

ANTHROPOLOGICAL PAPERS.

II.

THE VADÂRIS OF THE VILLAGES ROUND THE DEOLALI CAMP IN THE NASIK DISTRICT.

PRESIDENT—LT. COL. K. R. KIRTIKAR, I. M. S. (RETD).

(Read on 30th August 1911.)

As desired by the Government of Bombay¹, our Society had circulated, among district officers and others, who were thought to be likely to take an intelligent interest in the subject, the ethnographical questions framed by Mr. (now Sir) Denzil C. J. Ibbertson, Mr. John C. Nesfield and Mr. (now Sir) H. N. Risley (general series forming Part II. to Mr. Risley's glossary). In response to our circulatory letter, some of the district officers had kindly sent us communications on some of the castes in their district. Some of these communications were read before our Society and published in the Journal.² Mr. S. M. Edwardes, our ex-President, had, as the City Census Officer for the census of 1901, asked, at the instance, if I do not mistake, of Mr. Enthoven, the then Provincial Census Commissioner and our present President, for all the above communications and they were all sent to him.

¹ The correspondence on this subject began with a Government letter dated 11th December 1891, and ended with their letter dated 31st August 1894.

² Vol. III No. 8, p. 471., Vol. IV., Nos. 7 and 8, Vol. V, Nos. 1 and 2.

I had the pleasure of placing before the Society, on two former occasions, two papers based on the lines of the above ethnographical questions. They were the following :—

1 “The Dhankars and Dhavars of Mahableshtar,” read on the 28th of November 1894 and published in the Journal, Vol., III, No. 8, of the Society.

2. “The Thakurs of Matheran,” read on 30th January 1901 and published in the Journal, Vol. V, No. 8.

My papers on “The Todas of the Nilgiris,” read on 24th February 1904, and published in the Journal Vol. VII, No.1, and on “The Kolis of Bassein,” read on 25th July 1906, and published in the Journal, Vol. VII, No. 8, were not the results of long inquiries, based on the above ethnographical questions, but were rather collections of notes collected during short flying visits to Ootacamund and Bassein. My paper this evening is the result of a regular inquiry.

My proposed visit to Persia, last April, having fallen through, owing to my sudden illness at Kurrachee, I had to return to Bombay under some disappointment. I then spent a part of my leave at Matheran and Deolali to recover my health. At the latter place, I took pleasure in my morning walks to the adjoining villages. During my visits to these villages, the Vadāri tribe, of which only a few persons live there, drew my special attention. I propose giving a few particulars of this tribe in this paper.

What drew my attention to this tribe was this: In the outskirts of most of these villages, I found a number of pigs, just as we see in the villages of the Salsette district near Bombay, which are principally inhabited by the Firanghees or the native Christians, who eat pork. The villages in the Nasik District of which Deolali forms a part, are mostly inhabited by Hindus who do not eat pork. The Mahomedans also, who form a part of the population of the district, do not eat pork. So, the presence of these animals in this village struck me, and led to inquiries, which pointed to the presence, here and there, in the district, of the Vadaris who are the owners of the pigs.

I have collected my information during my visits to the following villages round about the Camp of Deolali :—

- 1 देवलादी गाभ, The village of Deolali about two miles from the camp, on the road leading to Nasik.
- 2 ईद Id, a village near Deolali village and standing on this side of the river which separates these two villages.
- 3 भगुर Bhagur, a village situated about a mile from the camp, on this side of the Darna River.
- 4 शेगवा Shegwa, about a mile from the Deolali camp and situated near Dhondi-âbâd, founded by Mr. Sohrabji Kharshedji Dhondi of Bombay.
- 5 वदनेर Vadner, on the Vâldevi (वाल्देवी) river, about two miles from the camp.
- 6 सौंसारी Saunsari, about a mile from the camp, on the other side of the Railway line, crossed at the first crossing after the Deolali station near Dr. Bapuji P. Narielwala's Convalescent Home.
- 7 बेलतगांभ्या Bellat-gaum, at the distance of about two miles and a half from the camp and on the other side of the Railway, crossed at the second crossing opposite Mr. Batliwala's bungalow on the Nasik Road.
- 8 चेरी Cherry, on the bank of the Dârnâ, about three miles from the camp, on the other side of the Railway line, crossed at the third crossing from the Railway station. A *pucca* metalled road from the Nasik Road station-crossing, also leads to the village, near which the river is crossed by a ferry boat, driven by the current of the river when flooded and controlled by a bridged rope.
- 9 नाना Nânâ, about two miles from the camp, on the other bank of the river Dârnâ, to be crossed at about a mile from the pumping station which pumps water from the river for the use of the camp.

- 10 शेवगा Shevgâ, about three miles from the camp, on the opposite side of the Dârnâ River. It can be approached from Nânâ.
- 11 लावरी Lâvri, about three miles from the camp, on the opposite bank of the Dârnâ River near the village of Bhagur. A ferry boat runs between the two banks near Bhagur when the river is flooded.
- 12 नादगाव्या Nad-gaum, about 9 miles from the camp, near the Dârnâ river dam, lately built in connection with the Godavery canal scheme. A walk of about two miles and a half, on a pretty good road, from Asvali, the station next to Deolali on the Bombay side, leads one to this village and to the great dam, which is worth seeing.¹ Near this village, there was, during the time of my visit, a special camp of the Vadâris, who had collected for the work over the dam.

As required by the framers of the above-said set of questions, I note here, the sources, *i.e.*, the names of the parties, from whom I principally collected my information.

1. मलारी Malâri, son of बापु Bapu, son of दासापा Dâsâpâ, aged about 50, who lives at Bhagur with his family and relations, in a set of three huts just near the entrance to the village from the Deolali camp, and on this side of the railway crossing. He is the Vadâri of Bhagur, Shegwâ, Lâvri and Dhondwâdâ. At present, he has his pigs only at the first two villages, and not in the last two, because, as he says, these villages are small and the people complain of the damage done to their crops by the pigs.

2. Bhimâji, son of Râvjee, son of Ittoobâ, aged 40, living in the Vadâri camp at the Dârnâ dam near Nâdgâum.

¹ Bullock carts can be had from the village by previous arrangement through the station-master of Asvali. I note here, my obligation to Rao Saheb Narayan Vishnu Barve, Sub-Engineer in charge of the Dârnâ dam, for the courtesy kindly displayed in showing me the dam. This visit to the dam enabled me to see the Vadâri camp there.

3. Rakhmi, the wife of Shetiba, the head man of the above camp of Vadâris. Shetiba was absent from the camp.

4. Parbuttee, the wife of Shimâ (or Chuma as the people of the village of Saunsâri called him), who was absent from his house at Shevgâ. Shimâ is the Vadâri of Nânâ, Shevgâ, Bellatgaum, Saunsâri and Shindi.

Before I give my account of the tribe in the order of the ethnographical questions referred to above, I will note here, the relationship, if I may so use the word, that exists between the Vadâri of a particular village and the village itself. The Vadâri is the owner of a number of pigs, which he distributes in more than one adjoining village, of which he is said to be the special Vadâri. The pigs feed on the rubbish, or, as the villagers term it, the मेल (melâ) (filth), thrown on the outskirts of the villages and thus do a good deal of the scavenger's work. Thus, both parties are benefited. The villagers are benefited from a health point of view, and the Vadaris are saved the expense of feeding the pigs. They breed and eat the pigs and even sell them. But the villagers say, that the benefit is rather more on the other side, *i.e.*, to the Vadâris, because, the pigs, not only feed on the filth of the village, but, at times make inroads upon their crops in the fields round about, and, at times, even upon some eatables, in their houses. So, they claim some small service from the Vadâri, and it is this: the Vadâri is bound to look to the state of the roads—if that word can be properly used in the case of the pathways of the villages—of the streets of the village, and of the roads leading from village to village. Again, he is also bound to do the outside *mâti* work of the village temple, which is generally the Maroti temple, *i.e.*, when any earthen patch work to the outside walls of the temples is to be done, he has to do it. He has to do both these works, free of cost. Thus when his pigs do the Health Department's work, he personally does the Public Works Department's work. The Vadâri does other private work also, especially the *mâti* or earth-work of individual villagers, but in that

case, he is paid either in kind or in money. All the above work not being heavy, one Vadâri is in charge of more than a village. He is spoken of as being a Vadâri of such and such villages. The particular Vadâri of the village only can do the above work. He only has that privilege and no other Vadâri can encroach upon that privilege. When the Vadâri of a village dies, his heir succeeds him. For example, in the village of Vadner on the bank of the Vâldevi river, the Vadâri in charge being dead, his wife Rakhmi has her pigs there and acts as the Vadâri of the village. The above work is not their only work. After attending to the above work, which requires their services occasionally they are at liberty to do other work, which is generally that of ordinary labourers.

In the case where a Vadâri has no pigs grazing or feeding in a particular village, the villagers pay him in kind for his labour in connection with the public work of the village, *viz.* the reparation of the roads and of the temple walls.

I now proceed to give an account of this tribe, following the order of the ethnographical questions, above referred to.

1. The name of the caste is वदारी Vadâri.¹

¹ While collecting my notes at Deolali, I had inquired from Deolali from my assistant, Mr. F. M. Pavri, if our Society had received any paper on the Vadâris in this series of monographs published by the Department of the Ethnographical Survey of Bombay, conducted under the superintendence of our President, Mr. Enthoven, and was answered in the negative. I then worked up my paper from my notes. On my return to Bombay, I inquired of our President, if he knew of any monograph on the caste. After some inquiries, he wrote to me, that there was no monograph on the Vadâris, but kindly sent me a monograph on a tribe called "Od, Vadda, or Baldar," perhaps suspecting, that the Vadâris may be the same as Od, Vadda or Baldar. On looking into the paper, I found that the tribe was the same. I had thought of reading my paper at the last meeting, but on receiving the above monograph, only a few days before the day of the meeting, I postponed the reading until I went into the monograph. I have done so subsequently, and have found, that though the monograph and my paper are both on the subject of the same tribe, the particulars collected are, in several respects, different. I thought my paper may be taken as a supplement to the monograph and

2. The sub-divisions of the caste are—

(a) माटी वदारी Mâti-Vadâri, *i. e.*, the Vadâris who generally do the *mâti* or earth-work.

(b) गारी वदारी Gari Vadâri, *i. e.*, the Vadâris who do the work of carrying loads in *gârris* or carts.

(c) पथरा वदारी Pâthrat Vadâri, *i. e.*, the Vadâris who do the *pathar* or stone work, such as that of breaking stones, or of ordinary masons. The Vadâris of this third sub-division are also called चक्की वदारी Chakki Vadâris, *i. e.*, mill-stone Vadâris, because they generally prepare the grinding stones (chakkis) used in Indian houses. The Nasik Gazetteer (Vol. XVI, p. 64), which contains a few lines about the Vadâris, gives the name of this third sub-division as Jât. I did not hear this name in my inquiries, and so, am not in a position to give the meaning of the term.

There is free intermarriage between all these sub-divisions. Again, members of each sub-division marry among themselves also, *e. g.*, a *Mâti-Vâdari* can marry a woman of his own sub-division.

5. There is no prohibition of intermarriage among the sub-divisions, based upon social status, geographical or local position, and differences of religious beliefs or practices or differences or changes of occupation.

6. The Vadâris, in the camp at the Dârnâ dam have gone there from the district of Poona, and mostly from the villages of Siswad and Pimpri in that district. As told by Malâri, the Vadâri of Bhagur, their tradition is, that they all belonged to the Carnatic. This is borne out by the fact, that, though they all speak the Marathi language out of home with others, they speak at home the Telugu language which is the language,

may give materials to a future Superintendent of the survey, for a fuller monograph. I consulted our learned President at the last meeting, whether, under the circumstances, I could read the paper and he kindly advised me to do so. Hence this paper, which I beg to submit before the Society, as said above, as a supplement to the monograph.

generally spoken in the Carnatic. They have no knowledge of the approximate time of their emigration, as marked by the reign of any particular king. They do not even know the name of our present Emperor.

7. The habit of the caste is wandering. They point to the Poona district as their head-quarters. Their migrations are not periodical but are irregular. They move about in large numbers wherever some earth-work or stone-work requires their services. For example, the people of the Vadâri camp at the Dârnâ dam had mostly come from the Poona district, where they all would return on the completion of the dam work, if not required elsewhere. The Nasik Gazetteer (Vol. XVI, p. 64), which speaks of them in a few lines, says that they are believed to have come from Pandharpur, Sholapur, Satara and Jamkhandi. I did not hear the names of these districts in the villages round Deolali.

The habit of the particular Vadâris, attached, as said above, to particular villages, can be said to be half-settled and half-migratory—half-settled, in so far, that they cannot go far away from the villages which are in their charge as Vadâri; and half migratory, in so far, that they have to go from village to village, to look occasionally after their pigs and to attend to the reparation of the public roads and temples of the villages.

The shape of their dwellings is like that of the *râotîs* or small tents, used in camps as cook-rooms, or as servants' quarters. Some of them are not as large as *râotîs*. The materials, of these dwellings consist of a kind of reed and grass, of which some mattings for floors of rooms are made. These dwellings or huts are easily removeable. The sides or walls consist of a tied framé-work. So, when the hut has to be removed, one has to remove the frame-work sides or walls. Each family has one or more huts of that kind. Some of the farmers of the Nasik District also have their temporary huts of that shape, but they are made up of slips of thin bamboos interwoven with hay. A comfortable removable hut of that kind can be purchased ready-made for about Rs 6 to 8.

The Vadāris generally have dogs, some of them very ferocious to guard their huts. They have also donkeys to carry loads of earth and stone.

Some Vadāris, for example the Vadāri of Bhagur, have their dwellings of a more *pucca* kind in a particular village, as their head-quarters.

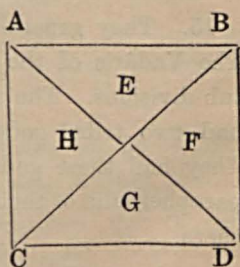
8. They do not admit outsiders into their caste.

9. Infant marriages are permitted. The fathers of girls are paid, at times, sums, up to Rs. 100. If the husband is poor, he does not pay at once, but marries on certain conditions. He lives with his wife at his father-in-law's and works for him. He pays to him, whatever he earns until he pays off the whole of the stipulated sum. On paying off that sum, he is at liberty to go with his wife and children to his parents' house or to put up in a separate house. Sexual license before marriage is not tolerated.

10. Polygamy is permitted but not polyandry. Shimâ, the Vadāri of Shevga, Nânâ, Bellat-gaum, etc., has two wives. He has provided a separate hut for both and has children by both wives.

11. The marriage ceremony is performed by a headman of the caste, whom they call *mukhtâr* মুখতার. At times, the Hindu Brahmin sees the *murat* or the auspicious occasion for the marriage.

They form a square with grains of rice (vide adjoining figure). Two cross lines are drawn in the square also with grains of rice. At the four corners, A B, C and D of the square are placed four *lotās* or pots, which contain betel-leaves, betel-nuts, turmeric, etc. The number of betel-leaves in each pot is 5. In three of the sections, E, F and H of the square, formed by the cross lines of grain, two small heaps of grain are placed. In the 4th section, G, three heaps of grain are formed. The marrying couple



sit in the middle of the square ; then, the headman or *mukhtâr*, utters the name of Bhagvân, *i.e.*, God, and of four elders of the caste, and asks for their kalyân कल्याण *i.e.* blessings over the couple. Those present at the ceremony sprinkle rice over the couple, asking the blessings of Prabhu (God). Then, the couple turn five times round a small statuette of their god. Sometimes the marrying couple turns several times round the Hindu temple of Mâroti in the village. At times, the marriage ceremony is simpler than the above. According to the statement of Pârbatti, the wife of the above-named Vadâri, at times, the marriage ceremony is simply this : They bury in the ground, the thick piece of wood with which they pound rice, and then the husband, holding a hand of his wife goes round it 5 times. That finishes the ceremony.

12. Widow marriage, called मोहतुर (Mohtur) or नेकाह Nekâh, is permitted, but not with a brother of a deceased husband. It requires no ceremony other than the application of *peethee* (red pigment) to the marrying couple.

13. Divorce is permitted for adultery or for such other reasons. There is no particular form for it. Divorced wives may remarry.

14. The property of a deceased person is divided by the Panch of the caste, equally among the sons, but not among the daughters.

15. They generally worship their own tribal or caste gods. The Vadâris of the camp at the Dârnâ dam belonged to two sub-divisions. The *Mâti* Vadâri and the *Gâri* Vadâri. They had two tribal gods, (येकुबा) Yenkubâ and नरसुबा Narsubâ. They had these gods in their own huts. I saw the following paraphernalia of their god Narsubâ in a hut of one of the Vadâris there.

1. A metallic pot (डरसली),
2. A thin metallic rod (सली) with a canopy (छत्र) over it.

The canopy was known as (आबदगरी) Âb-dagri.

3. A metallic chain in the above pot. The chain had a crown-like coin. This coin represented their god Narsubâ.

16. Besides their own gods, they worship the village god of the Mahrâthi people, among whom they live. They pay homage to Mâroti and Khandobâ, especially to the former, because all the villages round Deolali have their Mâroti temples, and it is a part of the duty of the Vadâris of these villages to look to the reparation of the village temple wall. Tuesdays and Fridays are sacred for their worship of Khandobâ, and Saturdays and Sundays, for that of their own Marâi or Mahaluxmee. Women are permitted to worship after a bath.

The Vadâri of Bhagur had his tribal gods in an inner dark room of his hut. He had a small vertical box there, which contained a small statuette of what he called Mahaluxmee, the other name of which was (मरिच) Marâi. There was a similar box standing by its side, containing a similar statuette. The first box was his own. The second was that of his father. A Vadâri, if he can afford to keep and attend to such tribal gods at home, does so. A son, on separating from his father and putting up a new house, does so. Malâri, the Vadâri of Bhagur, of whom I speak, had set up in his own house a cage-like box for the worship of his god Marâi or Mahaluxmee. When his father died, he thought it a point of honour to bring up his father's box of the Marâi or Mahaluxmee idol also to his own house. So, now, he attends to both the gods and makes the necessary worship (युग युक्ति) of both. A flag is hoisted outside his house in honour of his god.

17. They do not employ Brahmins for religious or ceremonial purposes, except this, that, at times, they consult them to know the days that are auspicious for marriages and to know whether the couple has râç (रीच) *i.e.*, good luck to live happily.

18. They bury their dead with their heads pointing to the north and feet to the south.

19. They have no Shrâdh ceremony in honour of the dead ; but they perform some *punjâ pâtri* ceremony on the day of the death, and on the 13th day, and then do, what they call, *ଝିଲି ଧାନାଦା* (lit. to give bread) *i.e.*, feed the caste-men. That finishes the ceremony for the dead. They believe that for 13 days, the soul of the deceased moves about within the precincts of this world in the form of a bird, like the crow or the cock, or of an animal. Then it passes away to the next world.

20. They are not named after any animal, or plant. They are named Vadâri, perhaps from their migratory habit of moving about. If so, the word Vadâri comes from the Sanskrit root, *vah* (vad), to go, to move about, to wander). The subdivisions are named, as said above, from the various kinds of their work.

21. They do not know anything of the original occupation of their forefathers. They do all petty works as labourers. They are not agriculturists themselves, at least, in the district round about Deolali.

22. They hold no lands and are day-labourers. They are paid in money on excavation, reclamation, or building works but, in their works as village Vadâris, they are generally paid in kind, *i.e.*, in corn every year.

23. Some of them catch rats and eat them.

24. A part of the occupation of the village Vadâris, who are generally the *mâti* Vadâris is to breed pigs. As the eating of pigs is generally disliked, some of them, in order to show, that they are above the average and of a higher order, say, that they do not eat pork or pig flesh. For example, the Vadâris at the Dârnâ dam said, that they were all *gâri*-Vadâris and as such, as a body, did not breed or eat pigs. They further said, that they would not eat or intermarry with the *mâti*-Vadâris, who, as a rule, ate pork. But this seems to be a recent step, or a commencement in the direction of that step, to raise themselves in estimation among the people round about them. The *mâti*-Vadâris of Bhagur and other villages near Deolali

said that the above *gâri-Vadâris* said a falsehood, if they gave the above version of their food, etc.

25. They do not habitually prostitute their married or unmarried women.

26. They eat all articles of food, except beef, or as they called it, the flesh of mother-cow and the flesh of monkeys. The special article of food, the abstaining from which they thought would raise them, was, as said above, the pork, which the *gâri-Vadâris* now seem to leave off eating.

27. They will not eat the *pakki* (cooked food) from the hands of the *Mâhârs* and *Dheds*, but would eat that from the hands of the *Mahrathis* and other high-caste Hindus. They do not eat that from *Mahomedans*. They would have a non-smoked *bidi* from others, but not one that is partly smoked. The same is the case with wine, which they would not drink from a cup from which one of another caste has drunk partly. Such wine they speak of as being (*జుఠా*) *jutha* i.e., false or tainted.

The following are a few lines of their cradle song I heard at *Shevgâ*.

దయమా కుయమా

కుయమా దయమా

నానా రామా దాదామా

పదాపా పదాపా

My baby!

Come here, go there.

Go there, come here.

My boy! Why do you not sleep?

Go to sleep, go to sleep.

The following is the purport of a cradle song in their Telugu language, which I heard at the *Vadâri* camp, at the *Dârna* dam:

My child! Your father has gone to work. He will return soon; so, kindly go to sleep early. I have much work to do.

Your father, on return, will beat me, if I will not do that work. Therefore, my child, go to sleep, go to sleep. (वदारी वदारी)¹

MR. OTTO ROTHFELD'S REMARKS ON THE PAPER.

Mr. Otto Rothfeld, I.C.S., who presided at the meeting said the Society was obliged to the Hon. Secretary for a very exact and scientific paper. With all deference, however, he ventured, to doubt the possibility of a Sanskrit derivation of the name Vadâri or Vadda. He had listened, with great interest (as they all had), to the analysis of the place of the pig as an economic factor in a Deccan village. Previously, he had considered the pig as a factor of economic importance in Ireland only. Mr. Modi had, however, stopped at the economic pig and had not gone on to discuss the succulent rodent. Now, Mr. Rothfeld's own connection with Vaddas depended upon rats. In 1902-03, there had been the famous rat-famine in Gujarat. Mr. Cadell, then Collector of the Panch Mahals, imported two Vadda families to show the villagers, how to kill the rats that were destroying their crops. The operations of the Vaddas were most interesting. Observation showed that they were able, with almost exact accuracy, to tell, on inspecting a hole, how many rats there were within it, or when the hole had been vacated. At the most, they made a mistake of a baby rat or two. Then they knelt beside the hole and by rubbing the nail of their thumb and second finger together made a slight noise which appeared to attract the rats. As they made the sound, the rats, marched out quietly in single file, and each one, as it left the hole, was nipped by the Vadda's left fingers and tossed aside with a broken neck. The closing scene was a dainty rat-stew. Mr. Rothfeld

¹ After the Paper was read, while going over the old Volumes of the Journal, to prepare "A Short History of the Society," for the Silver Jubilee Volume, my attention has been drawn to Etnographical Notes on the same tribe, from the Collector of Sholapur, read before the Society, at its meeting of 25th April 1900, and published in the Journal of the Society, Vol. V, No. 6, pp. 376-379.

only regretted that, at this stage, the spirit of scientific experiment had abandoned him and he had not partaken of rat-stew. Mr. Rothfeld was of opinion that there was no connection of race between the Odhs of Gujarat and the Vaddas of the South, and considered that this was proved by the prohibition of widows marrying their husband's brother among the Southern Vaddas, while in Gujarat the *Levirate* was the rule. He imagined that the Vaddas were an aboriginal Dravidian caste of the South, like most of the Shudra castes in Madras. He suggested, that the origin of the cast-system in India, as it is now known, may most probably be traced to that Dravidian race; as caste is found also in Polynesia, where the inhabitants are closely connected by race. And he was of opinion that the origin of most castes may more reasonably be traced to the Dravidian race than to Manu's famous abstraction from reality of the four castes.