

Bhil

Introduction:

The **Indian** subcontinent **caste system** describes the social stratification and social restriction, in which social classes are defined by thousands of endogamous hereditary groups, often termed as **Jatis** or **Castes**. Within a jati, there exist exogamous groups known as **Gotras**, the lineage or clan of an individual, although in a handful of sub-castes, endogamy within a gotra is permitted and alternative mechanisms of restricting endogamy are used (e.g. banning endogamy within a surname).

Indian caste system is **3,000 year old**, a pernicious practice that discriminates against nearly a fourth of the country's billion-plus population. The caste system was described in Hinduism's ancient sacred text, the **Rig Veda**, as a social order intended to maintain harmony in society. It divides people into four main castes, but there also are those outside the system, the ``untouchables," who now call themselves ``Dalits," literally ``broken people."

Although generally identified with Hinduism, the caste system was also observed among followers of other religions in the Indian subcontinent, including some groups of Muslims and Christians.

There is no universally accepted theory about the origin of the Indian caste system. The Indian classes are similar to the **ancient Iranian classes** ("*pistras*"), wherein the priests are Athravans, the warriors are Rathaestha, the merchants are Vastriya, and the artisans are Huiti. If we look into the history then we will come to know that many invaders came from the way to Iran. We have an example of **Alexander** the great who came in this region from the Iran and in his armies the Iranians were present and he also married with an Iranian princess. The conflict had started from that time because Europeans and so many other people of different races came in this region. However, a **2001** genetic study, led by **Michael Bamshad** of the **University of Utah**, found that the affinity of Indians to

Europeans is proportionate to caste rank, the upper castes being most similar to Europeans. The researchers believe that the Indo-Aryans entered India from the Northwest and may have established a caste system, in which they placed themselves primarily in higher castes." Because the Indian samples for this study were taken from a single geographical area, it remains to be investigated whether its findings can be safely generalized.

A **2006** study by **Ismail Thanseem** et al. of **Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (India)** concluded that the "lower caste groups might have originated with the hierarchical divisions that arose within the tribal groups with the spread of Neolithic agriculturalists, much earlier than the arrival of Aryan speakers", and "the Indo-Europeans established themselves as upper castes among this already developed caste-like class structure within the tribes." The study indicated that the Indian caste system may have its roots much before the arrival of the Indo-Aryans; a rudimentary version of the caste system may have emerged with the shift towards cultivation and settlements, and the divisions may have become more well-defined and intensified with the arrival of Indo-Aryans.

Several critics of Hinduism state that the caste system is rooted in the varna system mentioned in the ancient Hindu scriptures.

In *Early Evidence for Caste in South India*, George L. Hart stated that "the earliest Tamil texts show the existence of what seems definitely to be caste, but which antedates the Brahmins and the Hindu orthodoxy". He believes that the origins of the caste system can be seen in the "belief system that developed with the agricultural civilization", and was later profoundly influenced by "the Brahmins and the Brahmanical religion". These early Tamil texts also outline the concept of equality.

Fa Hien, a Buddhist pilgrim from China, visited India around 400 AD. *"Only the lot of the Chandals he found unenviable; outcastes by reason of their degrading work as disposers of dead, they were universally shunned... But no other section of the population*

was notably disadvantaged, no other caste distinctions attracted comment from the Chinese pilgrim, and no oppressive caste 'system' drew forth his surprised censure."

The castes did not constitute a rigid description of the occupation or the social status of a group. Since British society was divided by class, the British attempted to equate the Indian caste system to their own social class system. They saw **caste as an indicator of occupation**, social standing, and intellectual ability. Intentionally or unintentionally, the caste system became more rigid during the British Raj, when the British started to enumerate castes during the ten year census and codified the system under their rule.

Historically, the caste system offered several advantages to the population of the Indian subcontinent. While Caste is nowadays seen by instances that render it anachronistic, in its original form, the caste system served as an important instrument of order in a society where mutual consent rather than compulsion ruled; where the ritual rights as well as the economic obligations of members of one caste or sub-caste were strictly circumscribed in relation to those of any other caste or sub-caste; where one was born into one's caste and retained one's station in society for life; where merit was inherited, where equality existed within the caste, but inter-caste relations were unequal and hierarchical. A well-defined system of mutual interdependence through a division of labour created security within a community. In addition, the division of labour on the basis of ethnicity allowed immigrants and foreigners to quickly integrate into their own caste niches. The caste system played an influential role in shaping economic activities. The caste system functioned much like medieval European guilds, ensuring the division of labour, providing for the training of apprentices and, in some cases, allowing manufacturers to achieve narrow specialisation. For instance, in certain regions, producing each variety of cloth was the speciality of a particular sub-caste. Also, philosophers argue that the majority of people would be comfortable in stratified endogamous groups, and have been in ancient times. Membership in a particular caste, with its associated narrative, history and genealogy, would instill in its members a sense of group accomplishment and cultural pride. Such sentiments are routinely expressed by the Marathas, Rajputs, Iyers for instance.

According to some psychologists, mobility across broad caste lines may have been "minimal", though sub-castes (jatis) may change their social status over the generations by fission, re-location, and adoption of new rituals.

During the British Raj, this sentiment gathered steam, and many Hindu reform movements such as Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj renounced caste-based discrimination. The inclusion of so-called untouchables into the mainstream was argued for by many social reformers. Mahatma Gandhi called them "Harijans" (children of God) although that term is now considered patronizing and the term Dalit ("downtrodden") is the more commonly used. Gandhi's contribution toward the emancipation of the untouchables is still debated, especially in the commentary of his contemporary Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, an untouchable himself, who frequently saw Gandhi's activities as detrimental to the cause of upliftment of his people.

British society was divided by class, the British attempted to equate the Indian caste system to the class system. They saw **caste as an indicator of occupation**, social standing, and intellectual ability. During the initial days of the British East India Company's rule, caste privileges and customs were encouraged,^[46] but the British law courts disagreed with the discrimination against the lower castes. However, British policies of **divide and rule** as well as enumeration of the population into rigid categories during the 10 year census contributed towards the hardening of caste identities.

The caste system has also been criticized by many Indian social reformers. Some reformers, such as Jyotirao Phule and Iyothee Thass argued that the lower caste people were the original inhabitants of India, and were conquered in the ancient past by "Brahmin invaders." *Mahatma Gandhi* coined the term "**Harijan**", a euphemistic word for *untouchable*, literally meaning *Sons of God*.

Allegations that caste amounts to race were addressed and rejected by B.R. Ambedkar, an advocate for Dalit rights and critic of untouchability. He wrote that

"The Brahmin of Punjab is racially of the same stock as the Chamar (Dalit) of Punjab. The Caste system does not demarcate racial division. Caste system is a social division of people of the same race",

Such allegations have also been rejected by many sociologists such as Andre Béteille, who writes that treating caste as a form of racism is "politically mischievous" and worse, "scientifically nonsensical" since there is no discernible difference in the racial characteristics between Brahmins and Scheduled Castes. He writes that "Every social group cannot be regarded as a race simply because we want to protect it against prejudice and discrimination".

Pakistani-American sociologist Ayesha Jalal also rejects these allegations. In her book, *"Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia"*, she writes that "As for Hinduism, the hierarchical principles of the Brahmanical social order have always been contested from within Hindu society, suggesting that equality has been and continues to be both valued and practiced."

In India, some observers felt that the caste system must be viewed as a system of exploitation of poor low-ranking groups by more prosperous high-ranking groups. In many parts of India, land is largely held by high-ranking property owners of the dominant castes that economically exploit low-ranking landless labourers and poor artisans, all the while degrading them with ritual emphases on their so-called god-given inferior status.

Matt Cherry, claims that karma underpins the caste system, and the caste system traditionally determines the position and role of every member of Hindu society. Caste determines an individual's place in society, the work he or she may carry out, and who he or she may marry and meet. According to him, Hindus believe that the karma of previous life will determine the caste an individual will be (re)born into.

According to Stanford University scholar Oman Jain, there is no caste system currently in place in India.

Bhil:

The Bhils are the third largest tribe in India after the Gonds and the Santhals. In the state of Madhya Pradesh, they are prominently found in the Dhar, Jhabua, and West Nimar regions. Anthropologists believe that the word Bhil is derived from the Dravidian word *bil* or *vil*, meaning a bow.

The name Bhil has derived from beel, **the bow**. The Bhil People were ancient warriors of Bharat and they were archers. They also began to recognize as **Dhanushveer (bowmen)**.

So, now they are called Bhil People.

Bhil is not a caste. Bhil was name of the tribe of Bhil People. Later on, people began to call them Bhil. Bhil are the greatest archer in this world.

Time is changing for Bhil People. They are getting education. But, most of the Bhil People are still very poor and uneducated. There are many divisions of Bhil People. Still, many Bhil People move from one place to other for their livings.

Historical Background:

Bhils are a tribal people of Central India. They speak Bhil languages, a group of Indic languages. Bhils are also settled in Tharparkar, Umer Kot, Mir Pur Khas districts of Sindh and Rahim Yar Khan of Punjab in Pakistan.

The history of the Bhil is 5000 years BC old. Their presence and name has been discussed in the religious books of the Hindu Dharam. The man who wrote “Ramayan” the first book about the history of Hindu religion was Swami Balmik Bhil. According to myth of the Hindu Religion the first person on the earth which was created by the God was the Brahma, the second was Vishnu and the third was the Shiva. Bhil claim them as the decedents of the god Shiva. The three main Hindu groups are on the name of these three gods and in the religious and social hierarchy which are!

Brahma=Brahmans

Vishni=Vesh

Shiva=Shoodras

Long long time ago, God Bhairoo or Shiva was resting around his home. God Shiva had one holy baal (ox) and the name of this ox was Varishbha. One of innocent son of God Shiva stole his ox (baal). Later on, the holy ox was killed by his son. At this hateful act of his son, God Bhairoo (Shiva) had abandoned his son. God Shiva had dispelled his son to the vast forest and mountains. Son of Shiva went to vast plains and forests. At that time, there were very few villages in those plains and mountains. The innocent son of God Bhairoo (Shiva) began to live in one of the village of mountains next to forest plains. The son of God Shiva married to village woman. The descendents of this son of God Bhairoo (Shiva) were Bheel. So, the grand children of God Shiva were Bheel.

Social Hierarchy & Stratification Table

Brahmans

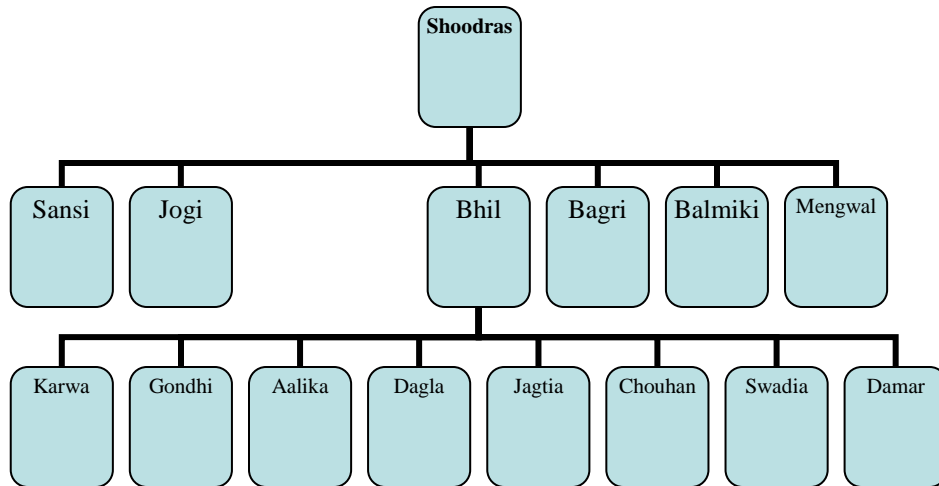


Khashatrias



Vesh





Although empirical evidence is lacking, the Bhil are credited with the earliest occupation of their area; with successive Immigrations of Rajputs and conflicts with periodic waves of Muslim invaders believed to have driven them farther into the refuge of the forested central Indian highlands. The Rajputs, in feuds, periods of truce, and even alliances against the Muslims, were a constant source of interaction. By the end of the tenth century, most of Rewakantha was under the rule of either Bhil or Koli (a neighboring tribal group) chieftains. Between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries, the Bhil were supplanted by chiefs of Rajput or mixed descent. In recognition of the Bhil's prior occupation of the land, many Rajput ascensions of the throne in recent times necessitated validation by the performance of a *tika* or consecration ceremony, by representatives of the Bhil chiefs of the area. Around 1480, Rewakantha came under Muslim administration, leading to conversion to Islam among many Bhils. However, these Tadvi Bhils, as they came to be known, maintain many of the traditions as well as the religious beliefs of the past. A Political system of rulership is ascribed to the Bhils from the earliest times. From the sixteenth century, which coincides with the Rajput supplantation, the Bhil political leadership fragmented into several chieftainships, leading to speculation that the Hindu encroachment, driving the Bhil into the hinterland, was a dynamic force that led to sociopolitical change. During the eighteenth century, deprived of their lands and finding their subsistence base greatly reduced, the Bhils resorted to looting and pillaging in large, armed bands. This led to conflict with the Maratha invaders and local

rulers who retaliated by attempting to eradicate them. The Bhils were killed by the hundreds, and the survivors took refuge even deeper in the hills; this move resulted in greater disintegration of their leadership but increasing self-reliance and Individualism. These developments are reflected in today's egalitarian structure of social relations, quite different from the system of rulership that is believed to have existed prior to the successive waves of immigration into Rewakantha. It took the intervention of the British imperial administration to restore peace and order in the Rewakantha territory, enticing the Bhils back through the extension of an amnesty and persuading them to settle down as cultivators. An agreement hammered out by a Mr. Willoughby, a British political agent and Kumar Vasava of Sagbara, a powerful Bhil chief, ensured a semiautonomous status for the Bhil under Rajput territorial administration and provided them with land for cultivation, loans with which to purchase seed and bullocks, as well as rights to resources of the forest. Similar pacts were worked out in Khandesh. At present, the Bhils are a settled agricultural people whose short history of brigandage undeservedly besmirches their image on occasion. Those who have lost their lands now work as laborers. Extensive deforestation that has now reduced the forest to portions of the eastern highlands has considerably diminished Bhil dependence on forest resources.

In feudal and colonial times, many Bhils were employed by the ruling Rajputs in various capacities, e.g. as Shikaris because of their knowledge of the terrain. Many had even become warriors in armies. They were in the Mewar army of Maharana Pratap Singh and like Chhatrapati Shivaji, were experts in guerilla warfare which the Mughals had so much trouble handling. Today, there is a *Mewar Bhil Corps*.

The Bhil people are highly skilled desert hunters; the art of hunting has been in their blood for many centuries. Although the government now forbids hunting, the Bhils secretly preserve their culture by venturing out at night to kill birds, rabbits and lizards with their hunting sticks. Their favorite target is the bountiful antelope population, prized for its plentiful, high-quality meat. Among the poorest people in India, few Bhil people own rifles or those who do can't afford the licenses or bullets. They fill rifles leftover from their mercenary work with black powder, stones and glass debris and hunt under cover of darkness.

Bhil Rajas:

Dungar Raj:

Dungaria Bheel (Bhil) was one of the great warrior and king of Bheel people. During 1345 ADE, Dungaria Bhil was the king of Dungar Region, west central part of the Vagad Region. Life of Dungaria Bhil was full of adventures. The Kingdom of Dungaria was flourishing and his people were brave archer. Even today, Dungaria Bhil is popular in the cultural stories of Rajasthan.

Around 1358 ADE, Dungaria Bhil wanted to marry the daughter of Mahajan Sala Shah, businessman. Sala Shah had agreed about the marriage of his daughter with Dungaria. But, Sala Shah conspired with Maharawal Veer Singh against Dungaria. On the wedding day Dungaria was intoxicated and assassinated by Veer Singh and Sala Shah.

There were two widows of Dungaria Bhil. It was the will of Dungaria's widows and his people to establish a town after his name. Dungarpur was established in the name of Dungaria Bhil in 1358. It was in Dungarpur where Dungaria Bhil was assassinated. Dungaria was a brave man and great warrior of Bhil people.

Nowadays, Dungarpur is a small southern district of Rajasthan. Dungarpur is still a part of Bagar or Vagad Region.

I believe that "The day will come when Bheel People will live in peace with all kinds of Hindi People in Bharat. Bheel People will have their own homes and respect in the society just like other simple Hindi (hindu) People".

In old days, Bheel and Meena People were treated as lower social class people. Bheel and Meena People were discriminated and hated by some Rajput People, higher social class. That is why Dungaria was killed by Rajput People. "Classism is just an excuse in Bharat, jealousy and greed are the motives to depress people of lower social class",

Bansi Raj:

Bansia was other powerful warrior and king of Bheel People. Bansia was a nice king of Bansi Region, an area controlled and ruled by Bansia. Bansi Raj (kingdom) was an eastern part of Vagad Region. People of Bansi Raj were great devotees of God Bhairoo.

The life of Bansi was not very different than the Dungaria Bheel. Around 1529 ADE, Bansi was killed by other Rawal Jagmal Singh who occupied the kingdom of Bansia. Most of the Bheel People were very nice and descent, but their kindness had no value for powerful greedy people.

Banswara was named after Bansia, the king of Bheel People. Most of the Bheel People and great Bheel Kings were killed by many Rajput Kings due to greediness and jealousy. Now, most of the Bheel People are poor and homeless. Bheel People are kept poor so that they can serve to greedy people. The land of Bheel People had taken away by greedy Rajput kings.

Kotia Raj:

Kotia Raj (kingdom) was among the famous kingdoms of Bheel People. Kotia Bheel was one of the genius warrior kings of Bheel People and Rajasthan. Kotia Bheel was a king of Akelgarh and Kotia Raj, region ruled by Kotia. Akelgarh is located on eastern side of Chambel River (nadi).

Kotia Bheel was a genius general with great military skills. Kotia had built a fort at Akelgarh and erected a mud wall ranging from Akelgarh to Retwali. Kotia knew that fortification was necessary for his kingdom and people. Jait Sing had raised a war against Kotia Bheel and his people in 1264 ADE.

Kotia Raj was not a powerful kingdom compare to Bundi Raj (kingdom). Jait Singh had conquered the Akelgarh and Kotia Raj. Later on, Kotia region began to known as Kota. Kota had become part of Bundi, a Kingdom of Hadoti. Kotia Raj was a great kingdom of Bheel People.

In 1579 ADE, Kota was separated by Rao Ratan Singh as a gift to his younger son, Madho Singh. And, Kota becomes separate kingdom from Hadoti.

Bhil rebellion:

Bhil raised their voices against the caste discrimination during (1822–1857) and the second Bhil rebellion, begun by Tantya Tope in Banswara (1858). The Rajputs of Rajasthan were dominating and ruling that area and their behavior toward other Bhil was very discriminatory. They consider them the lowest cast mean shoodras that's why they started rebellion against the ruling casts at that time.

Social organization:

Bhil people practice the *Sonatan* religion, a form of Hinduism. Although they do not use the Hindu *veda* book, they pray to the same gods and worship cows. They venerate the prophet Bhapuji, a 15th century warrior known for his courage, and honor him once a month during a full moon celebration called *Jagaran*. Women are not allowed to attend these celebrations where male drummers called *bhoppas* play and sing all night to accompany the men as they dance around a large fire.

Bhopa:

Bhopas are the people who dance around the fire and perform different practices. They have concept that after performing it they get power from their **Devta** and they also get a signal from them and after performing what they demand from their Devta he gives it to them.

Some people believe in this concept but the people of *Sanatan* dharma do not believe in it. Sanatan dharma is form of Hindu religion which was get popular in the 15th century.

Family style:

Bhil people have totally nuclear family system in Pakistan. After marriage every individual lives in his own house with his bride. It is due to poor economic conditions because people wages are very low and with this low income they can run only one family. Male is the head of house hold and he earns the money while women stay at home and do the house jobs. Decisions are made by the male family member but it has great influence of female or wife on it.

Bhil men fervently protect the women in their families. No outside men are allowed in a family's house unless the women's male relatives invite them to enter. Men do not talk to women without permission from a man of the family. Women do not attend night celebrations to avoid male dancers who may get drunk and overly zealous. The overt practices of modesty begin at puberty. Most young married women must keep their faces covered all day, especially in the presence of their in-laws. Only women with grown children can be seen without a veil.

Houses:

Bhil live on the government and landlord lands. They are not allowed to make the permanent residences. Their houses are made of mud and wood. They do not use the bricks, cement or concrete houses because they have not any surety that when they have to leave their place and move to some other place. In other words Bhil are still in 21st century spending the semi nomadic life. I visited the villages in Sindh and Punjab where the housing of the Bhil were same. The other reason of making mud houses is the economic conditions of the Bhil. They are not as much stronger to bear the expenses of a concrete cement house. In a village where Bhil live together, their houses are open to each other. There are no walls between their houses. A family holds a house of two rooms and a kitchen. A house is usually made of 4 to 5 *Marlas*. They make external house wall with bushes. Their houses are made of few specific patterns which are:

Chuanra:

Chuanra is a room like cone which is made of mud and grass. Its roof is like tomb and its walls are made of mud. Its shape is like circular room. It uses mostly in the winter and rainy season and people get protection in this room.



A Chuanra in Valhar village in Umer Kot District.

Landhi:

Landhi or ***Kurh*** is the bedroom of house of these Bhil people. This room is also made of mud and its roof is made of grass and bushes. These are highly very low expensive and require less labour for accomplishment. Its roof is made of grass and bushes but it is totally water proof. The rain water does cross it and people sleep over here easily.



A Landhi or Kurh is behind the local people.

Bhil mostly live in groups. A group of 30 or above households lives on an area. It can be the government land or the local feudal lands. Their main occupation is to work in the fields or daily wages in the city or village. Mostly these people are belonging to the same clan having the same ancestor.

Water System:

The water supply system is different in the different areas. In Punjab or the areas where electricity is provided by the land lord; these people use to drink the water which they get from under water source through the pumps. In the desert areas of the Sindh specially in Nangar Parker and Tharparker people get water from the well or the place where the rain water gathers.



A well in Valhar village which is main source of water for this village.

In Valhar village, the well is 500meters away from the houses. It is totally a desert area where so many dangerous reptiles live but women and men came here in the dark night for getting water. These people have not even electricity and in the evening they use the candles and lamps for light.

Dresses:

The Bhil people in Pakistan are living mostly near the belt of Rajasthan. In India Bhil are in great in number in Rajasthan. Their dress pattern is similar as the people of that area use to wear. Male have not any specific dress but women have their own style which are also connected to their traditions. Bhil are mostly related to agriculture that why they use to wear the traditional peasant dress. The women dresses which they commonly use are:

Poontio:

It is also known as **Choli**. It is shirt which Bhil women use to wear. It is above the knees and women make it beautiful by making flower by hand and other designs. It is up to them to they want to make it. This poontio is half sleeves not full sleeves because women wear other jewelry along with this.



A Bhil woman in her traditional dress

Polka:

Polka is form of poontio but it consumes less cloth and less time and it is cheaper as compare to the poontio. It takes half an hour for preparation and mostly polka use the married women. The widow wears half black sleeves along with her polka. It is the sign that where she will go every one will come to know that she is widow and less respect she gets from the society.

Ghagro:

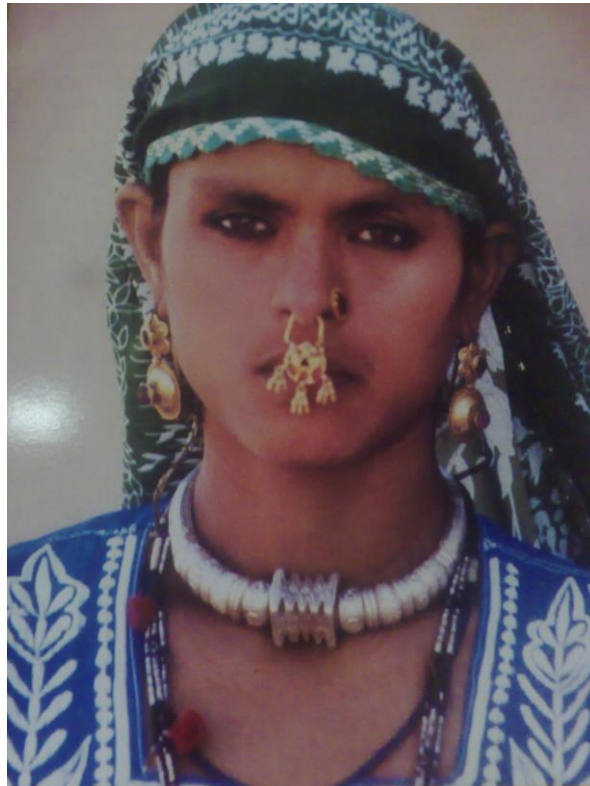
Ghagro is like trouser or lower which women wear with poontio or polka. It is totally open from its lower side. It is very comfortable for the women to movement from one place to another. These are also design by the women to make it more attractive and beautiful.

Ghoongat:

It is also named as dopata. This is like shawl and women cover their face and body with this. It is strictly practiced in the Bhil women that they always covered their faces from strangers and even from their cousins and other relatives.

Boola:

Boola is jewelry which women hang in the front side of their nose. It can be made of gold or silver. It depends on the economic conditions of that family. But in Pakistan less women use this type of jewelry because these are costly.



A Bhil girl with her jewelry

Popa:

Popa is jewelry which also use on the left or right side of nose. It is mostly made up of gold and it is like big coin of gold which women use.

Karian:

Karian is jewelry which women use on the upper side of feet. Usually these are made of silver.



A Bhil woman wearing Karian in her feet.

Churkay:

It is like bangles and Bhil women cover their arms with this. The unmarried girls cover only half sleeves they are not able to cover the whole. It is related with their customs and traditions. These are available in different colours but women mostly prefer to buy the white. Male persons are against this because they said that in summer these churkies become the source of skin problems but women follow to continue their traditional jewelry.

Hansli:

Hansli is jewelry necklace which is made of both gold and silver. But mostly women use the silver hansli. It is like a circle around the neck and heavy in weight.

The Bhil women show the real culture of their area and tribe while males are dressed according to the area.

Geographical Areas:

Bhils are mostly living in India in the states of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan. In Pakistan most of the Bhils are living in the Province of Sindh on the border with Rajasthan and Gujarat. In Punjab there are **7000** Bhils live and in Sindh they are **120,000** in number in the districts of Umer Kot, Mirpur Khas, Tharparkar, Tando Allah Yar, Mithi, Sukkur and in small numbers in the other districts. In Punjab they are in Chaniot, Bahawalpur and Rahim Yar Khan districts.

A district in Rajasthan province is named after Bhils which is known as “**Bhilwara**” which is a district now a day. This area was given to Bhils in the response of their bravery.

against the fight with the Zaeer Ud Din Babar by **Maharaja Partab Sigh** who was the Raja of Rajasthan state. After that in this area was ruled by the Bhil rajas. Still its name is Bhilwara and a large number of Bhil live in this district.

Bhil in Pakistan have not specific area for their living because they have not their own residence, where the landlord provide them place they live over there. They also live on the government lands. I visited two villages; one in Punjab and the other is in Sindh. I visited the Chak No: 83 Abu Dhabi Colony No: 2 which is 8 kilometers from the Rahim Yar Khan city. A number of 1200 Bhil live in this village. This is also government land which was approved by **Lala Mehar Lal Bhil** who was member of provincial assembly and secretary of the chief minister Punjab as well. So have not their own land. The second village was Valhar village near Umer Kot city where 60 households live and their population is 750. They are living on the government land. It is on the government that when they will order them, they will leave their houses. They have not even electricity facility. Government does not provide them the rights of their ownership.

Regions with significant populations	
Sindh	120,000
Punjab (Pakistan)	7,000
Gujarat	3,441,945
Madhya Pradesh	4,619,068
Maharashtra	1,818,792
Rajasthan	2,805,948

Occupations:

It is a great logic behind logic behind the social stratification and hierarchy of the Indian society that it had classified on the basis of the occupations. The people who were the preachers and the religious scholars they were on the top and known to be the Brahmins. The people who were fighters and participate in the politics were known as Khashatrias

and the similar case with businessmen and other occupations. Over the centuries, the Bhil have become semi-nomadic, offering their services to kings and maharajas as mercenaries and soldiers for hire. As the era of warring maharajas and kings came to a close in the early 20th century, the Bhil lost their only source of income and were forced to adopt a different way of life. Since then, they have settled in rural villages where they live from hunting and limited herding. So it is clear that the stratification in the Indian society had been done on the basis of occupation. There are some myths about the Bhil which are translated over here:

(a) Bhil has not any specific occupation.

When the groups were divided on the basis of their occupations then Bhil were not going to fit in other free groups because they had not skill in any field so these were include in the Shoodras. As we have discussed that they were fond of hunting and warriors but they serve as the personal guards of the Kings and Rajas.

The same condition of Bhil has today. In Pakistan Bhil are living in very condition. Still they have not any specific occupation. They work on the daily wages and have no permanent residence. They work for the landlord and landlord provides them the place to live. It is on the will of landlord that he gives them much money or very few in reward of their work. In Sindh province the Bhil are living some better as compare to the Bhil living in the Punjab and especially in the Rahim Yar Khan district. Now a days they are related to the agriculture but they also work on the daily wages basis. Most of the Bhil work in the cities and in the evening came back to their villages. If the Bhil does not live on the land of landlord then they live on the government lands. The second proverb is:

(b) Bhil dies due to hunger but does not do the work

This is popular about them because they are some lazy and slow in working. They have not any progressive thinking to make their economic or social condition better. If they have some money then they will not work next day till every thing will finish at home. Bhil women are mostly house wives or they also work with their male family members in the fields. Other women make handicrafts and embroidery on the clothes.

In the Umer Kot district of sindh Bhil are 25000in number and only 1% are employees and 4 percent are shopkeepers while the other people work in the fields of landlord. In

Rahim Yar Khan District this percentage is 0 because not a single Bhil have the government job or any kind of business. They all work in the fields. The main reason of this is their lack education and especially discriminatory behavior of the other communities towards them. People discriminate them because of their religion and in the religion on the very low level mean shoodras. Wherever they go for the job people hate them and even their utensils are separate from the other people. They are not allowed to touch the food items or the thing in which they eat. If any Bhil apply for the grade 1 job and he qualifies for that, he does not given the job and the other preferred because of their religion and caste. Few of the Bhil has started singing as profession and they done this job very well. The famous name in these personalities is **Krishan Lal Bhil** who has performed not on the national level but many times on the international level. He is earning well from this profession. Another person is **John Karan** who is running his music academy but due to poor economic conditions he drives the rickshaw in the day time and in the evening he runs his music academy.



John Karan Bhil on his rickshaw.

John Karan has performed in so many programmes but it is not his profession but he sings because of his interest. He says that singing is not permanent source of income that's why he drives the rickshaw to fulfill the needs of his family.

Marriage and traditions:

The marriage system among all the Hindus of the subcontinent is exogamous because they married in their tribe but outside their lineage, clan or the blood relatives. The Hindus consider their blood relatives as their brother and sisters. The same pattern of marriage is among the Bhil tribe.

There are also some groups in India who do not practice it. They married with their cousins and other relatives excluding their real brother and sisters. There is a myth about this system that a long time ago the Brahmans were divided on an issue and they became two groups. One of the group boycott the marriage with other Brahmans and the second group continue the marriage within the Brahmans. So the followers of these groups accept this thing according to their group. If the father of a person married in a clan of a tribe then the son will marry with the woman of the other clan because they are conscious about the blood relatives. Both can marry in the same clan but they see that there should not any blood relation with his grand parents.

The Bhil living in Pakistan are economically weak. They have the system of Bride Exchange. They give bride and in return they also get the bride from the other family. They are not in position to give so many dowries to the bride and if they do so they expect the same amount of dowry from the bride which they get. In most of the cases they give less amount of dowry due to poor economical condition. All the expenses and if the means of transportation are need then these are bared by the landlord under whom that Bhil work. Landlord also provides the cattle for serving the **Baraat**. There are some steps of the marriage among the Bhil which are:

- People consult the Pandit for the **Mahurat**. This Mahurat comes from the **Jotash** (knowledge about stars). This date and time is not specific. It can be a week, a month or more then this.

- People celebrate the ceremony of **Barna** or **Wanha** on which the bride has given some gifts and given the Mehndi from the groom family.
- Before leaving for the bride house they bring a goat or sheep along with them and when they reach over there they sacrifice that animal and cooked it. After that it is served to the baratis. Behind this concept the Bhil say that it is because during traveling if there is some thing wrong happens or vetches come in the journey then this is for the protection from them and for the long life and happy life for the groom and bride.



- After 7 days the last ceremony is being practice which is known as **Halana**. This ceremony is being done in the night time. The family of the groom and their relatives stay whole night as guest at the home of bride and next day after lunch they go back to their homes.
- When the ceremony starts, the groom is cross through a special gate where the ladies from bride side welcome him.
- Then the bride and groom sit together and the **Bhagat** or **Pandit** starts the religious verses or Mantar of the wedding ceremony.
- Few years back the Brahmans perform the duty of this marriage as they were the religious scholars but now due to awareness Bhil people themselves performing

this duty. This is a step toward their self dependency. They have started their works by themselves.

- Then bride and groom are bonded with the shawls and they started the ***Phere*** or circles around the ***Agni*** or fire.



- Bride and groom move 4 circles or 7 circles around the agni. But in Pakistan people practice 4 Phere. The 4 phere are termed as ***Ram Chaury*** and 7 phere are known as ***Shiv Chaury***. The Bhil totally follow the Ram Chaury.

There is a diverse system of kinship exists in the subcontinent. In marriage system the Hindus and Bhils have some other issues if the husband dies. These are related to the widow and about the future of the widow.

- If the widow has her husband younger brother then she can marry with him or the in laws parents perform this duty.
- The elder brother of the husband is like father for both husband and wife so she can not get married with elder brother of her husband.

This system provides security to the girls from their relatives and specially cousins that no one get harassed to them or problems may occur because every one knows that he or

she can not married to him or her. So they do not waste their time in love affairs or such type of other activities because their system does not allow them to do this.

We have an exceptional case in Rahim Yar Khan where a Hindu Bhil converted his religion from Hindu to Muslim for marrying with her cousin. His name after becoming Muslim is Muhammad Ali and he is Medical assistant in Sheikh Zaid Medical Complex Rahim Yar Khan. He and his cousin who was also a Hindu Bhil and his father's sister daughter both converted their religion because their religion and community does not allow them for this. So for Cousin-Marriage they converted their religion.

Another problem which is very common in Pakistan that Muslim boys run away with Hindu girls from their houses and after converting these girls into Muslims they get married with these girls and when some one ask them about these girls they said that these girls have changed their religion by their own choice d now they are Muslims and not from you. Muslims are in majority in Pakistan so Hindus can not say any thing to them and especially on the religious matters it is very sensitive issue.

Bhil women are dominant when it comes to marriage. Marriages are always arranged and treated as a business agreement. Yet in this case, the negotiations are reversed. Bhil families do not pay a dowry to marry off their daughters; men outnumber women.

Ghoomar

Dance is an expression of human emotion as much as music and it is found in almost limitless. **Ghoomar** is a traditional women's folk dance of Rajasthan, India which was developed by the **Bhil** tribe and was adopted by the Rajputs. In Pakistan it is not performed openly but there are some people who still have maintain and preserve their traditional dance. Lakha Ji Bhil is a famous person who introduces this dance in the Lok Virsa first time and after his death his son Rajoo Bhil has started performing this dance with other members of Bhil tribe. Rajoo Bhil is tranfering his skill to his grandson and has started his training.



Rajoo Bhil standing in centre with his group members and grandson.

It is performed by groups of women in swirling robes, and accompanied by men and women singing together. It is performed by the young women and girls on various occasions and festivals including Holi, Gangore Puja and Teej. As one of the traditional rituals, a bride is expected to dance Ghoomar on being welcomed to her husband's home.



This folk dance gets its name from '*ghoomna*', the pirouetting which displays the spectacular colors of the flowing '*ghaghara*', the long skirt of the Rajasthani women. There is an amazing grace as the skirt flairs slowly while the women folk twirl in circles, their faces covered with the help of the veil. Their measured steps and various graceful inclinations of body, beating palms or snapping fingers at particular cadences while singing some lilting songs. Dance continues for hours into the night.

Musical traditions:

Music Tradition:

Music is part of Hindu religion. The basic *Bhajan* or the prayer of Hindus is being practiced with the musical instruments. The similar case is with the Bhils. They perform bhajan with musical instruments. We can say that a Hindu child gets familiar from his childhood with the musical instruments. Then the child also becomes the part of that practice and he sings the bhajan along with the other people. In a discussion with a Bhil *Bhagat* (religious scholar) who was a singer as well, he told me that he got inspiration of music from the people. Because when he sang every one appreciated him that he sang very well as compared to others. Then he started taking interest in the music and now he is a good singer and has performed in many events on a nation-wide scale. During performing the bhajan the instruments which commonly use are:

- Bina or Tamboora
- Harmonium
- Manjeera

In the case of happiness and sorrow, the musical instruments are differently use. Like on the death of some one the bhagat sings with only Bina and Manjeera while on the happy events they sings with all their musical instruments including Dholak, Tanpura, Yaktara, Chapri, Kamach, Ranti and some other musical instruments. A little introduction of these musical instruments are discussed below:

Manjeera:

Manjeera, also known as **manjira**, **tala**, **khartal** or **kartal** are small metal cymbals that originated in **India**. They are held and played with the hands and often accompany folk or devotional music. Manjeera are usually made of bronze, brass, copper or zinc and connected with a copper cord which passes through holes in their center. They produce a rhythmic tinkling sound whose pitch varies according to their size, weight and the material of their construction. A player can also adjust the timbre by varying the point of contact while playing.

There are also small cymbals incrustated into wood blocks forming another type of instrument also known as khartal.

The Manjeera is an ancient instrument. Pictures of it have been found in temples dating back to the earliest times



A picture of Manjeera

Harmonium:

In much of Europe, the term "harmonium" is used to describe all pedal pumped keyboard free reed instruments, making no distinction whether it has a pressure or suction bellows.

The harmonium was invented in Paris in 1842 by Alexandre Debain, though there was concurrent development of similar instruments. Christian Gottlieb Kratzenstein (1723-1795), Professor of Physiology at Copenhagen, was credited with the first free reed to be made in the western world after winning the annual prize in 1780 from the Imperial Academy of St.Petersburg.

The British introduced harmoniums to North India during the colonial period.

Harmoniums reached the height of their popularity in the West in the late 19th- and early-20th centuries. They were especially popular in small churches and chapels where a pipe organ would be too large or too expensive. Harmoniums generally weigh less than similarly-sized pianos and are not as easily damaged in transport, thus they were also popular throughout the colonies of the European powers in this period- not only because

it was easier to ship the instrument out to where it was needed, but it was also easier to transport overland in areas where good-quality roads and railways may have been non-existent. An added attraction of the harmonium in tropical regions was that the instrument held its tune regardless of heat and humidity, unlike the piano. This 'export' market was sufficiently lucrative for manufacturers to produce harmoniums with cases impregnated with chemicals to prevent woodworm and other damaging organisms found in the tropics. During the **mid-19th century** missionaries brought French-made hand-pumped harmoniums to **India**. The harmonium was widely accepted in Indian music, particularly Parsi and Marathi stage music, in the late 19th century. The instrument quickly became popular there: it was portable, reliable and easy to learn. It has remained popular to the present day, and the harmonium remains an important instrument in many genres of Indian music. It is commonly found in Indian homes. To Sikhs the harmonium is known as the **vaja/baja**. It is also referred to as a "**Peti**" (A loose reference to a "Box") in some parts of North India and Maharashtra.

The harmonium plays an integral part in **Qawwali** music. Almost all Qawwals use the harmonium as their sole musical accompaniment. It has received international fame as the genre of Qawwali music has been popularized by renowned Pakistani musicians such as **Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan**.



The Harmonium

Dholak:

The **Dholak** or **dholaki** is a North Indian, Pakistani and Nepalese double-headed hand-drum. It may have traditional lacing or turnbuckle tensioning: in the former case rings are used for tuning, though the dholak is mainly a folk instrument, lacking the exact tuning of the tabla or the pakhawaj. It is widely used in qawwali, kirtan and various styles of North Indian folk music. It was formerly much used in classical dance.

The drum is either played on the player's lap or, while standing, slung from the shoulder or waist. The shell is usually made from sheesham or shisham wood.

The dholak's right-hand head is a simple membrane, while the left-hand head is of a greater diameter and has a special coating, a mixture of tar, clay and sand (dholak masala) which lowers the pitch. The drum is pitched depending on size, with an interval of perhaps a perfect fourth or perfect fifth between the two heads. It is related to the

larger Punjabi dhol and the smaller dholki. Similar drums with similar names are found elsewhere in western Asia.

Indian children sing and dance to the beat of the dholak during pre-wedding festivities in many Indian communities. It is often used in *Filmi Sangeet* - Indian film music, in chutney music, baithak gana, and tan singing, the local Indian music of the Caribbean. It was brought by indentured immigrants to Suriname, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago. In the Fiji Islands the dholak is widely used for bhajans and kirtans.



The Dholak

Yaktara:

Yaktara is Indian musical instrument which mostly use in India. Folk singers pick this in their hands or a person behind play it. It gives the single sound which match with the voice of the singer. It is mostly played in the Rajasthan and folk singers in the Punjab and Sindh in Pakistan. The singer decorate it with the embroider clothes and flowers. It is played only with one finger and the finger is covered with metallic shell to preserve it from the cut by single wire.



The Yaktara

Tambura:

The **tambura** is a long necked plucked lute, a stringed instrument found in different versions in different places. The tambura (South India) or **tanpura** (North India) in its bodily shape somewhat resembles the sitar, but it has no frets, as only the open strings are played as a harmonic accompaniment to the other musicians. It has four or five (rarely, six) wire strings, which are plucked one after another in a regular pattern to create a harmonic resonance on the basic note (bourdon or drone function).

Tanpuras come in different sizes and pitches: bigger "males" and smaller "females" for vocalists and yet a smaller version that is used for accompanying sitar or sarod, called tamburi or tanpuri. Male vocalists pitch their tonic note (Sa) to about C#, female singers usually a fifth higher. The male instrument has an open string length of approx. one metre, the female is sized down to 3/4. The name 'tanpura' is probably derived from *tana*,

referring to a musical phrase and *pura* which means "full" or "complete". Both in its musical function and how it works, the tanpura is a unique instrument in many ways. It does not partake in the melodic part of the music but it supports and sustains the melody by providing a very colourful and dynamic harmonic resonance field based on one precise tone, the basic note or key-note.



The Tambura or Tanpura

Ranti:

Ranti was invented in the Rajasthan and with the migration of the people and having similar culture it came in the Pakistan. It is the part of the Ghoomar dance. It is played when the ghoomar is being performed and singer sings with the help of this instrument. There are some other instruments which played during the ghoomer. It is becoming rare with the passage of the time because when the partition was took place in 1947, the Ranti

maker artisans also migrated to India. Now it is becoming rare due to lack of interest of the people and presence of artisans.



A child is playing Ranti in the traditional Rajasthani dress.

Kamach:

Kamach is another local musical instrument which is related to the people of that area. It has become as rare as Ranti. The Kamach has three thick wires and the person bearing a stick on which wires are joined. On asking about the Kamach the person who was playing this, told that it was 40years old. Now a day no one is making this and it is not frequently use. He told that he is bearing this because it was given by his father and his father taught him to play.



A boy is playing Kamach in Shafi Faqir Music Acadmy in Umer Kot.

Chapri:

Chapri is a pair of slide shape wooden pieces and these played with one hand by the singer or extra player of it. They give the dumb voice. It was invented in the India and it is widely used in India and Pakistan. On the marriage ceremonies women also perform with these Chapris. These are use for the dance and the dancer bear these in his or her hands and play it with the steps of the dance.



A pair of Chapri.

Bhil tribe is not related to the music like Mangan Hars and Bhat. They have joined this field due to their interest and as for a source of income. It does like in the Bhil community to become a singer because in the Indo-Pak society the music as profession is not liked. In Pakistan the **Lakha Ji Bhil** was the first person who introduces himself in **Lok Virsa Pakistan** as a singer and after him **Faqira Bhagat** and **Krishan Lal Bhil** came in this field. When these people were come in this field, they faced the so much criticism from their Bhil community. Their community was anger with them but with the passage of time when they got popular and Bhils were appreciated then their community accept them. Another aspect of appreciation was that they were earning very well and earning independently. These singers sing in their mother tongue **Marwari**, Darawri, Sindhi, Saraiki, Punjabi and Urdu but their main popularity is their Marwari language.

In an interview with **Krishan Lal Bhil** who has got National Award two times and performed so many times in foreign and in Pakistan, that his father was against his

singing. At first his father came to know when in 1978 he performed on Radio Station in Bahawal Pur and people of his community listened him and told to his father.



Krishan Lal Bhil singing in his cultural dress.

His father was angry with him but with the passage of time as much he got popularity, people started respecting him and his family agreed. He is running a music academy in Rahim Yar Khan. Now many Bhil are in this field namely John Karan Bhil, Sumar Lal Bhil, Bhagat Jalal Bhil, Bhagat Nawal Nath Bhil, Dittu Lal Bhil and the very young singers Vashoo Bhil, Om Parkash Bhil and so many other singers.

In a gathering with Bhil, they told that they wish that their children learn the music because it is independent field. They can earn the money for themselves and they can live freely. Bhil are so much disappointed by the behavior of the people of other communities and specially landlords. If few people are interested that their children become good singer then their economic conditions are very poor and they send their children for earning the money on daily wages or in the fields of landlord.

The Bhagats are considered as the religious scholars but they also sing due to their interest and good voice. They sing the Bhagti on the different oceans of death or happy events while a singer is not allowed to sing the bhagti. So a bhagat enjoys the both statuses. If we describe it mathematically hen:

Bhagti=Singing

Singing≠Bhagti

Singer≠Bhagat

Bhagat=Singer

It is now awareness coming in the Bhil that they have to join the other occupations for their better life and for this purpose they are also joining the music field.

Parh:

Parh is the story telling about the Devis and Devtas. People arrange a programme in the night and open large clothes on which the painting of Devis and Devtas painted. Then a person who has taken a lamp or light focuses on any of the Devta then the story teller tells people about that Devi or Devta. It is still practiced in Rajasthan but in Pakistan it has nearly finished. **Lakha Ji Bhil** was the person who performed the Parh but now a day no one is continuing this art.