CHAPTER III

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The present study was conducted in Nagpur City, the headquarters of Nagpur District and the second capital of Maharastra State, India. The city is at the center of the country situated at longitude 21.09° North and 79.09° East latitude. The entire Vidarbha region, in which Nagpur is situated, is rich with forests and has been highly endemic for malaria. The climate is generally dry and hot. The district is also considered as the capital zone of the Gond region named after the indigenous tribal people of the area. Nagpur District is spread up to Bhandara District towards the east and Wardha District towards the west. The district has 1658 villages with a total population of 32,37,000 (the Times of India, 1999). Nagpur City, though comparatively small in size (217.66 sq. km.), is thickly populated. According to 1981 Census, the city has a population of 12,17,461 persons (as per a recent estimation more than 2.5 million) with a density of 5,605 persons per sq km. The British had selected Nagpur as one of the premier cities for commercial exchange. Later, the city experienced a lot of inflow of people from other areas. Being centrally located and with wide transport facilities, it became one of the preferred cities of India for trade and commerce. The city attracted important business communities like Sindhi, Gujarati, Marwari and Punjabi, which constitute a considerable fraction of the city population today. Following the partition of India, the Government of India decided to rehabilitate part of the Sindhi refugees from Pakistan at Nagpur and established camps for them in the city. Many of them became the permanent settlers of the city.

The Sindhi

The Sindhi people are known by the name of their ancestral homeland the Sindh, once part of India and now in Pakistan. The boundaries of Sindh are attached with parts of present day Punjab, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Cutchh province of India in east and with Afganistan and Balochistan in west. Sindh or Sindhu is probably named after the river, popularly known as
Indus. Rich and verdant plains of Sindh have always been able to satisfy the immediate requirements of people for survival and has proved tempting to invading people from Scythian, Parthian, Kushans, Huns, Iranis, and Greeks, who left their mark on the culture of the people of Sindh region. Throughout centuries, when amalgamation took place between Aryan, Dravidian, Mongolian and other races, which formed the Hindu religious system in undivided India, the Sindhi remained as the Aryan torchbearers. Sindhi characters are found in the Hindu epics of Ramayana and Mahabharat. In India, 93% of the Sindhi are Hindu, 4% are Muslim and the rest belong to other religions.

Figure 3.1: Diagram map of Sind showing the sections as known to Sindhi people recalled for linguistic divisions.

Origin and early migration
The history and origin of the Sindhis has been a matter of debate to anthropologists for a long time. Various racial elements furnished by the skeletal remnants from the Sind and adjacent areas suggest preponderance of Mediterranean mark (encyclopedia of Human evolution), whereas linguistic studies point towards a further mix up of Dravidian elements (Thakur 1959).
Regarding the ancestry of the Dardic and neo-Dardic people of the Sindh region, the exclusion of north and east part of the Indus valley leaves the only possible option of the western Iranian plateau in continuum with the extended Mesopotamian (Tigris-Euphrates valley) urban civilization. However, the archaeological evidences suggest indigenous development of urban civilization in Indus valley, though linguistic and historical evidence support an array of migration, invasion and admixture of people from the west into the valley. The use of wheat, horse and trading occupation along with settled agricultural societies suggest a buffering of new migrant Aryans from high Iranian uplands with the indigenous population of Indus which had an early spread up to Gujarat in south and Punjab in north (Chard 1969). The further archaeological evidences suggest that the racial types of the people of the Indus valley had a similar phenotypic character with that of modern local settlers, but were highly heterogeneous. Nevertheless, Indication of amalgamation with the later invaders without much genetic changes cannot be ruled out (ibid: 252).

Figure 3.2: Postulated route of linguistic and material culture flow to Sind (schematic).

Fairservis (1992) and Zvelebil postulate that an early immigration by the Dravidian speaking tribes in about 3500 – 4000 BC from the mountains of east Iran into the Indus valley is evident. The Dravidians were pastoral hill tribes most probably emerged from further east of the Mesopotamia and had a little connection with the Iranian people. They migrated through the Kohistan area of Balochistan and after a period of acculturation with the Indus people started settled agriculture of rice and millet. Later they moved further south and through the Rajputana, Gujarat and Maharastra; settled in the South Indian peninsula in Tamilnadu and
Karnataka. In addition to these western elements (Dravidian, pre Iranian), there were also local inhabitants of Sindh who were more or less influenced by the para-Munda trace. So it can be summed up that the south Indus area (present ‘Sind’) is influenced by a combination of several cultural entities like Indus language groups, eastern Munda speakers, migrants from Iran and far west, old Iranian tribes from Balochistan, Kutchhi and Dravidian immigrants from inner core of Indus Aryan linguistic area.

Recently with the advancement in the techniques of molecular biology especially in the recombinant DNA analyses, a link of Sindhis can be traced with the Mediterranean people. The β-thalassaemia mutations in this part of the continent also points towards a Mediterranean origin of the people of Sindh, Multan, Punjab and Balochistan (c.f., Subbarao 1958). Thakur explains the invasions in Sind as the major causes of the racial and communal diversity among the people of Sind. First the Greek invasions up to the north central Sind, and later the Scythian and Parthian invasions to lower and eastern Sind has increased the diversity among the inhabitants of Sind. He further explains that a majority of eastern and lower Sind people has more Scythian and less Aryan elements in them. The further assimilation with the people of Turkistan, Khorasan and Arab has added to the Aryan element among the northern Sind people (Thakur 1959).

This population traditionally lived in Sindh province, once part of India but is now in Pakistan. Successive invasions of a wide variety of people have left their mark on the culture of the Sindhi Hindus. Sindh or Sindhi is the native name for the river known more popularly as the Indus. This river runs from north to south through the province of Sindh and has by its position and functions literally carved three specific geographic areas. In the east lies the inhospitable desert; in the west the rugged desolate hill country and lastly the central fertile plains of the Sindh where most of the rich history of Sindh has occurred. Rich and verdant, the plain areas of Sindh have always been able to satisfy the immediate requirements for survival and have proved tempting to invading people. The boundaries of Sindh are comprised of and include parts of present day Punjab (India), Gujarat (India), Rajasthan (India), and Cutchh (India), Afghanistan & Balochistan. Although the mountainous and desert areas afforded a certain degree of protection from invasion, two trade routes enabled invading people to enter Sindh which became known as the Gateway of India. These routes
were as follows. In the north that which extended from Kabul to the middle Indus basin and in the south that which connected south Iran with north Balochistan and then led into the south Indus valley. Through these routes came invasions from Scythians, Parthians, Kushans, Huns, Irani and Greeks and other ancient people. In addition various other people have left their mark on the culture of Sindh.

Language
Though the Persian, Arabs, Mughals, Britishers and others left their influence over Sindhi language, yet except a few words here and there from other languages, Sindhi language has continued to remain more or less pure and alive. Sindhi community is linguistically classified under the Indo-Aryan family and is considered to be one of the outer sub-branches of the family assimilated with the Dardic group of languages. The Dardic group of language (Grierson 1927) influences both the Sindhi and Lahnda (predominant language groups of Sindh and Punjab of Pakistan and northwest frontier provinces). The zone inhabited by the speakers of these languages in the northwest area of West Pakistan is called the ‘Dardistan’. The Aryan / Proto-Aryan group of people and speakers of Iranian language developed in Persia, migrated further east through the Hindukush (in one or more waves) to Dardistan (Lambrick 1974).

Early history supports a tribal influence among the inhabitants and the early migrants, the Aryan of Persia who later mixed up with the successive Aryan invaders into the area. The homogeneity and the specific identity of these people could be conserved owing to the inhospitable and rugged geographical character of the belt and later slowly developed into a ‘hybrid’ of Iranian (proto Persian-Persian) and Dardic language groups. The later subsequent migrations from the northern area (Iranian highland and Brahui-Pushto dominated eastern Balochistan) opened the route to further mixing up of the Iranian and Dardic speakers.

During the spread of Buddhism, invasions of Aryans was still continued, the fascination being mainly the conquest for land and trade, and also the rich cultural diversity of the Indus Valley civilization people or the ‘Indians’. Waves of migrations and wars with the dynasties from west (central Russia, Iranian uplands and Greece) are noted. The gradual adaptation to the food habits, cultural traits and material culture by the Indus settlers brought in the new
comer Aryans and Persians (traders and herders) to further conquest and settled agriculture based life. History further notes that invasions followed after the Alexander the great (327 BC), by the Greek dynasties who founded kingdom in Sindh and Punjab. The later invaders were Scythian, Parthian, Kushan, Huns, Mughal and Muslims till date (Sorley 1968).

For its isolated geographical position, Sindh still has retained its linguistic and cultural specificity and has preserved the identity from historical time. To its southeast, a linguistic assimilation and influence can be observed with the ‘Kutchhi’ of Gujarat, who trace back their origin somewhere in lower Sindh about in thirteenth century BC (in Chapter XIII of Grierson’s Classification of Indian Languages, 1927). In many phoenical aspects, Sindhi show peculiarly distinctiveness and primitiveness unlike even the linked Lahnda and other Indian languages.

**Socio-economic status and occupation**

The Hindus in Sindh (in Pakistan) were part of the great family of Lohano, which is divided and subdivided into many branches. The divisions are primarily on the basis of occupation. The two main classes are as follows. The Amils or people working under government sectors filled many appointments in the civil service. This conferred a status upon them, which set them above others and was marked by a difference in attire. In the past they worked for Muslim rulers who often gave gifts of land in return. Thus they became small landowners known as Zamindaars or Jageerdaars. Under British rule, these were transformed into administrative posts and they held positions of collectors and commissioners, highly respected by the British as well as the common people of Sindh. The other large groups of Hindus were involved in trade and commerce, were popularly known as Bhaibandh. Those Sindhi traders or Bhaibandh who used to carry their business to other parts were known by the name Huvarki and some of them established trading posts in different parts of the world. They were mainly dealing in fabrics. Many were extremely rich and their women-folk were renowned for their rich dress and bejeweled appearance. The Shikarpuri of the Sindh were bankers who carried their business to the Middle East and the Vanya (or Vania) were shopkeepers of all types. Sindhi themselves had no untouchable caste, which in other Indian societies did the menial work.
Various theories abound as to the exact origins of these Lohano (or Lohana). Connections between them and with the Dravidian and Vedic cultures are apparent from the manner of worship they still conduct. For instance some Sindhi still worship the Varuna God as it used to be worshiped by the Aryans, while others worship Shiva. Another connection is the worship of the water god Uderolal. Most people believe that the Indus valley is the original home of the Lohano although a small minority feel that they may be an immigrant group from the Punjab or Kutchh (or Cutchh) because of the similar sounding names (Hiranandani 1980, c.f. Aileen Wortley 1998).

One of the theories about the origin of the Lohanas, depicts that these people are originated in Lohargarh, northeast of Sindh province and later have migrated to the Cutchh and Gujarat of India sometime around 1200 to 1350 AD (Shanbhag and Bhatia 1974). Studies done on them have shown linguistic and cultural similarities with Hindu Sindhi. Moreover the extents of commonness in surnames and Nukh (a lineage like division) with that of the Sindhi are also prominent (c.f., Mishra 1998).

One of the most striking features of the Sindhi Hindus is their lack of emphasis on the caste system as of importance. This is in contrast to almost any other Hindu groups in India. There is no doubt that it is the feature, which gives Sindhi their distinct and unusual adaptability, which is reflected in many aspects of their culture. Indeed, Sindhi are regarded as a rather decadent example of Hinduism by most Hindus, because of the non-rigid traditions and are considered to have condemned their 'caste-less' sectarian approach ridiculing the non-parochial behavior.

The lack of Brahmins in Sindhi society is reputed to be a legacy of one of the invading people of Sindh. Brahmins in pre-partition-Sindh are likely to have been imported from neighboring states to preside over ritual ceremonies (Hiranandani 1980, c.f. Aileen Wortley 1998). Those who do exist have lost their caste hierarchy; few are experts in Hindu culture or intellectual pursuits and are generally considered backward by Sindhi. This of course is uncommon in most other communities of India. In post partition period, in migrated Sindhi population, ‘Brahmin Sindhi’, however, do exist as a minority caste performing ritual ceremonies. They practice endogamy (ex: the surnames Sharma, Udhasi).
Marriage Pattern

Except all these occupational and traditional divisions among the Sindhi, another division is also identified which classifies the subgroups on the basis of the regional origin of the ancestors. Similar divisions have been reported in Lohanas by Bhatia et al (1976) and in Sindhi by Thakur (1959). The Sahiti (possibly a remnant of the ‘Sahata’ sept of the ‘Sama’ tribe) are disposed to derive the ‘Sahiti’ identity from a prosperous village in Nawabshah District of central Sindh. The Ghotki owe their separate identity from the village ‘Ghotki’ in Sukkur District and the Larkana (or Ladkana) people are those migrants originated from the district Larkana. These subgroups (or subdivisions) practice preferential subgroup endogamy but avoid marriage among the closely related. The surnames and the lineage identity (Nukh) are strictly considered as exogamous units. However the trend of subgroup endogamy is now less strict as per the observation of Daswani and Parchani (1978). The problem of the depressed classes did not exist, there was less of a stigma attached to widow remarriage and child marriage was not a feature of their custom.

Distribution of the Sindhi in India

In 1947 following the partition between India and Pakistan, the Sindhis (specifically Hindu Sindhis) migrated in bulks from the Sindh province (including the North-West Frontier District) to the primary settlement zones in different parts of India. Their early settlements in India were mainly in Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Maharashtra. Rajasthan received a maximum of 43.85% of emigrants during 1950-1960 (Ansari 1994). They were rehabilitated in temporary settlement camps in different areas, from where many of them primarily in kin groups moved later to other states. Their dispersion was radical and the random pattern of their migration has also been attributed to one of the causes of their gradual cultural disintegration and loss of their group solidarity. In fact, during this internal mobility, Sindhis who originated from adjacent places in Pakistan preferred to move together.

Population

Prior to the partition in 1947, there were about 20 million Sindhi in Sindh. About 21% of them were Hindu. According to one source (Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore report) there were 13,71,932 Sindhi speaking people in 1961 in India, which increased by 22% to 16,76,728 in 1971. During the period 1961 to 1971, while some states of India
experienced increase of Sindhi population by 10-30% in others there was decrease due to internal migration in connection with occupational and marital mobility. In Maharashtra alone there were 4,32,073 Sindhi speaking persons in 1971. The population figure had shown a rise of about 27% from that of the estimate in 1961 (Durrant 2000).

In Nagpur of Maharashtra, where the present study was made, their major concentrations were in three settlements established during the partition in 1947, are situated in three extreme corners of the city, namely Jaripatka (north Nagpur) the largest Sindhi settlement, Khamla (south Nagpur) and Vardhaman Nagar (northeast Nagpur). Samples for the present study was
also collected from Shantinagar settlement. The Sindhi population in these four settlements were about 30,000 (Jaripatka), 15,000 (Vardhaman Nagar), 10,000 (Khamla), and 5,000 (Shanti Nagar). Sindhi people were also found settled in places outside their original settlement all over Nagpur City. The total Sindhi population in Nagpur is about 75,000 to 1,00,000.

Subgroups

Sindhis in their homeland Sindh were divided into a number of subgroups named after the place of habitation under the diverse geo-physical condition of Sindh. It is believed that certain subgroups were distinguishable to a large extent on the basis of morphology and specific cultural practices. It has been reported earlier that the Sindhi subgroups were almost strictly endogamous with negligible frequencies of marriages between subgroups before the partition. River ‘Sind’ used to play crucial role in the intermarriages between certain subgroups.

Evidence of marriages between Sahiti (mostly the people of Nawabshah District, Karachi, and Thatta) and Ladkana or Dadu subgroups in Pakistan, has been reported (Thakur 1959, Daswani and Parchani 1978). Sakhrus and Ghotki were reported following the practice of subgroup endogamy strictly. Preference for any specific subgroup by another subgroup during mate selection was generally due to its higher socio-cultural status and/or economic condition. For example, the Ghotki being an agricultural group is considered lower in status in comparison to Sahiti and Ladkana because of the latter's higher status in business and education (Bhaibands and Amils). Even the Sakhrus, who share the geographical area with the Ghotki are generally not considered during the selection of mate by the subgroups of higher status. Earlier the Sakhrus used to be considered as 'Riyasati' or landlord, and they used to own most of the agricultural and non-agricultural land of the district including Ghotki taluqa. Their hierarchical position and superiority continued to prevail until partition. Sakhrus in Pakistan rarely have marriage alliances outside their own group. A similar trend is also observed among the Ghotki.

After the partition, the trend of differential preference to subgroups during mate selection is not prominent in India (Daswani and Parchani 1978). The subgroups are gradually becoming
less and less rigid in respect of obeying their earlier strictness of the rule of endogamy. Though subgroup endogamy continued to be the general preference, inter-subgroup marriage rate is on the rise. The smaller the subgroup, the larger is the extent of preference for inter-subgroup marriage.

Even after migration following the partition, most of the Sindhis continued to retain their subgroup identity, which they used to have at their ancestral places. These subgroups in India are believed to be largely endogamous and they differ from one another in respect to the dialect the people speak (especially the syntax and phonetics part of the language). Their settlements in India have varying proportion of representation from different subgroups. For example: Ghotki and Sahiti are numerically strong in Jaripatka, whereas in a comparatively small settlement at Vardhaman Nagar there were more households of Chhapru than any other subgroups. In numerical strength, Ladkana and Ghotki subgroups ranked first and second respectively in Nagpur City, where as the Sakhru subgroup ranked fifth. Kamptee, another settlement 20km away has a considerable number of Sakhru families. The settlements in the adjacent districts of Nagpur are also having different subgroups of Sindhis. Amravati District has more Bahawalpuri than other Sindhis. Wardha was having more Ladkana and Dadu Sindhis followed by Sahiti, but only few were Sakhru. Similarly, in Hinganghat division, Ladkana and Dadu are the numerically strong subgroups.

People of these subgroups used to practice strict surname (both paternal and maternal) and Nukh (lineage like division) exogamy. But with the advancement of time, a gradual inclination towards marriage between subgroups is observed. Economic and educational statuses are now being considered as the preferential criteria during matrimonial alliances. The Sindhis practice levirate (preferably junior) and sororate marriages in very low scale. Cases of polygyny are rare among them. Marriage by exchange (‘tako-fero’) i.e. marriage of a bride’s sister / brother with groom’s brother / sister is also practiced.

Surname
It is believed that Sindhi used to have limited number of surnames by which they could be distinguished from other communities. The patrilineal inheritance of surname though is a common occurrence in Sindhi families, it is interrupted frequently by assigning new surname to the child. Because of this, one finds numerous surnames among the Sindhis. Most of these
surnames are after the names of their renowned ancestors. Normally the people add 'ani' as suffix to the name of the ancestor. For example 'Kewalramani' is derived from 'Kewalram'; but 'Advani' is deduced from 'Adumal'. Some surnames are also derived from the Nukh names, like Makhijani from 'Makhija', Ahuja from 'Ahuja', Poptani from 'Popat', Lalwani from 'Lallan' etc. These Nukh and surnames are often found restricted to specific geographical area, but some of the surnames are also found in more than one subgroup. For example: Advani, Kewalramani, Hemrajani, Wadhwani, Gidwani are found only among Ghotkis; and Rughwani, Kishnani, Gurbani, Vidhani are exclusive to Sahitis; whereas, Mulchandani, Multani, Jawahirani, Manchani are common among Dadu and Lankana subgroups of Sindhi. Similarly, Lalwani is found among Sahiti, Ghotki and Lankana; Valechha is found both among Ghotki and Sakhr; Ahuja among Ghotki and Lankana; Chug among Quetta and Balochis. Sharma is found only among the Sindhi Brahmans. A list of Sindhi surnames of Nagpur City is given in Appendix - II.

Sindhis in Nagpur City can be summed up as:

- Sindhis of Nagpur City have different intra-community territorial subgroups formed on the basis of ancestral place of origin. These subgroups are well differentiated from each other both culturally and linguistically and are endogamous in nature.

- Subgroups of Sindhis are distributed in different settlements of Nagpur City with a varied numerical strength in each of these settlements. Four such numerically large subgroups could be delineated, though many other comparatively smaller territorial groups could also be identified. Each settlement is further shared by a number of panchayats.

- Surnames among the Sindhis of Nagpur City are derived either from the names of their ancestors or from the nukh. But the peculiarity is that a few of them are specific to certain subgroups whereas others are common across the subgroups. Strict surname and nukh exogamy is followed during matrimonial negotiations and alliances.

- During partition of India, Sindhis have migrated from the Sindh province and later on settled down in different parts of the country. In Nagpur City a majority of Sindhis are traced to have settled down by a course of further lineal migration from Rajasthan,
Gujarat and Bombay. The internal migration is still continued especially in this part of the country.

- Sindhis of Nagpur City are Hindu, worshipping a large number of Hindu gods & goddesses. They visit both Hindu temples, as well as Gurdwara regularly. 'Jhulelal' is worshipped almost by every one among the Sindhis. The Sindhi surnames commonly found in Nagpur City are given below. A majority of surnames are specific to one or more subgroups. Some surnames are exclusive to particular subgroups.

- Cases of adoption are also reported. Their literacy rate is average, however in older generations it was low. The Sindhi script, earlier in Pakistan was mainly ‘Aarbi’ (Aarbi Sindhi), but now they have adopted devnagari script (Hindi-Sindhi). Sindh province can be subdivided into four major Sindhi linguistic zones; namely, (i) Vicholi (ii) Siraiki (iii) Lari and (iv) Lasi. There are other two (Thari & Kachhi or Kutchhi) linguistic zones, which are mixed with Marwari & Gujarati dialects respectively. Vicholi linguistic zone is shared by Sahiti at the core, Hyderabadi people in the southern part. Ghotki & Sakhrū in the northeastern part are under Siraiki linguistic zone where as the Lasi zone covers Karachi & Thatta people. Ladkana, Shikarpuri & Khairpuri share the Siraiki zone in the northern part of Sindh province. Here it would be interesting to note that the subgroups of Lohanas i.e. Halai and Ghoghari also share the common linguistic zones with Sahiti. Bahawalpuri are counted under the extreme north boundary of Siraiki language zone, which has an affinity to Multani dialect (commonly spoken by Punjabis).