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## BHIL GAURI\*

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&  
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### I INTRODUCTORY

The Bhil living in the fastnesses of the Aravalli hills celebrate the festival of Gauri in a dance-drama activity lasting for forty days during the rainy season. After the maize plants have appeared on the fields, no special attention is required for the plants to grow till the harvest gets ready by October. In the intervening period, the Bhil in a few villages in Rajasthan organize their dance-drama parties almost by rotation. They enact their plays at different centres and attract both the tribal and the peasant groups to witness the show. The festival calls for pointed attention in being one of such a long duration, combining ritual and secular aspects of prayer and recreation. It stands out as an expression of tribal solidarity and managerial skill and the contribution it makes to the general life of the peasantry of the villages nearabout is rather significant.

Permission for holding the festival is sought from the deity through the *Bhupas*. Every village does not undertake this exacting task of celebrating the festival every year. The deity is invoked by the devotees and she herself says whether she would like to be remembered again after three or five years. From the point of view of the participants, such a rotation is understandable in terms of the extraordinary character of the festival in regard to the nature of taboos, the duration of the festival, resources and organizational ability called for and finally the bonds of reciprocity which unite them with other villages in being mutual hosts to one another. In terms of actual relations, it works out that in any season there may be three to seven units moving about over a region of twenty or thirty villages.

The actors in the festival are males only. Women are not eligible for participating in this ritual activity which is believed to bring benefits in the form of better crops to the Bhil and to be generally conducive to their well-being. Men play the role of women in disguise and undergo certain taboos. They are required to abstain from wine and woman and taking of meat or green vegetables for the duration of the festival beginning on the third day of Bhadrapad (Usually in August).

Gauri is essentially a ritual activity with a strong sacred contents. The story centres round Shankar and Parvati who are locally represented as the *Buris* and *Ras*. The dance-drama ritual is spread over 43 days of the rainy season.

\*The field work on which this article is based was carried out by Daulat Singh Chelawat under the guidance of Brij Raj Chauhan. Nai is the name of the village near Udaipur City where the field work was concentrated. References to villages Kaliawas and Phanda occur. These are wholly tribal villages. Nai is a multi-caste village which serves as a business centre for the tribal region west and south west of Udaipur.

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Only excessive rains and fatal accidents could stop this type of performance. The invoking of the deity is a feature of the initial and the concluding ceremonies for the entire period. The activities on a particular day start with the fixing of the lance and the trident in the central part of the village. The deity is seated at that spot with incantations and incense offered by the Bhil *Bhopas*. Amidst shouts of "Jai Shankar Mahadeo" and "Jai Gauri-Mai" the deities are assigned their places for the day. The participants gather around the place and the *Bhopa* gets possessed of the deity's spirit. Two assistants to the *Bhopa* invoke *Amba Mata* and *Dharmu Deo* and get possessed of their spirits. In the state of trance, they keep on striking the iron chains over their shoulders. Their bodies shake and the state of their being is transcended from the secular to the sacred. Their words come as pronouncements of the deities. The rest of the participants express their joy at the success of the *Bhopas* in invoking the deities and being dancing round them with the *Bhopa* leading them amidst the music of the drum and *Jhalar*. After the blessings of the main deities have thus been invoked, the process for inviting the lesser of the deities is started. A prominent Bhil actor called the *Katukdia* who latter plays the role of an interloper amidst various scenes helps the *Bhopa* to recall the names of nearly 80 odd deities for the purpose. For about an hour this process goes on. Among the significant deities thus invoked happen to be (1) *Gatod Bhoji* who has a spread over 40 miles radius (2) *Kesariya Naih* which is deity of the Jains 40 miles to the South of the main villages under study, and it is deity that the Bhil call the *Kala Deo* after the black colour of the image and (3) *Amud* a deity that seems to have been associated with mother's brother's clan. These initial ritual mark the preparatory part for the more popular items to follow. These would be described in a latter section.

An item is concluded when the actors in the item come before the deity, make a bow and receive the final blessings of the *Bhopa*. Then they revert to their normal ritual status. The participating members for the following item get ready as the members of a concluding item perform the circular dance amidst song and beat of the instruments. Various items are enacted for the day. The Bhil begin the day's functions after taking the morning meals. At about 11 a.m. they begin their ritual activities and they conclude the day a little before the sun-set. The concluding part for the day's performances is also a ritual activity. It is performed amidst shouts of "Jai Shankar Mahadeo ki", "Jai Parvati Mai ki", "Jai Dharm Deo ki", "Jai Kesariya Naih ki". The trident and lance are removed from the spot for the rest of the day. Such activities continue for the duration of the Gauri festival spread over 40 days.

## II The actors and their roles

The actors in the Dance-drama festival can be divided into two groups; the principal and the subsidiary. The sacred and secular contents in their roles will become apparent as the mode of their recruitment and performance of their roles are analysed.

(a) *The principal actors*.—Four roles are considered primary. (i) the *Burua*, (2) the *Rai*, (3) the *Bhopa*, (4) *Pujari*. Two persons are selected to play each of the roles. In the village under study, there was an additional *Bhopa*. This group of 9 actors providing for alternatives for playing the four roles constitutes the core of the party. Their roles may be described separately.

**Burua**.—*Burua* is the hero of the Gauri festival. The person who play this role, is supposed to be *Shankar*. *Burua* wears *Bandia* (an underwear) prepared of black-white *Chini*. He covers *Bhajama* (a little *Chaddar*) round his chest and *Angocha* (turban) on the head, *Chorai* (a piece of cloth) round the back. He wears a *Madaliya* in back and arms, and *Benti Damana* (rings) in his fingers. He covers his face with an alternative but fearful mask profile built of clay, which is supposed to be face of *Shankar Mahadeo*.

In each circular dance which takes place after the end of a secular performance, the *Burua* moves his head and the mask, to direct the people "Go ahead-go ahead". The *Burua* dances out of the circle moving in anti-clock-wise direction of the clock-wise movements of the rest of the party.

*Shankar* talks to the villagers about their folk-life. The sacred part of the rituals of Gauri are observed for an hour and a half. In this period on one occasion *Burua* carry on the dialogue about the religious life of the village. Meanwhile various deities are invoked by other principal actors. The *Burua* is required for the whole of the day to participate in the circular dance. One person can not do this job so two perform it by rotation. When one gets tire another wears the face of the *Shankar* and plays the role. Both the persons have similar dress and make-up, though there is only one mask which is used by both at the time of enacting that role.

**Rai**.—*Rai* is the heroine of the sacred dance-drama of this festival. *Rai* the local word for *Gauri* or *Parvati*. The Bhil consider that she belonged to the Community and was a Bhil Girl. When she got married with *Shankar Mahadeo*, she was raised to the status of the *Devi*. The role of the *Rai* or *Gauri* is played by a male member. Two persons do this job. Hence there are two *Rais*.

Persons who play the role of *Rai* wear their ritual tribal dress, which is generally worn by the Bhil women in Mewar. The dress involves *Kanchali* (one type of blouse), *Orani* or *Luguri* (*Sari*) and *Skirt* (*Gagri*). They wear a *Chudidar Pajamu* (a narrow trouser) inside the *Gagri*. They put silver *Bor* on the fore-head and wear a necklace, *Bah Madliya* (armlet) on both arms and, *Bentidamana* (rings) in fingers.

The festival is observed essentially to please *Gauri*. It is believed that *Gauri enters in Rai* (person who does this role) and sees the performances presented by Bhil, in her honour. In all circular dances 'she' also dances with other people in a specific way. Two persons play this role simultaneously in the dance unlike the *Burua* whose role is performed by one of the two actors at a time.

**Bhopas**.—*Bhopas* are the persons with semi-magical powers who invoke different deities like *Gauri*, *Amba*, *Mama-Deo*. There are different *Bhopas* in the Bhil unit relating to different deities. These functions are important in Bhil life. *Bhopas are the mediators between deities and the Bhil. The Deities communicate the message to the Bhil through them.*

*Bhopas* wear white *Jhagas* (a type of loose and long shirt) *Chotiyas* which is worn by every Bhil, and on the head a *Phenta* or turban. They cover *Chaurias* (one type of cloth) and tie *takar Guguras* round the back and wear *Hanwali* in neck.

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**Pujaries:**—(Assistant to the Bhopas)—There are two Pujaries in every Gauri Unit. They keep the temple (Devara) clean and worship deities. One works as a liaison officer for the party during the festival days. Where ever the unit wants to perform its celebrations, message or information is conveyed by the Pujari. He goes to the related group or person taking leaves of neem with him, which are called in their dialect 'Pati.' He requests them to accept the 'pati'; when the 'Pati' is accepted by the party, a certain day is fixed for the Gauri party to play dance and drama in that particular village. This preparatory work is done before the festival starts and is continued during the festival. The table indicates how three village units in 1961 distributed these four roles among the various participants.

The table points out the following noteworthy features :

1. Major participation of Pargi clan in Phanda, exclusive participation of Kharkhar in Kaliawas and equal significance of Angari and Khara in Nai Gauri unit.
2. Age group above 40 is the normal feature in all these units, there being only one man of 33 in Nai.

TABLE No. 1

Principal Actors In Three Gauri Units For 1961

Role	Unit I (Nai)			Unit II (Phanda)			Unit III (Kaliawas)		
	Role performer	Age	Clan	Role performer	Age	Clan	Role performer	Age	Clan
1. Buria	Punna	43	Khara	Jagan-nath	55	Kalawa	Deva	45	Kharkhar
2. Buria	Amra	50	Khara	Veshia	51	Pargi	Hara	45	"
3. Rai	Roda	45	Angari	Late Hakara (died after the festival)		Pargi	Manglia	45	"
4. Rai	Bhera	40	Angari	Manji	49	Pargi	Ambava	50	"
5. Bhopa (Mahadeo)	Bhera	52	Angari			Pargi	Heera	51	"
6. Bhopa (Gauri)	Mana	55	Angari			Kalawa	Hakra	43	"
7. Bhopa (Amba)	Harang	44	Angari			Pargi	Megna	47	"
8. Pujari	Moti	55	Kher	Deva	49	Pargi	Thavara	47	"
9. Pujari	Uda	33	Khara	Uda	44	Pargi	Dalla	49	"

Among both the principal and the subsidiary roles, males as well as female characters have to be provide for as shown in the table:

TABLE No. 2

Sex-wise Distribution in Principal and Subsidiary Roles

PRINCIPAL ROLES

Male Characters		Female Characters	
Buria	2	Rai	2
Bhopa	3		
Pujari	3		

SUBSIDIARY ROLES

Bhanwariya	Bhanwari
Goma Meena	
Bhinyawal	Kirni Amba
Kaly Kir	Kirni
Khaliya Bhoor	Khetudi
Nahar	Kalaka
Banjara	Banjarin
Dani	
Kandi	
Shiv	Paravati

Thus there are 9 female characters and 17 male characters. But it is interesting to note that no woman can take part in playing any of these roles. This festival is observed in honour of a female deity and yet women are considered impious for such ritual.

All the actors in this period have to avoid themselves from woman, wine and meat and green vegetables. Principal actors cannot go to their houses in these days. They all sleep in devara. They have to observe 9 days fast (take fast only one time in last nine days of the festival) at mid-night of last but one day before, all the principal actors have to pass their hands in flame of the fire. This is their *pariza* held at devara. It is considered that one who had not obeyed the prescribed rule of this ritual would get his hands bruished.

After the final ceremony viz. on Aswani vid Asthani they are freed from these prescribed taboo and conducts.

Two types of Actors play dance and dramas of Gauri festival. Persons who deal with a sacred aspects of Gauri are principal actors; and those who perform secular performances are subsidiary artist. How are the both type of actors selected ? Answering this question we first take the criteria in selection of the principal actors.

The position of a principal actor is an ascribed one. He is a principal actor because his father was also a principal actor. Heredity is the only factor to determine the position of a principal actor.

only the eldest son of a principal actor is given a chance to perform that job after the death of his father. When one of the principal actors is physically incapable of performing that role his eldest son can not do that job until old man is alive, in such a case, his younger brother performs the role. If the Principal actor has got no son, his nearest paternal cousin succeeds him.

Many years before Kana Kher was a principal actor (Rai) of Nai Gauri unit. He got two sons, Bhera and Roda. After his death Bhera being the eldest got the chance of performing the role of Rai. For some years he performed it. But when he became patient of asthma, he did not find himself fit to perform that role every times. Although he has got 3 sons but in his life time his sons could not get the chance, so his (Bhera's) younger brother Roda plays that role.

One man Bhera Angari is also Rai of Nai Gauri unit. His father was a Bhopa. Bhera has one elder (Harang) and one younger (Pema) brother. Harang being the eldest got the chance to perform the role of the Bhopa. Bhera and Pema being younger could not do it. Bhera had also an uncle, who was Rai. His uncle had no son and for this reason after the death of his uncle Bhera being elder (elder to Pema) nephew was given chance to play the part of the heroine.

Thus it is clear that every principal actor is given chance through inheritance. Others can not achieve that position.

#### Selection of Subsidiary Actors

It is heredity which determines the selection of a person for principal role, while in selection of subsidiary actors no such rigid rule exists. Every one from the same unit has the right to play any role, subsidiary roles are many and every one is given chance to play them.

With the Children of 7 to 10 years dance in the circle with the elders and get early socialization in these manners. Gradually they develop in themselves other arts of playing. When they become slightly mature, they are given chances to perform various subsidiary roles.

No feeling of jealousy was noted among the actors of subsidiary items. Many factors may be responsible for this solidarity.

1. Gauri festival is played not only for one day but for long time (40 days). In this situation if an actor does not get his desired role on a particular day, he has a fair chance of getting it some other day.

2. Some roles like Banjara-Dani, Kandi, Bhinyawals, which require great talent and are performed by matured persons. Generally a younger actor does not come directly to play these roles, without performing other preparatory roles.

3. In every role an actor has to dance and work at a very fast pace, so he gets tired very soon, and finds himself unable to take part in more than three items.

4. And finally subsidiary roles are numerous. None is likely to stay firm only on one role, he wants to figure in on different roles and show wider talents. So these roles are changeable.

The Nai Gauri unit was observed for 7 days and no such actor was noted who repeated his role performance even once. The observations are recorded in the

Nahar (Lion)—An actor playing subsidiary role.



in a table, indicating from where they had come and what they got.

table. Generally the young people take active interest in these subsidiary roles, whereas the elders take interest in the general dance or in seeing what their sons do. Only one exception could be noted that a man of above sixty played the role of Nahar (who has to jump many times) on 1st October, 1961. He is *Roopa ba* an elder of that unit. The table indicates that there is no such artist who performed one role every day. It is also clear that on last day of its closing function viz. on 3rd October, 1961, subsidiary roles were played by different sons in law. Thus we find that in selection of subsidiary actors no rigid rules occur.

TABLE No. 3

A Record of Five Days : Who played which Roles : How many times : Different Subsidiary Roles

S. No.	Name of the actors	Bhamriya	Goma-Meena	Bhinya-wals 2	Kalu Keer	Khaliya Bhoot 2	Nahar (Lion)	Kalka	Banjara	Banjarin	Daji	Kandi	Shiv	Total
1.	Ram Lal	2		1			1		2		1			5
2.	Pooriya	2				3						1		6
3.	Dadmiya	2	2		1	2								7
4.	Hariram			1			2	1	1		2			7
5.	Pema			2	1	1			1					6
6.	Rama (Jamai)			2	1	1						1		6
7.	Nankia ..			2	1								4	8
8.	Roopa (60)						1							3
9.	Udia		1			1		3		1				6
10.	Lalia				1			1		2				4
11.	Moti		1				1			1				3
12.	Logaria											3		3
Outside guests on final day		1	1	2	1	2			1	1	1	1	1	11

Figures indicates the number of times the actor performed the role.

Even persons related by marriage are given the chance. The number of non-members of the village community participating in day-to-day activities of the three units was 2 in case of village Nai, 3 in Phanda and 5 in Kaliawas. In the Nai unit two outsiders played some of these roles daily. In Phanda unit there were 3 artists from outside who played subsidiary roles, and in Kaliawas Gauri unit 5 outside artists were noted.

Sometimes outsider artists are invited due to kinship relations or friendship relations. Sometimes good artists are called on hire to add to the efficiency and name of the unit as happend in case of Kaliawas and Phanda.

We can list Guest artists in 3 Gauri units viz. Phanda, Kaliawas and Nai in a table, indicating from where they had come and what they got.

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Nadel has classified the roles into three categories : (1) Peripheral (2) Alternative (3) Central.

"Certain attributes are peripheral in that their variation or absence does not affect the perception or effectiveness of the role which is being performed".

"Other attributes are sufficiently relevant, that is sufficiently firmly entailed in the series, for their variation or absence to make a difference to the perception and effectiveness of the role, rendering its performance noticeably imperfect or incomplete".

"The hierarchy of relevance Culminates in attributes which are basic or pivotal in the sense that their absence or variation changes the whole identity of the role".

In the context of these ideas we find all three types of roles in Gauri festival. Central or principal roles, which are very essential to be played, are religious because Gauri-festival is observed in honour of a deity and this sacred aspect is performed by the principal actors.

Subsidiary roles of Gauri festival may be called alternative roles. Their playing adds some vigour to the programme. Persons who perform these roles are generally local. Some Gauri units invite some good artists from outside, and their participation makes the programmes more look different.

We find some instance of peripheral roles also in Gauri festival. On the final day of Gauri festival, the sons-in-law of members of the Gauri unit come from different villages and play these roles. It makes no difference whether they play their or not, because it is not their efficiency but their being the guests that enables the unit to extend the invitation to them.

TABLE No. 4

ARTISTS FROM OUT-SIDE IN GAURI UNITS

*Nai Unit*

S.No.	Name	The Qualifications	Residence (Village)	Returns
1.	Ram Lal	Jamai	Rata Khet	Food only
2.	Nankia	"	"	"
(Both are the good actors).				

*Phanda Unit*

1.	Bada Pargi	Good artist	Phopati	Food and Rs. 12/-
2.	Nanji	"	"	"
3.	Decta	"	"	"

*Kaliawas Unit*

1.	Panna Mati	Good artist	Pallana	Collectively
2.	Bhera Mati	"	"	for the
3.	Rama Mati	"	"	Party.
4.	Rama Kher	"	"	
5.	Hewa Kher	"	"	

III The Network of the Performances

Members of the Bhil Community from one village visit other villages for playing the festival of Gauri. Which are the villages, where they go for the purpose? These villages lie in the neighbourhood within an area roughly of 15 miles radius. These villages may be classified into three categories :

- (a) Villages related through affinities.
- (b) Villages of permanent businessmen.
- (c) Villages connected through ritual exchanges.

It is necessary to examine the nature of inter-relationships between the players and their patrons on the basis of these three categories. The three types of relations are based on different considerations. In one case affinal-ties form the base of these relations; in the second, permanent or semi-permanent economic connections become important. In the third type, inter-relationships operate among the members of the Bhil sections of different villages.

In the mixed villages members of various castes other than the Bhil live together with the Bhil. Normally these castes have marriage relations in other villages of the neighbourhood. (1) These villages give their daughters in marriage to males from various villages. Daughters and sisters of the village are called *Kunwayas*. After marriage they normally reside with their husbands in the latter's village. These village girls acts as hosts of the Gauri party. This type of relationship brings the Bhil party from one village into two types of relationships with others : (a) with members of other castes in neighbouring villages, (b) with the members of their own group in other neighbouring villages.

Conditions in which these relationship are established can now be stated:—

- (1) Traditionally the Gauri unit goes to the father-in-law's houses of their village *Kunwayas*, of its own initiative, once in a life-time.
- (2) The Bhil visit the father-in-law's village of *Kunwayas* of other castes, not their own.

Bhils of Nai village celebrated Gauri festival in 1961 after a gap of six years. During these six years many daughters and sisters had been married. Bhils of Nai could not visit all the new villages of all the girls (*Kunwayas*) who were married during this period of six years.

The *Kunwayas* may be classified into two categories from their point of view :

- (1) *Kunwayas* of other castes of the village in which they live.
- (2) *Kunwayas* of their own caste.

They do not visit latter's houses to play before their homes, although they may visit their villages for the sake of maintenance of ritual exchange.

- (1) Besides the fact that normally *Kunwayas* are married with the persons from the out side, there are a few cases within their own village too. *The Sasuralis of Kunwayas* are called *Kunwaya-ka-Ghar* in that region.

They give an explanation of their not visiting the houses of their own Kunwayas. They do not think it proper to play before the homes of their own daughters and sisters, and accept food and cash from them. Gauri (Parvati) was also their Kunwaya. So when festival is celebrated in remembrance and honour of a Kunwaya, it is wrong to visit the houses.

Two points can be raised for interpretation in this connection. Their idea that, it is not right to visit their daughters and sisters where the parents spend money for arrangements of food, and presentation of some cash for their fathers and brothers (Gauri party) is a Hindu idea. A Hindu in this region does not take food and water from the Sasural of his own daughters or younger sisters. And he never allows any expenditure to be incurred on him by them. It is possible that this idea might have evolved in Bhil Community through their contact with the Hindus.

It is also possible that they do not visit Kunwayas of their own, due to lack of time. Gauri festival is celebrated for 40 days only. And it is not possible to visit all the Kunwayas of all the persons of their unit in this short period.

Yet another possibility is that these Kunwayas' Sasurals exist in neighbouring villages, and these villages are also linked with ritual exchange. So in enacting the dance drama before the house of single Kunwayas they may think it better to give performances before the whole Bhil Community collectively in that village, to meet their obligations to the community linked in ritual exchanges.

The Bhil as a group behave in ways different from what they do in relation to other groups. These two sets of rules enable the Bhil to develop a well-feeling and a sense of solidarity. These rules also enable them to devise ways and means of living together with others in mixed villages.

Nai is a multicasite or mixed village. So the Bhil of Nai unit visit Sasurals of Kunwayas of other castes of their own village. They visited during the year: Bujara (at the Gadri or Shepherd and Teli or Oil maker Kunwaya's house) Havala, (at the house of Meghval Kunwaya), Amba Mata and Brahmipoles, (two streets in Udaipur) at the house of Rajput and Teli Kunwayas, Paladi (at the Rajput's, Kunwayas house) and Havina Khera. They also visited Kunwayas Sasurals in their own village. These were the Sasurals of Kunwayas of Castes.

Kaliawas Gauri unit visited some villages as Pai, Kotara, Phophati, Aud, Kumbhariya Khera, Bari Undari, Choti Undari, Chokadia. These villages were also villages of their own Kunwayas but they visited these villages considering relation of Udhari-hanti or ritual exchange and did not play at the houses of their Kunwayas.

Generally we mean by a Haji, a Saji or Partner. But here Haji means a creditor who sells grains of foodstuff for daily necessities to Bhils, mostly in credit. The Bhil call him Haji and they (Bhils) are called Asami by their Hajies.

In the part of Alsigarh Kotda area of Udaipur district, the Bhil live in the interior part of forests with meagre resources. In that area villages like Chokadia, Kaliawas, Pipalwas, Naya Gura, Rayata, Keli, Aad, Kumnariya Khera, Phophati are purely tribal.

In others, the Bhil constitute the most important section of the population. The whole of the area is called Bhilwar. There are no marketing centres in these villages. All the Bhil of this area are connected with Nai village (Girva Tehsil) in business sphere. The Bhil of this Bhilwar area come to Nai for meeting the necessities of life. They purchase articles from the Baniyas to whom they call their Hajies. Their Hajies give them corn for seeds or food, besides other articles for foodstuff, clothing and necessary things of life in credit, and provide loan in cash. In return these Bhil who are called Asamies of Hajies bring *Mul* and *Bhara* (the Bundle of wood and grass respectively) and seasonal things.

Thus Hajies are creditors of the Bhil. When the Bhil of this area observe Gauri festival, they visit their Hajies village for a day and dance before his house. Every village of this Bhilwar area is connected with certain Hajies. They have permanent relations with them. It is claimed that their fore-fathers were connected with fore-fathers of those Baniyas.

During the year, Kaliawas and Phanda Gauri units danced on 1st October, 1961, before the house of their Hajies in village Nai. Their Hajies are :

For Phanda Unit. Mansukh Lal Kothari and Khyali Lal Kothari.

For Kaliawas Unit. Shankar Lal Kothari, Nand Lal Baya and Kanhaiya Lal Vada'a.

The Bhil of Nai village have quite frequent relations with the Hajies or businessmen who reside in Nai. Quite a few amongst them work as labourers in the City of Udaipur, and generally purchase their things from the urban centre. But they do not have permanent relations with shopkeepers of Udaipur. Some of the Bhil work as Hali's (servant at the field of Baniyas). The Bhil of Nai also take some loans from their Hajies. But in fact, due to nearness of City, the Bhil of Nai do not have so intensive relations with the Hajies as those of the Bhilwar area have.

These factors notwithstanding, the Bhil of Nai always play dance-drama of their festival before the house of their Hajies. During the year on 1st October, Nai Gauri unit played dance and drama of Gauri festival at Nichali Heri (down street) where Hajies live.

In the Bhilwar area of Alsigarh Kotda, villages are linked in ritual exchanges. Villages which observe Gauri festival in a year visit these villages which do not observe it that year. It has to be emphasized that this festival is not held every year by the same village. This year in that area the Bhil of Nai Sisarma, Pipalwas, Phanda and Kaliawas celebrated this festival, and visited many other villages of this area. The villages which did not observe Gauri festival this would perform this festival next or some other year. Then Gauri performing villages will visit Nai, Phanda, Kaliawas, Pipalwas and Sisarma Bhils units which had observed Gauri festival this year. This is their network of ritual exchanges in which the Gauri performing villages visit non-Gauri performing villages.



This ritual exchange involves ritual obligations of coming and going to each other's villages when either of them undertake to perform the Gauri. In local terms this ritual exchange is called Udhari-hanti. When one Gauri unit visits some villages, it means Gauri unit has obliged the non-Gauri performing villages and the latter have to return the compliment by visiting the former. The norms that govern these networks may now be stated.

1. Villages get linked in the Udhari-hanti system in two ways, the immediate and the long term. The visiting party provides the necessary ritual and recreational activities to the hosts. The hosts, in turn who had not organized the Gauri unit that year provide food to the members of the visiting party. In the past the Bhil of Choti and Bari Undari used to come to Nai in large numbers, about one hundred each time, and it became impossible to provide good food to such large units. The Bhil of Nai did not like to maintain relations of Udhari-hanti with those villages reciprocated in the like manner and stopped visiting Nai. Relation of Udhari-hanti or ritual exchange could not be continued in such a case.

2. Bhil units which are performing this festival in the same year, do not visit each other's villages, although they are linked in Udhari-hanti relations. For example in this area during the year five Gauries were being celebrated. They were by Kaliawas, Phanda, Pipalwas, Nai Sisarma, units. They did not visit each other. One explanation given by them for this point was that it was not necessary for one Gauri unit to visit other villages where Gauri festival is already performed. We can interpret this explanation in some other manner. It has to be emphasised that Udhari-hanti relations always go on among the Bhil only. The Gauri unit which visits a village is guest of the Bhil unit and not of all the villagers. Only the Bhil provide the food and cash to the Gauri unit of outside. Since they are themselves going out for the festival, they can hardly play the role of a host to another similar party.

Villages Nai and Sisarma are related in Udhari-hanti relations. Both observed Gauri festival this year. They did not visit each other. And it was not possible. We know that Gauri unit has to play dance-drama every day and on more occasions they are played outside the village. In both the conditions, it is not possible to entertain guest Gauri unit by the host Gauri unit.

3. First day of the festival Gauri is always celebrated in its own village. And it is from the second day, that the Gauri unit starts visiting villages related in Udhari-hanti, Kunwayas and Frijies relations. In this connection one thing is important that before visiting all these villages certain village is always visited for omen. That should be in the northern direction of the village and one connected with Udhari-hanti relations. Nai Gauri unit always visits *Bujara*, Kaliawas unit takes omen of *Raava*. Phanda unit take sakun of *Phophati*. All these villages which are visited for sakun (omen) are in the north of the villages and were determined long ago by their goddess *Gorkiy. mat.*

New relations may also be established. In establishing such relations it is always assessed whether it would be feasible to maintain them or not. If they are difficult to be maintained they are not established. With which units may these relations be established? Unit which is not too far and a unit which is not too big to

manage. So a new unit in the limited area may be visited and recognised. When guest unit is not very big, the host unit is always able to provide the reasonable type of food, and such relations continue for a long time.

We can list the villages which are linked in this relationship with Nai Phanda and Kaliawas in the Bhilwar area.

Nai is related to Devali, Goverdhan Vilas, Vallichá, Kamali, Nora, Naya Khera, Beera, Ryata, Gada, Chokdia, Verchia, Phophati, Kaliawas, Kedi, Bujara, Sisarma, Gorela, Rampura, Rata Khet, that is to 21 villages.

Phanda is related to Nai, Kamali, Nora, Beera, Hurana, Aar, Kotda, Bari Undri, Choti Undari, Pipalwas, Kaliawas, Raysts, Dodawali, Kumariya Khera, that is to 15 villages.

Kaliawas is related to Phanda, Phophati, Bari Undari, Choti Undari, Pai, Kotra Kumaria Khera, Pipalwas, Aad, Beera, Keri, Aayata, Garh, Bachar, Kamali, Chokadia, Nai that is to 17 villages.

This is a festival of all the Bhil of a unit, and every one takes active interest in this festival. When Gauri unit goes to different villages, though it is not obligatory for every person to go with unit except principal actors and leaders at least one person from each family is required to accompany the unit. Practically, all the youth and the elders accompany the unit to visit different villages. Every-where they are provided meals once a day and little amount in cash.

Gauri is a dance drama. The drama needs some stage. The festival's needs lasts for 40 days. During these days Gauri of Nai unit visited 21 centres, Phanda visited 15 villages, and Kaliawas visited 14 villages.

In these places Gauri unit from 3 villages came in contact with other villages in at least three ways. They visited members of their own group in other villages, connected with name through Udhari-hanti relations. They visited their permanent hajies in other villages and strengthened their Haji-Asami relationship. The Bhil party by visiting the Kunwayas of other castes of their village, participated in the Community life of other castes. This last type of relation is possible only in mixed villages, like Nai. Such relations were not found in the tribal village Kaliawas.

*Taking of Clay Elephant from Nai.*—Closing ceremony of Gauri festival is always performed by 'Hathi Varadena', fare-well to Shiv and Parvati whose clay images are put on clay elephant and taken to a temple to lie put on its roof.

Thus every Gauri requires a 'clay elephant' for its closing ceremony. The closing ceremony of Gauri is always celebrated on Aswani Vid Navami (first Navami of Aswani Month). The clay elephant on which Shiv and Parvati are seated, are given the fare-well on Navami.

We have to emphasize here that villages in Alsigarh Kotada Bhilwar have no Kumhar. They have to take that elephant from village of Nai. In Nai there are 10 Kumhar families. All households are traditionally related to some or other villages of this Bhilwar region. And only the related Kumhar related with them, make clay elephant for the party. The table shows the number of villages related to Nai for the purpose.

TABLE No. 5

## Kumhars of Nai and villages served by them.

Name of the Kumhars	Name of the villages served by them.
1. Deva	Phanda, <sup>1</sup> Kedi and Verchia.
2. Amba Lal	Nai, Kaliawas, <sup>1</sup> and Kohada. <sup>2</sup>
3. Tulsi Rara	Naya Khera and Kumhariya Khera.
4. Jeeta	Nora, Pai <sup>3</sup> and Choti Undari. <sup>4</sup>
5. Hemaji	Chokadia and Pai. <sup>3</sup>
6. Kaloo and Bavariya	Phopati.
7. Bhagwan Das	Pipalwas.
8. Logaria	Aad.
9. Bhanwar Lal	Kotada <sup>2</sup> and Beera.
10. Jai Chand	Choti Undari, <sup>4</sup> Bari Undari, Kharpar and Barapal.

Various villages are served by different Kumhars not only in the matter of preparing Clay Elephant but in all potter's services for the whole of the year. Kumhars and villages are traditionally linked.

Thus on Asthami, these Bhils units of various villages come to take clay elephant from related Kumhars and dance for half of the day in that village. And they return by the same day, taking the elephant in procession to their village, where it is used for the final ceremony.

Most of the villages in the area are largely tribal villages, for them Nai serves as a business centre. The final ceremony of the festival requires a 'Clay Elephant'. It can be supplied only by the potters of Nai. Traditionally the elephant has to be carried ceremonially in a procession. The size of the procession reflects the concern of the village for the festival. As such residents and affinal kinsmen of these villages form the procession. Nai village has about 20 businessmen, they are related to the tribal people, in traditionally permanent economic relationship. They facilitated the visit of their consumers in two ways, (a) by providing food for one occasion, (b) by providing a ritually designated place at the village Chauraha for each party. In turn Nai become the centre for more than one parties for the day. It attracts a large number of visitors, who alongwith the residents of Nai, enjoy themselves on the Occasion. Obviously this gathering promotes brisk marketing in the village. When the parties return back to their villages, they carry the Mahadeo and Gauri seated on the clay-elephant to the village temple amidst the final shouts of "Jai Shankar Mahadeo ki", "Jai Parvati Mai-ki", "Jai Gauri Devi-ki", "Jai Gauri Mata-ki". Having laid the images to rest, the organizers feel the relief of being disbanded from the rigorous the membership of an exacting party and rush home with great speed. There they take food with their in-laws who come to grace the occasion.

Gugari (maize boiled with Jaggery) is served to them. Some men had started preparing it from noon, so it got ready to be served when they returned from the temple. This is their Community dinner. All the hosts give one to two seers of maize for it. After this programme the guests and the hosts keep in gossiping. After mid night when Dasami starts, they are free to take wine and meat. First wine is offered to the guests. This programme is held individually at their houses. After offering the wine to the guests, hosts (men-women-children) drink it. Children who are of very small age also drink wine in small quantities. They all become intoxicated and sleep. They wake up the next sunny morning. 38 tins of wine were brought by the Bhil of Nai from Udaipur Distillery for that occasion. Such a final of the ceremony seems to mark the great relief of the member of the party who had undertaken the taboos of an exacting ritual spread over 40 days. It is after this tension-release that they feel once again normal members of the Community returning to its ordinary routine of life.

1. Deva served Clay Elephant to Phanda unit this year, and Amba Lal served to Kaliawas and Nai unit.
2. Village Kotada is served by Amba Lal and Bhanwar Lal.
3. Pai is served by Jeeta and Hemaji.
4. Choti-undari is served by Bhanwar Lal and Jeeta in common.

## APPENDIX

### Performances as displayed by the Gauri units on a single day.

Gauri is a complex of sacred and secular performances. The items displayed on a particular day vary from 8 to 10. These performances highlight the entertainment aspect of the festivities. Most of these festivities are of secular nature. In two of the items one of the major actors is a female deity, and the last item involves Shiv and Parvati. Short descriptions of the items as displayed by three Gauri units are given in the appendix. Sisarma and Tekari Gauri units displayed 10 items while Nai Gauri unit 8, during the festival days. Generally 8 items for entertainment are played by every Gauri unit. It is also interesting to note that content of the items, dress of the actors and the order of events happen to be similar and are known equally to the actors and the spectators. An account of the contents and make up material used in each item now be given:

#### 1. Bhanwaria-Bhanwari :

This is their first item in this series. Bhanwaria and Bhanwari both are Bhil youth. One day Bhanwari wishes to get honey. So she says to Bhanwaria to get meals ready quickly and go to the forest thus:

“Devar Kana re.....a ape Chala Magare Mal re,  
Rotale vela karo—Magre Chala re.”

They go to a hill called ‘Mal-ka-Magra’ to get honey. They start getting honey from a bee-hive; Bees sting them. They return to Devara and get blessing of Mataji, again they reach there, this time they succeed in getting honey.

Bhanwaria wears Dhoti, and covers a *garimar* some type of *angocha* a cloth on his chest. He holds a ‘Phumbari’ plant, in his hand. Bhanwari wears black *Lugari* (Sari), a *gagari* and *Kanchali* (blouse). She holds a *Khappar* (a clay vessel) in her hand. The faces of both are polished with coal powder.

#### 2. Goma—Meena:

This is second item of the series. Goma is a dacoit. He belongs to the Meena tribe. He is also wellknown by the nick-name-Mewali Meena. He has got a toli (party or group) under him. All start for their jobs. First they go to a temple. Mewali remembers all the deities in a song. A few lines of that song are :

“Choth Mata E,....., Thu huti he ke Jago,  
The mare Valpe rise, Mu chori Karva Jaon.

The sense involved in it, “O deity, are you sleeping or awake ! I am going for help me to get success”

In this way he gets blessings. He and his party go for daka they get success and bring many valuables. They again reach the devi temple. Mewali Meena cannot control himself and steals valuables from the idol of devi. Devi gets angry

and cannot tolerate such behaviour of these persons, and they are crushed by the supernatural power at the very moment. Goma or Mewali Meena wears Dhoti, Shirt and Red-yellow turban, and covers a ‘*Ga:imur*’ (a cloth on his chest or waist). He wears pearls in ears and holds ‘Dhuni’ a bow and an arrow, and a sword.

3. *Bhinyawals and Ambama'a*.—Bhinyawals are *Rakashasha* giants. Amba is a deity. This goddess is seated on a Lily flower in an ocean. These Bhinyawals have heard about Amba. They go to see and find chances for meeting Amba. When they start, wind is their horse, clouds are seats, lightning is Lagam which controls the course and they have got a golden chabuk (a stick).

They invite the Amba who is still a virgin to get ready for a marriage.

Aadi re Vaigi Jalri deranki.

Aadi re vigi Jal ri Machari.

Barcha ro mando, more kikada.

Vadai ne mu vivah rachaon.

Amba says : “You are an innocent bachelor. I am an innocent virgin—so let the hands be united.”

Thui he agan Kunwaro

Mui hu agan Kunwari

ki lage hatheli dag.

In this way Amba agrees to marry Bhinyawals. A day is fixed for the marriage. Bhinyawals come. Both the Bhinyawals dance with great enthusiasm. But the other deities intervene and kill the demons before they can get married to Amba.

Amba wears yellow red *Sari*, red *gagri* and *Kachali*. She wears *Nath*, in nose, *Rakhudi* (armlet) on arms and holds a sword in one hand. Bhinyawal wears narrow white trousers, red or black *garimar* on the chest, and red or yellow turban on the head. Each Bhinyawal has two wooden horns fixed on his head.

4. *Kaloo Kir and Amba*.—In this story Amba is a Bhil woman (Bhilani) wife of Kaloo Kir. Once she goes to take bath at sea. In the sea there is a ‘Rohi Machala’ a big fish, who snatches *Mundari* (ring) of Amba when she is taking bath. She atonce returns to her house and tells the event.

Amba —“Kaloo Kir E.....Marc Rohi Machalo

Mundari gatiygo re,

Thu huto he ke Jage re—

Kir— Amba E.....Mu Jaon Samundar tirc.....

He takes a net with him and goes to the sea. He tries hard to catch the fish but that big fish cannot be controlled. Then he comes to devi Mandir, prays there to help him in his work. He gets the blessing and again goes to the sea, throws the net, the fish comes in his control, and the ring is taken out from his belly.

Kaloo Kir wears red-yellow turban, white *dhotiya*, a coloured shirt and holds a cane. Amba wears red or yellow clothes. Their faces are polished with powder.

After this item Sisarma and Tekari Gauri units played 'Jata wala Babaji', Nai Gauri unit did not play this item.

4. (a) A baba puts on a lot of artificial hair, comes to witness the scenes and asks "are all these people children of one mother?" "No" he is told. Then he asks what the collectivity is therefor. He is told of observances in honour of Shankar, Parvati. He seeks permission to witness the same. With Shankar in the middle and two *Rais* on either side, the baba wants to have a gaze of the deities. He is prevented by a piece of cloth from seeing them. After some frolics he goes behind Shankar and says "I am also Shankar. I will take these two women." He is told that the ladies would come only if he, like Shankar, could dance on one leg. He obliges. Then he is asked to perform all the activities that fall within the division of labour of women, like grinding corn and preparing bread. After the Baba is made to do these 'womanly' activities, he is asked to get the lady seated on his shoulders. He does that too and then tries to run away in the same situation, but so prevented from doing the same. The story is connected with Bhasanasur.

5. *Khaliya Bhoot and Kheturi*.—It is a very interesting item. At the field of a Bhil there is a ghost, called Khaliya Bhoot. The Bhil did not care for this ghost nor invited him to feast. The Ghost gets after the Bhil's young and beautiful daughter. One day he appears before the Bhil with his friend. Katkudadia (the mediator between deities or ghosts and Bhils, who directly talks with persons who becomes any deity or ghost as Buria and Amba, Bhiyawals and Khaliya Bhoot) who plays the role of Bhil enters into conversation with the ghost.

Katkudadia—"Bol re Dokaria"

Ghost—"Sun sun re Angar Toru, Bangar todru, Khetri thari, Pyari Khetili Kali Khakhar, Khanya, Jimae, hamko ni Kalpya, isiliye teri Khetali ko Legya." (You never remember me on any feast and therefore I got after your daughter).

Katkudadia—"Kai Karta Chore" (when you will leave her).

Khaliya Bhoot—"Barah Man Bakara, Barah ganiya ro tel, Barah minda ri jod, Barah Bhatiya ro daru, Jadi thari khetuli ro pan chodu. Ni to Mari Bhunri Bhadika maro, teri Khetuli Kunwari ke Parni, han ko pran de "Aakas mele Chadh Jaon" And then he catches the Khetali and press her. (I require twelve maunds Guguari prepared of maize sweet oil from twelve oil pressing units, twelve goats and wine from twelve distillery units and unless you present these to me I would not leave her). In the play, persons who become Khaliya Bhoot and his friend other Bhoot, cover green grass round their whole body and look like a ghost. When they press Khetudi, grass falls from the body.

6. *Bai Sah ki Fauj*.—After the item of Khaliya Bhoot many Gauri units present 'Badsah ki Fauz'—the army of the Angres Badsah (English emperor). The army enters hilly forest area, where it has to face the tribal Bhils. Both the

parties fight—Angrej army has got modern weapons while the Bhil fight with old weapons—the Bhalla, Barcha, swords and the arrows and bows. This scene is shown in this item.

Persons who play roles of army men wear, torn hats and panted shirts and polish face with powder. Nai Gauri unit did not play this item, in the series except for one day.

7. *Nahar and Kalaka*.—Their next game is Nahar and Kalaka Mata. One man becomes Nahar i. e. a lion and the other become Kalaka. Kalaka comes to bless the people. Gauri The Nahar (lion) is her pet animal who always lives with her. People who see the programmes stand, or are seated in a circle. Kalaka and lion go round the circle 3 to 5 times. The lion jumps many times, when he moves round the circle. Women put their little children on the ground. The lion blesses them putting his hand on their head or touching any part of their body. Kalaka does not touch any one, she simply goes round the circle. Her one hand always stands in a blessing position.

When Kalaka and the lion have moved round the circle for 3 to 5 times. Kalaka goes again to the green room. Person who became Nahar is given bath atonce on the spot and thereby returned quickly back to his normal ritual status unaffected by an evil eye.

These Bhils are experts in the make up. Persons who become Nahar really looked like a lion. Yellow, red, green white lines are drawn on his whole body. One who becomes Amba Mata looks a devi, wears devi's dress—and holds sword and Aarati.

8. *Banjara and Dani*.—Banjara is a millionaire trader. He and his wife go to sell and purchase Jewels. They put their goods on a bullock. They have to pass through a dangerous forest so they remember deities and gods to secure safety. A few lines of that song are.

A re B njara e.....are devi Sumaru Sarda re.....Sumaru Gajanand or devia re.....

Praying deities and gods they move ahead. On the way a *Sarkari dani*, Government Official incharge of excise and duty meets them and asks for the Government duty. The Banjara replied. "I will not pay the duty as I had never paid such". Further he says with emphasis.

Char khunt Chawada Bhan phiroo-mo dan nahi chukaon. Me lakha ra Banjara-mere dan nahi lagati. (We have travelled all the four corners—we do not pay taxes we—are Banjaras with lakhs of rupees—we are not the ones to be taxed).

But the dani does not excuse him. He is somewhat romantic by nature and wishes to dance and enjoy with Banjarin by excusing them from paying the duty. Banjara and Banjarin think that if by dancing with him, the official may be pleased they excused from the duty, then there is no harm in it. The Banjara allows

the *dari* to dance with his wife. The dani enjoys a lot of pleasure in dancing with that woman. But after this he again reminds him of the dan (duty). He is not ready to let them go at any cost except payment of duty. After all they have to pay the Government duty to dani and then only proceed further.

9. *Banjara and Kandi*.—When some-how they go ahead, they find themselves in the interior parts of the forest. There they have to face Kandi, a Dacoit. Kandi wants to snatch all their property. The Banjara says very badly "No you cannot touch these valuables", and becomes angry on Kandi. The Banjara thinks he is protected by the deities so none can destroy him and his property. He tells Kandi "Are manja re mana re manja" Kandi says. "Ni manu-Ni manu" They both begin to fight. Banjara has got a sword and a lance whereas Kandi a bow and arrow and a dagger. They fight very bitterly. The Banjara repeats above sentences again and again "run away otherwise I will crush you", but Kandi does not worry about it. In first 3 or 4 bouts Kandi is wounded by the sword of Banjara. He is taken to Devi Mandir he is recovered each time. After that the Banjara is wounded so bitterly that he dies at once. Kandi snatches all his property.

The Banjara wears white narrow—*chudidar* pajama, *Satan ki ceruzni*, good type of safa (turban) and *Turi Choga* are applied on safa. He wears a watch and a chain.

The Banjarin wears coloured dress which is worn by Mewari ladies on special occasion.

Dani wears red turban or a hat on the head, white coat and narrow trouser or white pant. He holds an umbrella in his hand. All these apply powder to their faces.

Kandi wears *Dhotiya*, *Asrimar* (a piece of black cloth covers his chest) his hands and face are coloured with coal powder. He ties leaves of Neem round his ears. He holds a dagger in one hand and bow and arrow in the other.

10. *Shiv Parvati*.—Just after this item they present their last performance Shiv and Parvati. Any Gauri unit may show more than these items but those extra items are always shown before the Kalka and Nahar, they close their performance always by Shiv and Parvati.

Shiv and Parvati visit the earth. Shiv is the MOODY one. In one of his brisk walks he forgets that Parvati is also with him. When he has reached a long distance from Parvati, some Bhils call "Shivji Maharaj, O Shivji Maharaj where is your Parvati." Shivji does not hear these words for some time. But when they repeat the same sentence again and again, his attention drawn and asks "Where is she, was with me, where has she been lost" Bhils say "We know and can tell you where she is, provided you do one work for us. One man has died in our Khem (habitation) and if you restore his life, we will show you where Parvati is" Shiv gives him (dead body which is of the Banjara) new life. The Bhil indicate to Shiv where Parvati is seated in a displeased mood. When Shiv sees her, she protests with indignation and suggests that she is not ready to come with one who does not

take any care of her. In this connection a song is sung, which shows displeasure of Parvati and the answers to her by Shiv. A few lines are given below.—

Parvati . Me Machali ban Samundarme Chali Jaonji. Kesar ki Kyario.....Phulo  
On ki Kyari me rahu apse nyari O.

Shiv . Me Rohi Machala ban Sagar me Chala aonga, a re Paked Khinch Kar  
tum ko le jaonga, A re.....challo hamare sang.....

Parvati . Me Sapani vaine badali me gus jaonji our pyaria chali jaonji. Kesar  
ki.....

Shiv . Me Khanda me talwar mel karle chala aonga. A re ese.....

Parvati . Me Hirani bankar Jangal me chali jaonga, aap katasu laoga—Kesar ki..

Shiv . Me Shikari ban kar aonga aur mar Bandukse Pakad kar le aonga. A re  
ese.....

Parvati ; Me agni ban kar pather me chali jaonji aap katasu laoga, Kesar ki.....

Shiv . Me Chak mak ban kar aonga our mar thek kar pakad laonga, A re ese..

These lines indicate how Parvati would assume various forms and live alone and Shivji answers that in each of the forms he would pursue her and bring her back.