in my opinion by that of Captain Tod, an officer distinguished by his general attainments in Hindu literature and antiquities, and whose minute local knowledge of the country of *Rajputana*, and its inhabitants, exceeds that of any other individual. Captain Tod observes, in reply to my query upon this subject, "We can trace the *Bhills* as powerful communities so far back as the *Mahabharat*; for even *Virât*, to which the five *Pándawas* were banished, formed part of that grand forest, the *Herambar tarca*, which comprehended both *Surashtra* and *Gujjararashtra*, from the world's end (*Jagat Kúnt Dwarka*) to the *Malwa* frontier, along the *Nermada*, and embracing *Eidur* and *Dongerpur*. *Abu*, and the tracts anciently called *Dandhar*, comprehending *Koliwara* and tracts up the *Lernswdti* and the western *Benas*, an immense tract of country. *Herambar* was the titular appellation of those forest lords, and there are legends without end of BHÍMA's pranks with the fair BHILMÍ in the *Malwa* frontier, and at *Girnar* in the centre of *Surashtra*. The name of BHILL is immortalized by his giving the death-blow to the head of the powerful *Radu* (*Jadún*) tribes. The deified KRISHNA, who mixed in the fight of *Kuru-cshétra*, and was charioteer to his friend ARJUNA, when the Poet says, 'He crimsoned the yellow mantle in the red-stained field.' The curse of the sage DURVASAS, and the *Bhill* slaying the Indian Apollo (*Muralidhar*, the flute-holder,) is well known to all the lovers of Hindu legendary tales."

† Vide Central India, Vol. I. p. 518.

‡ I am informed by Mr. Haughton, of the East-India College, to whose knowledge of Sanscrit literature I am much indebted, that the term *Nisháda*, which signifies an outcast race, is radically different from *Nishaddha*, a country of which NALA (whose misfortunes are so beautifully described in the *Mahábhárata*) was sovereign. This episode has been translated into Latin by the learned Professor Bopp, who is one among the many distinguished men of his country, that have of late made a great proficiency in oriental literature. The European public are promised
a complete

many of whom dwell among them. The *Bhills* also dwelt, and still dwell in the country of *Nisháda*, whose localities are geographically discussed in the *Agni Purán*. It is the modern *Nerwer* or *Nalwer*; and, amongst its inhabitants, the tribe of *Lauriyah* is accounted one of the finest and oldest of the *Bhill* race. This was the country of the Prince NALA, whose name is in chronological tables as one of the *Suryavans*, or children of the Sun : and from him the *Jeypur* family trace their descent.

Besides the general pretensions of all *Bhills* to a celestial origin, we find in every district some fable which ennobles their local chiefs, by tracing their descent from demi-gods, princes, and heroes. But before entering upon a description of the different classes of this people, I must shortly notice their religion, their superstitions, and their usages.

The *Bhills*, with the exception of a few tribes (who were converted to the Mahomedan religion) must be classed with the Hindu population ; although they are in appearance, and in many of their habits, distinct from the other races of India. They worship the same gods ; but their religious ceremonies are, in a great measure, limited to propitiatory offerings, and sacrifices, to some of the Hindu minor infernal deities ;* particularly

a complete translation of the *Rámáyana* by the able and eloquent Schlegel, Professor at Bonn ; and his published translation of the *Bhágavad Gíta* is a proof of his competency to the arduous task.

* It is impossible to describe all the gods that are worshipped, by this rude race ; for every tribe has different objects of adoration, arising from local superstitions and legends. The following is a list of the principal deities of the *Bhills* in *Jebuah* and its vicinity, and the occasions on which they deem it necessary to propitiate their favour :

KALI. On many occasions.

HATIPOWA. At the *Déwáli* and *Dasahará* feasts, as presiding over village cultivators.

WAGHACHA KUNWER To protect them against the ravages of wild beasts.

HALK MATA. For success in their predatory journies and undertakings.

KHORIAL MATA. For protection to the cattle from sickness and plundering.

DEVI KANAIL. For a good ripening of their corn, and for plenty.

BEHYU BAJI. For rain.

GHORA RAJA. Against attacks and plunderers.

HALLAM. Worshipped by the *Malwa Bhills*, at the annual pilgrimage to the large hill of *Retna Wal*, in *Bariya*.

CHAMCONDA MATA is the goddess of harvest ; and the first of every grain cut is offered to her.

HOWIN WANA MATA. Against murrain or lameness amongst their cattle.

SÍTA' MATA. The goddess of small-pox.

the goddess of small-pox, SĪTA MATA, whom they invoke under various names, in the hope of averting its dreadful ravages. They pay great reverence to MAHÁDÉVA; from whom (as has been stated) they boast their descent.

The *Bhills* often make small mud figures of horses, which they range round their idol, to whom they promise a fine charger if he will hear their petition; and it is not unusual to place the image upon one of these figures. The extreme reverence of this rude race for the horse is very singular; and in many of their legends the principal event depends on the assistance, or advice, of an enchanted horse.

The *Bhills* neither build, nor frequent, pagodas or temples; but in general select for a place of worship some particular tree, which is consecrated by a few large stones put on an elevated terrace of mud, which is constructed at its root. In some places, however, a small open shed is erected for some particularly sacred image.

At the *Dasaharā** many of the *Bhills* resort to the principal neighbouring towns to celebrate that feast, and sacrifice at the outside of the village to DURGÁ, a goddess to whom they at all times pay adoration. But the most singular, and perhaps the original worship of the *Bhills*, is that which they pay to their deceased ancestors, or chiefs of note. On the death of one of these, a brass bull or horse is formed and delivered to the *Bhat*,† who makes an annual circuit of the hamlets, with this image, performing the requisite ceremonies, and commemorating, in songs, the fame of the deceased; for

BHULBAE MATA. In times of epidemic sickness, cholera, &c. &c.

BHADRĪ BAE. Small-pox.

GHONA. Small-pox.

The sacrifice or offering to HATIPOWA and WAGHACHA KUNWER, is a bullock; to the others, fowls and he-goats: a male bird to the male deities; and a female to the female ones. Their usual ceremonies consist in merely smearing the idol, which is seldom any thing but a shapeless stone, with vermilion and red lead, or oil; offering, with prostrations and a petition, an animal and some liquor; casting a small portion of each, with some pulse, into the fire; and then partaking of the flesh and remaining liquor, after giving the presiding *Rawel*, or *Bhat*, his share.

* The *Dasaharā* begins on the tenth of *Aswin* (September,—October), on which, after the worship and religious ceremonies have been performed nine nights, they throw the image of the goddess DÉVĪ (KA'LĪ) into the river. On this day RA'MA marched against RAVENA, King of Ceylon; for which reason it is called the victorious tenth.

† The *Bhat* is both the bard and chronicler of the *Bhills*, as of all the low tribes. This class have been described in the *Memoir of Central India*, Vol. II. p. 131, &c.

which service he receives, as his dues, a piece of cloth, and the vessels, and other articles, used in the sacrifice. It is also common for the *Bhills* to raise, on such occasions, a cairn, or rude pile of stones, to the chief who is beatified; and the top of this pile is, at particular periods of worship, covered with oil, red lead, and vermillion.

I cannot better illustrate the belief and usages of the *Bhills*, regarding their sainted heroes, than by giving a legend of the tribes inhabiting the mountainous tract, situated between the *Nermada* and the *Táptí*, and lying to the west of the level parts of *Nemar*. The demi-gods and heroes of other tribes differ in their names and qualities, and in the fables relating to their origin, from those described in the legend; but the miracles, which attended their birth and progress, are all of similar character and construction.

According to the traditions, and written records, of some of the oldest and best informed of the *Rarwels*, or holy men, of these *Nemar Bhills*, “ A youth of the mercantile class, named OLIA, of *Tóran Mall*, who had left his own family, came to the house of a *Bráhmén* school-master, called KHOJA, who took him under his protection, and educated him, along with his own daughter, named BARMÁ. One day, the two young scholars were assisting each other in their lessons, when the girl proposed casting their nativity, in order to discover whether they were born under the influence of the same star, and consequently capable of being united in marriage or not. They were employed in this task, when the *Bráhmén* arrived, who, perceiving in what they were engaged, was very angry, and taxing the young *Banyá* with ingratitude, in aspiring to the hand of his daughter, struck him several blows. The *Banyá*, irritated by such usage, lifted up his writing-board, and gave the *Bráhmén* so severe a blow, that it killed him. Alarmed at what he had done, he prepared to flee, when the girl entreated him to take her with him. He agreed to this; and after having performed the funeral rites of the deceased *Bráhmén*, they departed, and went to *Toran Mall*, where they lived as man and wife.

“ Some time after this, BARMÁ, leaving her husband to take care of the household affairs, accompanied the *Játrá*, or annual concourse of pilgrims, going to worship SEDÁSIVA, who was then passing his time in *tapasya*, or mental abstraction, on the hill of *Dhavalagiri Parvat* (or the White Moun-

“ tain) in *Gondwara*.* BARMÁ, on her arrival, performed her devotions
 “ to SEDÁSIVA, with such assiduity that, when that holy being awoke from
 “ the trance, in which he had been plunged, she attracted his attention, and
 “ he desired her to mention her prayer, and it should be granted. BARMÁ
 “ replied, that her only wish was to be blest with children, that her name
 “ might remain in the land of her nativity. SEDÁSIVA, on hearing this,
 “ gave her a club, or staff, which he directed her to throw against the
 “ branches of a mango-tree, and to pick up the fruit that fell. She obeyed,
 “ and obtained five mangoes; but not being satisfied, she again threw up
 “ the stick, when, to her surprise, it adhered to the tree, and at the same
 “ time, the mangoes she had already obtained, vanished from her hand.
 “ Mortified by this disappointment, she imposed upon herself, as a penance
 “ for her avarice, the task of sweeping with the long dishevelled tresses of
 “ her hair, the spot on which SEDÁSIVA lay reclined in *tapasya*, hoping
 “ that her humility and devotion would appease that anger, to which she
 “ attributed her disappointment. BARMÁ had performed this task for the
 “ space of seven years, when SEDÁSIVA again opened his eyes, and, perceiv-
 “ ing the same votary standing before him, enquired why she had not de-
 “ parted with her fruit. BARMÁ related what she had done, and the
 “ consequence. ‘It was a just punishment,’ said SEDÁSIVA, ‘for your
 “ cupidity. Take the stick, and try again; but learn to be satisfied with
 “ what fate grants you, and seek no more.’ BARMÁ, thus warned, took
 “ the stick, and knocking down five mangoes, departed with them to *Tóran*
 “ *Mall*. During the journey, she happened to lodge at the house of a
 “ *Komár*, or pot-maker, whose daughter ate one of the mangoes, and be-
 “ came immediately pregnant. In the same manner, three other mangoes
 “ were eaten by the respective daughters-in-law of the different house-
 “ holders, who gave her lodging. They were, a *Banyá* (a merchant), a
 “ *Rajput* (a soldier), and a *Gówála* (a cowherd). Their daughters-in law,
 “ becoming all pregnant from eating the mangoes, were, in due time, de-
 “ livered of sons. The *Komár*’s daughter-in-law’s son was called DUR-
 “ KUMBHÍ; the *Banyá*’s was called GUNJÍ; the *Rajput*’s was called WANG
 “ SÁMAR; and the *Gówála*’s was called VÉLAM.

* Probably the *Mahádéva* hills, where the pilgrims still continue to pay their adoration to SE-
 DÁSIVA, or MAA’DÉVA.

“ BARMÁ proceeded with the only remaining mango, till she came to
 “ a part of the country that was overgrown with long grass, in which her
 “ feet getting entangled, she fell, and dropt her mango. On missing it,
 “ she turned to look for it, and perceived it change into an egg, which as
 “ suddenly became transformed into a serpent. She conjured the reptile,
 “ if subject to the power of SEDÁSIVA, again to become an egg; which
 “ having taken place, as she desired, she took the egg in her hand, and
 “ proceeding on her journey, reached *Tóran Mall* in safety. The egg
 “ afterwards produced twins, a boy and a girl, who were called KÚNDA
 “ and KÚNDAN.”

After this the story becomes defective. No further mention is made of OLIA and BARMÁ; and the five brothers, with their sister, are introduced as grown up, and living together at *Tóran Mall*. They are represented as being in a state of indigence, and obliged to labour for their food, or procure it by hunting. Being, however, the children of SEDÁSIVA, they are under the protection of divine power; and, in one of their hunting excursions, they find a horse, which proves to be of celestial breed. This animal, which has the gift of speech, tells the brothers, that they are destined to rise, from poverty and obscurity, to wealth and power, by one of them marrying KÁJEL RÁNÍ. KÚNDA (who appears to be the recognised head of his brothers), enquires who this KÁJEL RÁNÍ is, and how she is to be obtained. The horse replies, that she is a *Gandharba* (a fairy, or celestial being), and that she resides at her father's court, in a distant region, called *Méghpuri* (or the city of the cloud), from whence she is in the habit of descending, with seven other celestial nymphs,* to bathe in the river *Sípra*.† The horse offers to conduct KÚNDA to the spot, and to assist him in concealing himself from view, while the nymphs bathe in the river, when KÚNDA is instructed to seize KÁJEL RÁNÍ's garments, and not to restore them till she promises to become his wife. In short, KÚNDA gains the RÁNÍ by following the advice of the horse. After he had obtained her,

* There are a great many nymphs at INDRA's court, and, as it is believed that the demi-god can be dispossessed of his sovereignty, by any mortal who can exceed him in the austerities, by which he obtained his present power, he generally despatches one of these charming and alluring damsels, to tempt the ascetic, and to interrupt and destroy the efficacy of his self-imposed penance.

† The *Sípra* is a river in *Malwa*, which flows past the sacred city of *Ujayan*. For description of its course, vide *Central India*, Vol. II. Index, p. 513.

she is much distressed at the idea of the calumny, to which she would be exposed, for having eloped ; especially as her father had already betrothed her to a prince. She therefore advises KÚNDA to allow her to return to her native sphere, to which she recommends him to ascend, and carry her off publicly, as his doing so would save her reputation. KÚNDA, after consulting his oracle, the horse, who promises him success, agrees to this proposition, and KÁJEL RÁNÍ, with her attendants, wings her flight into the upper regions. When the period fixed for the celebration of her nuptials with the Prince, to whom she was betrothed, arrives, KÚNDA and his brothers mount the horse, which carries them to *Méghpurí*, just as the marriage-ceremony commences. KÚNDA prays for aid from SEDÁSIVA, and is consequently endowed with the strength of twelve elephants. He approaches KÁJEL RÁNÍ; and seizing her intended spouse, annihilates him with one blow ; and then bearing off the bride, from the midst of surrounding hosts, he mounts her on the horse, which bears them in safety to *Tóran Mall*.

From the date of this event, KÚNDA, who is now called KÚNDA RÁNÁ (or prince), lived happily with KÁJEL RÁNÍ, to whom he was married, and in course of time (according to the prediction of the horse*) obtained wealth and dominion, by conquest, it is said ; but no further particulars are known. KÚNDA RÁNÁ, and his brothers, are reported to have possessed the kingdoms of *Malwa*, *Guzerat*, and *Candeish* ; but this probably means no more, than that they plundered these countries.

The era of KÚNDA RÁNÁ is subsequent to that of any of the Rájás and Princes, celebrated in the *Mahá-bhárat* ; in which, however, mention is made of *Tóran Mall* : a Rájá of that place, named YUVANÁSŌWA, being there represented as fighting with some of the *Pándava* race.

The following is an account of the progeny of KÚNDA RÁNÁ, and his brothers :

BALLA RÁJEL, son of KÚNDA RÁNÁ, by his wife KÁJEL RÁNÍ.

BHILLET, son of VÉLAM GÓWÁLA, by his wife MERENDA GÓWÁLIN.

LAJJAC, son of DURKUMBHÍ, by DÁSĒL.

KUÁJÁ, son GÚNJÍ BANYÁ, by RANJANÍ.

SODUL, son of WANGSÁMER, by LÁRBÆ.

There were altogether seven sons, but their names are not known. They

* No further notice is taken of the horse in the story.

were called *Kúhans*; and their offspring (with their relations by marriages) formed a family of sixty, who were called the sixty *Ráwets*, or knights, of whom KÚNDA RÁNÁ was the chief. This race has been extinct for ages, and the sixty *Ráwets* are now exalted to as many *Dongrí Dévas* (or hill-gods), who are worshipped by the *Bhillálas* and *Bhills*, as well as by almost all the Hindus of the lower classes, of *Nemar*. Of all the sixty *Ráwets* (or hill-gods) BHILLET, son of VÉLAM GÓWÁLA, is the most revered: and this arises from the skill he possessed in magic, and from the success, he was, in consequence, enabled to obtain during an expedition, in which he accompanied the god BHAIRAVA (another son of SEDÁSIVA). They both went (it is said) to *Cámrrúp*, where the latter fell a victim to the arts of the sorcerers and sorceresses of that country, who transformed him into a beast; but he was rescued by BHILLET, who, by his superior skill in necromancy, subdued all the magicians and sorcerers, and restoring BHAIRAVA to his natural shape, brought him away in safety.

This tissue of superstition and fable has given rise to a race of men, called *Barwás*,* who are supposed, through the influence of the hill-gods (whose votaries they are), to be endowed with the hereditary gift of inspiration. Their powers are, however, dormant, till they are excited by music; and for this reason, they have a class of musicians connected with them, who are proficient in numerous songs, in praise of the hill deities. When the recitation of these songs has kindled the spark of spiritual fire, they begin to dance with frantic gestures, and loosening their hair, toss, and whirl round their heads, whilst their whole frame becomes agitated, as if under the influence of strong convulsions. In this state of phrenzy, they give utterance to oracles, which are attentively listened to by those, who come to consult them. The *Barwás* are of various castes, and admit disciples. The novices are required to perform daily ablutions, in warm water, for nine days, and to allow their hair to grow, to as great a length as possible. They then undergo a probation; and if music does not stimulate them to a state of extatic phrenzy, they are rejected, as not being favoured by the gods with a requisite portion of spiritual grace.

The *Barwás* act also as physicians, and cure trifling complaints, by means of simples, which the jungles produce. When the disease is serious, and

* The *Barwás* of the *Bhills* appear to be nearly similar to the *Bhópas*; for an account of whom, vide Central India, Vol. II. p. 214.

of a nature beyond the reach of their skill to discover, they invariably attribute it to the evil influence of a *Dhákán*,* or witch. In such cases, it is their duty to detect this *Dhákán*, which is effected by the performance of various ceremonies: sometimes by music; and at other times by a bunch of peacock's feathers, made into a broom, being waved round the head of the patient. In some cases, more cruel means are used to compel the *Dhákán* to declare her name, and the motives which have compelled her to afflict her victim, and the terms on which she will be appeased.

The belief in witchcraft is common to almost all classes in India; but the *Bhills*, from their wildness and ignorance, are deeply tainted with this superstition. They are, consequently, never without *Barwás* of their own tribe, with whom they consult on all occasions, but particularly when about to undertake a plundering expedition; and they almost invariably abide by the advice of these oracles. The *Barwás* of the poorer *Bhills* differ, in some respects, from the others. They do not require, for their excitement, any music, beyond "the clashing of stones."

It has been stated, that almost every tribe of *Bhills* has an account of its origin, of similar character to the one before mentioned; but I have remarked one important fact, that these traditions, which have been evidently fabricated to minister to the pride of chiefs, whose ancestors have been degraded from the higher and privileged orders, on account of their spurious birth, or some impure habit of life, have always a reference to *Bhills*, who existed previous to the date of the fable; and this evidence tends, beyond all others, to prove the title of the latter to antiquity, as an original tribe. I select from my papers the following short account of a class, termed the *Mehira Bhills*, from their being settled on the banks of the river *Mehí*.

"JAGDÉÖ (YAJNYADÉVA), one of the former Rájás of *Dhár*, was a lineal descendant of the ancient family of the *Püárs*. He had four brothers, with whose aid he attempted to build a fort at *Mándú*: but all their efforts were unsuccessful; for, as soon as a portion was built up, it fell to the ground. This had happened several times; when one night the goddess HALLAKA DÉVÍ appeared to JAGDÉÖ in a dream, and said, that unless one of the brothers would make a sacrifice of the head of his son, and his son's wife, they would never accomplish their object. JAGDÉÖ, on waking next morning, repeated the dream to his brothers, whom he assembled for the purpose

* For a full account of the *Dhákans*, vide Central India, Vol II. p. 212, &c

“ of deciding what was to be done. One of them said, ‘ Assuredly, we
 “ have not that urgent occasion for a fort, that we should sacrifice the lives
 “ of one of our sons, and his wife, to obtain it.’ JAGDÉÖ, after hearing this
 “ speech, in which all his brothers acquiesced, said, ‘ I will give the head,
 “ of my son and his wife;’ and did so the same night. HALLAKA DÉVÍ told
 “ him, that the fort should be completed before the next morning, which
 “ was done accordingly. After this extraordinary event, only one of the
 “ brothers would remain with JAGDÉÖ. The other three left him, observ-
 “ ing, that he was, from having made the sacrifice, sole master of the fort,
 “ and that they had, by their hesitation, forfeited all right to share in that
 “ possession, or to participate in his power, as Prince of *Mándú* and *Dhár*.
 “ They continued wanderers, for some time, principally occupying them-
 “ selves with the chase. The *Mehí* river, being informed of their depar-
 “ ture, appeared before them in the shape of a wild hog, in order to allure
 “ them towards a part of the country, where she desired they should settle.
 “ The brothers gave chase, but, after a long ride, lost sight of their game.
 “ One of them, named UNCHÁRÁWAD, being thirsty, went in search of
 “ water. He came to a hut, where he found some brass pots, ready filled ;
 “ and from seeing the spot quite clear of wood, he concluded that it must
 “ belong to some person of high caste, and drank of the water. Another
 “ brother came, for the same purpose ; but, previously to drinking, he asked
 “ to whom the pots belonged. UNCHÁRÁWAD said, he did not know ; but
 “ having enquired of some children, who were playing, they were informed
 “ that the house belonged to a *Bhill*. The brother who came last, said to
 “ UNCHÁRÁWAD, ‘ As you have drunk the water, you have lost your caste,
 “ and become the same as a *Bhill*, therefore we cannot live together as
 “ formerly.’ UNCHÁRÁWAD, being, by this accident, degraded to the condi-
 “ tion of a *Bhill*, adopted their usages, and became their leader ; and in
 “ commemoration of his having been brought by the *Mehí* river, he and
 “ all his followers adopted the name of *Mehira Bhills*, by which they are, to
 “ this day, distinguished. Shortly after this event, he built a fort, which
 “ was called *Uchánggar*, or the fort of *Ucháng*.”

The plain fact of this story is, that a brother of one of the former Princes of *Dhár*, fled to the woods, and lost his caste, from associating with *Bhills*, of whom he became a leader.

The same pride, which has given rise to this fable, has led to the establish-
 ment of different castes, and distinctions, among the *Bhills*. The *Ujjwala*

and *Kálá*, or white and black *Bhills*, are general terms ; not applying to a difference in the shade of complexion, but in the habits of the tribes that these terms distinguish; and the words (which are used metaphorically) imply “ pure ” and “ impure. ” Indeed, the word “ *Mailá*, ” which literally means unclean, is often used to denote the latter tribe. The *Ujjwala*, or pure *Bhills*, trace their descent from the *Rajputs*; and are, in several parts, called *Bhillálas*. Many of these not only preserve the names of their forefathers, but the clan name of the peculiar tribe, to which they belonged, before their degradation. In writing a list of the different tribes of *Bhills*, settled in the principality of *Jabuah*, the names of many of the Hindu military caste were found. This induced a query as to the cause of *Bhills* being distinguished by family names, such as *Rhatóre*, *Chóhán*, *Súlankí*, &c. The answer from a chief, skilled in their legends, was the following short fable :

“ In former times, when PARASU RÁMA (*Avatára*) declared a war of
 “ extirpation upon the *Rajputs* (in revenge for an offence against his father),
 “ numbers of that tribe were obliged to save themselves, by denying that
 “ they belonged to it, professing to be members of other classes of the
 “ community. To punish this evasion, PARASU RÁMA insisted that every
 “ individual should eat the food of the tribe, to which he declared himself
 “ to belong. Those *Rajputs*, who did so, lost their caste, and were obliged
 “ to adhere to the tribes of their adoption, but retained their former name; ”
 and this (said the old man) accounts for your finding men who call themselves *Rhatóres*, *Súlankís*, &c. amongst the *Bhills*, and many other low castes,* with whom their ancestors, when in dread of extirpation, associated.

The pure *Bhills* (as they term themselves) pretend to keep up a distinction from others, on many points, and particularly in diet. They refrain from carrion, and animals that have died a natural death, which impure *Bhills* eat; and many families amongst them will not partake of the flesh of the cow. The consequence of this abstinence is, that some *Rajputs* will drink water from the vessels, and eat in the houses, of these *Bhills*; and the latter, flattered by this approximation, assume, as far as their condition permits, the habits and customs of other Hindus. On these, therefore, it is

* Some of these degraded *Rajputs* are found among the *Télís*, or oil-men, and the *Baláyás*, or guides; and even, I am informed, among the *Chamárs*, or shoe-makers, who are deemed the vilest and most unclean of the Hindu community.

not necessary to dwell. My chief purpose is, to describe the usages of the original and unmixed *Bhills*; but of these also there are many tribes, and classes.

Near *Adyanti*, and on part of the *Sátpúra* range, there are many Mahomedan *Bhills*, who appear to be a portion of this people, that have been converted to the faith of Mahomed, and were, at one period, probably reclaimed from those plundering habits, into which they relapsed, as the Government became weak and distracted. This tribe would seem, from my information, to know little of their professed religion but the name, and to be as ignorant and superstitious, as the rest of their brethren.

In every province, where *Bhills* are established, I have found the names of tribes, or rather families, increase in the ratio that enquiry was pursued. The slightest circumstances with them, as with other unsettled races of men, give rise to such a distinction. The name of an ancestor, a dispute in the tribe, which causes the separation of a branch of it, a favourite spot of residence, a wonted signal,—any thing, in short, gives rise to a name, which is perpetuated, and forms a tie of brotherhood, long after its origin is forgotten. I heard of a small tribe, known by the name of *Kókú Bhills*, which, I was told, had been adopted from their established signal, on plundering expeditions, being like the crowing of a cock. After this explanation, it is unnecessary to give a list of these tribes; though I obtained several of those that inhabited the different countries under my charge, as I deemed such minute knowledge useful, in the exercise of local administration.

There are, even among the *Maila*, or impure *Bhills*, some essential distinctions. Those settled on the *Nermada*, speak with detestation of other classes (particularly that denominated *Náb**), which dwell in the *Sátpúra* ranges.

I made every effort to obtain some written record of the *Bhills*, that might throw light upon their origin, and peculiar habits, but without success. Several heads of tribes on the *Nermada*, assured me, that such records existed, as they had heard their chief *Rawels*, or priests, who come from *Marwar*, read accounts from books; but enquiry led me to conclude, that the books referred to, were no more than those genealogical accounts †

* An intelligent *Bhill* assured me, that some of the *Sátpúra Bhills* had a language peculiar to themselves, but I have doubts of the fact. It is, however, a subject that merits enquiry.

† I have given a particular account of these genealogical works, in the Memoir of Central India, Vol. I. p. 516—550.

which are kept by the priests and minstrels of the *Rajputs*, of every tribe of Central India, to gratify the pride, and regulate the marriages, of the principal families.

The language of the *Bhills*, of the *Vindhya* range, and those of *Nemar*, differs, in no material degree, from that of the peasantry of the country; but from their being uneducated, and living (with the exception of the village *Bhills*, who are described in the Memoir of Central India) amid wilds and mountains, they speak a very rude dialect. The usages of this race merit particular notice. The following account * of the ceremonies at the births, marriages, and funerals, of the tribes on the banks of the *Nermada*, is believed to be accurate.

Ceremonies at the Birth of a Child.

When a *Bhill* child is born, it is bathed in warm water, and a name is immediately given it, by the women who have acted as midwives on the occasion. On the fifth day after the delivery, a great rejoicing takes place, among the members of the family, and their relations. During the day, the child and its mother are bathed in warm water; and in the evening, all the relations assemble. Wheat, flour, arrack (distilled from the *Mahua*† tree), some red lead, a mixture called *kúmkú*, turmeric, and cocoa-nuts, are previously prepared. The ceremony commences by the mother of the child plastering a part of the floor, immediately outside of the threshold of the hut, with cow-dung and turmeric, on which she places five small pebbles, corresponding with the number of days, since the infant has been born, and to these pebbles she performs *pújd*, or worship, by sprinkling them with red lead, *kúmkú*, and grain, and breaking a cocoa-nut in pieces. She next places some of that fruit near the five pebbles, on which a libation of arrack is poured. After this, a repast of bread and cakes is prepared, of which all partake; and the night is passed in carousing and rejoicing. During this festivity, the sexes do not intermingle, but remain separate; the men smoking and drinking, in one place, and the women singing, beating the *d'hól* (a small drum), and drinking, in another, till morning ends the merriment of the fifth day.‡

* I am indebted for this account to Capt. R. Shears (the officer who had the superintendence of these tribes).

† *Bassia latifolia*.

‡ This account of the woman joining in the ceremony, at so early a period after her confinement,

On the twelfth day, another ceremony takes place. On this day, the mother of the infant, with her female relations, proceeds to a river, stream, pool, or well, where rites are performed to the water-god, or spirit (*Jaladéva*, as he is called). The ceremonies are as follow: In the hut, where the woman has lain in, a dish called *khichrī* is prepared, made with *jowāra*,* or *bājra*,† boiled with *múng-ddl*.‡ Some of the *khichrī* is then put upon a brass dish, on which are also placed twelve lighted lamps, to correspond with the number of days, since the birth of the child. These lamps are made of wheat-flour, kneaded into paste; and of the same paste twelve small cakes are also made. In addition to these, red lead, *kúnkú*, cocoa-nut, and a mixture, made of five different kinds of grain, and of turmeric, beaten into a powder, which is dissolved in water, are placed upon the brass dish, which, with its contents, forming, what is called in *Nemar*, the *artí*, is carried by one of the women, the whole of whom, with the mother of the child, go in procession, singing, and beating the *d'hól*, and accompanied by any other instrumental music that they can procure, towards the appointed stream, at the edge of which, when the party arrives, the mother of the child arranges the lamps. The cakes are placed in a second line, parallel to that of the lamps, and a little of the *khichrī* is put on each of them; after which, the mother performs worship to the water-god, in the following manner. Red lead, and *kúnkú*, are thrown by her into the water, and also on the twelve lamps, upon which some of the five different kinds of grain, mixed with turmeric and water, is also thrown. A fire is then kindled before the lamps, and oil poured in it. The party afterwards proceed home, where they feast upon *khichrī* and oil; after which they break up, and this finishes the business of the twelfth day.

Marriage Ceremonies of the Bhills.

The fixing of a marriage between a young couple is managed entirely by their relations. When the parents desire to marry their son, they send some friends to the parents of the girl, whom they wish to become their son's bride. These make proposals, and present some (*gur*) raw sugar and arrack, which (if partaken of) shows, that the proposals are accepted.

ment, may appear extraordinary to an European, but not to any one who has been in India, and witnessed the rapid recovery of females after child-birth.

* *Holcus sorghum*

† *Holcus spicatus*.

‡ *Mudga-dala*; *Phaseolus mungo*.

After this, the parents of the intended bridegroom, taking with them five or six sers of sugar (*gur*), or as many pots of arrack, a new petticoat, a cloth, a rupee, and a cocoa-nut, proceed on a lucky day,* accompanied by the intended bridegroom himself, and all the male and female members of the family, to the house of the bride, where, in expectation of their coming, an entertainment has been prepared, according to the circumstances of the parties. If rich, the food consists of boiled rice, *dál*,† and *ghí*‡ and if poor, of bread made of *jowdra* flour, *dál*, and oil of *til* (sesamum). The mother of the girl, then carries to her daughter the presents brought for her; and attiring her in the petticoat and cloth, puts some *kúmkú* on her forehead. The whole party then assemble in the girl's apartment, where they partake of the entertainments prepared for them; and after quaffing large potations of the arrack, return to their respective dwellings. The young couple are, from that day, considered as regularly betrothed. The celebration of the marriage is afterwards fixed, according to circumstances, and opportunity. The commencement of these ceremonies always takes place on Sunday, previous to which the bridegroom and bride have, for several days, their bodies well rubbed with oil,§ and perform ablutions with warm water. During the whole of this week, till next Sunday, the bridegroom and bride, with their respective relations, male and female, in two distinct parties, go every night to pay visits to their neighbours. After these visits, one of the females of both parties, carries a brass plate, in which are a lighted lamp, some *kúmkú*, and grain. The master of each house, or hut, gives to the bridegroom or bride, as they respectively happen to come, presents of a cocoa-nut, or money amounting to a few *pice* (a copper coin), and taking from the brass dish some *kúmkú*, put it on their foreheads. On the last day (Saturday), a *mandha* (or booth) is erected at the houses of both the bridegroom and bride, by their parents. The *mandha* of the bridegroom must be erected on nine posts; and that of the bride upon twelve. In each of these *mandhas*, the bridegroom and bride's male relations bathe in warm water, and partake of victuals and arrack. At night the men retire, and

* The *Bhat*, or minstrel, is always acquainted with the lucky and unlucky days; but these seldom possess the almanacks, used by the Hindu priests of villages, in which they are all inserted.

† A species of Indian vetch.

‡ Clarified butter.

§ This word is, in the original, *chechra*, which signifies a particular oil.

make room for the women, who pass the night in drinking and singing. On these occasions, it is thought a great disgrace, if there should be any deficiency of arrack.

On the Saturday morning, the bridegroom, if he can afford it, is dressed in a red turban, of the value of two or three rupées; a jacket of white cloth, of the value of one or two rupees; and a pair of short white trowsers, of the value of eight or ten *annas*.* When dressed, he is conducted by his parents and relations, accompanied by vocal music, to the *mandha* of the bride, whose parents meet the bridegroom's party about half-way, and conduct them to the *mandha*. As this, however, is never made large enough to contain all the company, separate places are assigned to them, where they pass the day in eating and drinking. At night, they all assemble, and seat themselves, in distinct groupes, around the *mandha*: the bridegroom's party being on one side, and that of the bride on another; leaving a space in the middle, where the bridegroom and bride are afterwards seated, opposite, but nigh to each other. A piece of painted pasteboard, with tassels appended to it (of the value of about four rupees), is then tied on each side of their foreheads, by their respective female relations, the nearest of whom unite the hands of the young couple, which completes the ceremony. The whole of the company pass the night in singing and drinking, as usual; and the next morning, the bridegroom conducts to his house his bride, who is then separated from her own family.

Inferior Marriages, called Natra.

When a man wishes to contract a marriage with a widow, without incurring trouble and expense, he sends some of his friends to urge his suit with the woman, or with her parents, or relations. If his proposals are accepted, the suitor is desired to bring to the house of his intended bride, such presents as he can afford; which are, usually, a petticoat of coarse chintz, a cloth, a sort of bodice, a necklace of beads, two pots of arrack, sixteen sers† of roasted pease, and two sers of *gur*, or raw sugar. The match is then considered settled. The visit must be made on a Saturday night. The man takes with him friends, and requisites to form an entertainment, of which the woman's friends, and his own, partake. The woman dresses herself in the clothes brought to her, and she and her new spouse, after the departure

* *Anna*, one-sixteenth of a rupee.

† A *Ser* is nearly two pounds.

of the guests, pass the night together. According to long established custom, the new married pair are obliged to leave the house before day-break, and pass the next day in the fields, in some solitary place, about the distance of three or four miles from the village, and they must not return till the dusk of the evening. Their friends, however, send them meat and drink. The necessity of the new married couple passing the first day of their marriage, like outcasts, at a distance from any human habitation, is to mark that sense of degradation, which all the natives of Hindustan entertain against a woman, marrying a second husband. That even the wild and ignorant *Bhills* should be affected by this fastidiousness, would appear somewhat like a proof of the sentiment being less allied to a feeling of delicacy, than to some ancient national usage; for it is not likely, that the modern *Bhill* could have copied this extraordinary custom from the Brahmenical institutions.

These second marriages are, most frequently, preceded, amongst the *Bhills*, by an elopement of the parties; which, generally, ends in the pardon of the parents and relations, who are appeased by the seasonable application of some presents. When such connections are formed by the inhabitants of villages, a fixed fine is paid to the *Patéls*, or head men, and this constitutes part of their dues.

Funeral Ceremonies of the Bhills.

The *Bhills* always bury their dead (a very marked distinction from the Brahmenical practice of burning). The corpse is wrapt in a shroud of new coarse white cloth, and borne on a bier made of bamboos, or any kind of sticks. This is carried by some of the relations of the deceased to the usual burying-ground, which is always on the bank of a stream. Here the shroud is taken off, and the body (if that of a woman) is washed; and the shroud being again put on, the corpse is interred in a grave, three or four feet deep. The head of the corpse is laid to the south. The bier, and the clothes worn by the deceased, before his death, are thrown away, as being impure. All the family, and such of the tribe as are in the vicinity, attend the funeral; and after the body is interred, they purify themselves by ablutions. It is the custom for the female relations of the deceased, to observe a course of lamentations for five days. They commence their wailings in the mornings, keep them up for about a quarter of an hour, and then resume their domestic occupations. On the fifth day, ceremonies are

performed to the memory of the deceased. On this occasion, some wheat flour (not less than two sers), half a ser of rice, a small quantity of *ghí*, and some arrack, are prepared by the male relations of the deceased, and carried by them to a stream. Two of the relations perform the ceremonies of ablution, a third toasts cakes, while a fourth arranges, along the bank, five cups, made of the broad leaves of the *Palás** tree; and by the side of these cups, which are filled with water, are placed, in a parallel line, five cakes of bread. On the latter, rice is strewed, and arrack is sprinkled upon the rice. A small fire is afterwards kindled, and set in a blaze, by *ghí* being put in it. The water is then thrown out of the cups, and things being left in this condition, the party partake of the food, drink the arrack, and then return home.

Another ceremony, exclusive of the above, generally takes place to the memory of the deceased. It ought, properly, to be on the twelfth day; but in case of that being inconvenient, it may be performed at any time, within the twelvemonth. It is a feast to guests, who are invited, in the name of the deceased, to partake of the best fare that their entertainers can give.

Settlement of Disputes.

Disputes, of a trifling nature, amongst the *Bhills*, are, in general, amicably settled by the heads of families. Should a *Bhill* kill another, of a different tribe, or family, he must be adjudged by a *Pancháyat*, or Court of Arbitration, of the most respectable of the different *hatts*, or *Bhill* villages, near the place where the murder was committed. Efforts are always made to compound every crime, even murder, by fines; and the price of blood is generally given to the family of the man that has been killed. The sum is proportioned to the circumstances of the offender; sometimes, it does not amount to more than ten or twelve rupees; at others, several head of cattle are given. There is, however, often great difficulty in compounding for a murder; and as it is deemed against usage, to put a man to death, in cold blood, the cause of revenge is left to the relations of the man that has been murdered; and, in such cases, blood-feuds are often commenced, which continue for many years, and, sometimes, for generations. Consequently, one murder, amongst this wild race, is usually attended with the loss of many lives, beyond that of the individual by whom it was perpetrated.

* *Butea frondosa*.

The mountain *Bhills* live in small clusters of rude huts, which are to the north of the *Nermada*, termed *párás*,* and to the south, *hatís*. They are under the authority of a *Náyaca*, or *Tarwá*, whose power resembles that of the *Patél*. A number of these small colonies are often united in general obedience to one chief, who has a title according to his class, and the usages of the country. Almost all the *Bhill* leaders, immediately south of the *Nermada*, are termed *Náyacas*; while those on its north bank, are called *Bhúmíyas*: but in these titles, there is an endless variety, dependent on family, rank, local circumstances, and ancient usages.

There is a natural spirit of independence in the mountain *Bhills*, which compels chiefs, who have a desire to establish an authority that supersedes that of the *Tarwás* of small colonies, to entertain followers from a distant country. Besides, when the sphere of plunder is extended to any distance from their native wilds, the *Bhills* are not so fit for such enterprises, as many others of the predatory tribes. Their arms, and their habits, are more suited to the ravines, the woods, and the mountains, amid which they live. The *Bhill* is small of stature, but active, and capable of enduring great fatigue. He has seldom any clothing, but a small piece of cloth round his waist. His arms are a bow and a quiver of arrows, in the use of which he is very expert; but he seldom faces his enemy. His arrows are shot from behind bushes and rocks; and his acquaintance with the country, makes him almost always successful in eluding pursuit. If he descends into the plain, it is at night, to thief and plunder; or if in the day, to drive away unguarded cattle, or to attack defenceless travellers, who (if not killed) are kept, till they are ransomed.

The cultivating classes of *Bhills* have been elsewhere noticed,† as differing in their usages from their brethren, who inhabit the mountains. The latter, however, are always, in some degree, dependent upon the neighbouring villages, in the plain, particularly for tobacco, of which, as well as liquor,‡ they are immoderately fond. They also require grain, for they cultivate little, and that in the rudest manner, merely by breaking the soil to receive the seed; but I found them quite acquainted with the value of

* *Pará* is an Hindustani word, corresponding to the Persian word *Mahal*, a ward, or division, of a town.

† Vide Central India, Vol. II. p. 179.

‡ I have often given liquor to *Bhills*, and have invariably noticed, that before they drank it, they poured a libation on the ground. When asked the reason, they replied, it was usage.

ashes, as a manure, which they make of the wood cut down to clear the fields they cultivate.

They often possess cattle, and, when at peace with the inhabitants of the plain, they breed fowls in great numbers, the sale of which is a source of profit.

From a census * taken of the *Bhill* population, of the *Vindhya* range, it appeared, that there were not more than six to the square mile. This calculation may, perhaps, be applied to this race, over all the countries in which they dwell. Their exposure to the elements, the hazards they daily incur, their poverty, and the contagious distempers to which they are liable, have operated against their increase; but the change, recently effected in the condition of many of these tribes, will, no doubt, tend to augment their numbers.

Sufficient has been said to illustrate the habits, and manners, of the *Bhills*. A few words will complete the picture of this extraordinary race, as far as relates to their past, and present, condition. Existing, as they have hitherto done, under despotic governments, which placed them beyond the pale of civil society, and which not only gave them no encouragement, or protection, but authorized the lowest of the fiscal officers to take their lives, without trial, considering themselves a proscribed and condemned race, ignorant to a deplorable degree, believing in witchcraft, blindly obedient to the orders of their chiefs, subject to extraordinary privations, and constantly exposed to danger from their fellow-creatures, and from the ferocity of the wild beasts, with whom they shared the forests, the *Bhills* have, in consequence, become the enemies of order and peace. They have cherished predatory habits, as the means of subsistence; and receiving no mercy, or consideration, they have sought, from natural impulse, to revenge the wrongs they have sustained. Time has interwoven their habits of life, and feelings, with their superstitions, until they actually believe, that they were created to prey upon their neighbours. "I am *Mahádéva's* thief," is the common answer of a *Bhill*, detected in a crime; and his promise of amendment is usually so qualified, as to period,† that it seems more like a truce, than a pact of permanent good conduct. Nevertheless, from what has

* Vide Central India, Vol. II. p. 223.

† "I will not rob, during your *rāj* (government)," was the invariable answer I received from a *Bhill*, when I desired a pledge of future good conduct.

occurred, since this tribe became subject to the British Government, we may anticipate a gradual, and, ultimately, a complete, change in their character and condition. The men, though habituated to a life of rapine, are not sanguinary; and the females of the tribe, who possess great influence over them,* are of kind dispositions: and many of them are intelligent and industrious.

To reclaim this race (I speak from much reflection, and considerable experience), they must be treated with great attention to their prejudices and condition. Reform with them, as with all such classes, must commence with their superiors. We cannot break the link, by which they are attached to their chiefs; and if we could, it would not be wise, or desirable, to do so. We must endeavour, by every act, to elevate the *Bhills* in the community, and to raise them in their own esteem, or else we cannot succeed in altering their habits. We must, by making roads through their hills and forests, by employing them in honest occupations, by establishing markets for the produce of the tracts they inhabit, bring this race into daily and familiar intercourse with those, among whom they live. When compelled to punish their outrages, the punishment falls on the leader, and not on the devoted follower, who executes a crime by his command. While we use preventive means to check and eradicate their evil habits, we must temper our firmness with mercy, taking care, however, that certain rules should never be infringed, and that protection and punishment should be alike certain, when merited. But above all, the object should be, to give to this hitherto injured race, a stake in the general prosperity; and then, and not before, we may rest satisfied that they will become the defenders, instead of the disturbers, of the general welfare. These are not idle speculations. The system here recommended has been acted upon,† and the

* The *Bhill* women have better habits than the men; but, in justice to the latter, I must say, that I have seen singular instances of affection, and attachment to their families. During the pursuit of some *Bhills*, who had committed a robbery and murder, near *Nalcha*, their wives and children were discovered, by the cries of a child hid in a cavern, under some rocks. They were brought prisoners to me. I received them kindly, and having consulted with them what was best to be done, to induce the men to submission, I adopted the suggestion of an elderly female, wife of one of the principal men, and allowed several of the prisoners to join their fathers, and husbands, with whom they soon returned; and a very short negociation produced the unconditional surrender of the whole party.

† Vide Central India, Vol. II. p. 179, &c.

Bhills, on the right bank of the *Nermada*, as well as in many other parts, are now living in a state of peace and tranquillity ; and countries, through which (a few years back) an army was hardly a safe escort from their robberies, are now traversed by unarmed individuals. But we must not deceive ourselves, in thinking the effect will continue, when the cause is removed. Years must pass, before we shall be secure from the relapse of these, and other predatory tribes, into their former habits, if we relax in those measures, by which they have been reclaimed, and by which alone they can be kept in their improved condition.