

# THE SAHARIAS

*Dr. T. B. NAIK*



**TRIBAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING INSTITUTE  
GUJARAT VIDYAPITH, AHMEDABAD-380 014**



Tribal Research and Training Institute Series No. 22

# THE SAHARIAS

*Dr. T. B. Naik*



**TRIBAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING INSTITUTE**  
**GUJARAT VIDYAPITH, AHMEDABAD-380 014**



Published by  
Vinodbhai Revashankar Tripathi  
Secretary  
Gujarat Vidyapith Mandal  
Gujarat Vidyapith  
Ahmedabad-380 014

First Edition: June 1984  
1,000 Copies

© Gujarat Vidyapith

Price: Rs. 25

Printed by  
Jitendra Thakorbbhai Desai  
Navajivan Press  
Ahmedabad-380 014

## FOREWORD

The distinguished Anthropologist Prof. T. B. Naik had the unique opportunity of working as the founder Director of the Tribal Research Institute, Chhindwara, in the State of Madhya Pradesh, which has the largest tribal population in India. He continues to carry on his work in Tribal Culture and as the Director of the Tribal Research and Training Institute, Gujarat Vidyapith, Ahmedabad.

He was the first Prof. and Head of the Department of Anthropology of the Ravishankar University, Raipur and continues to head the same department in the Gujarat Vidyapith Ahmedabad. In the course of his field work in Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat spreading over nearly four decades, he has contributed many valuable monographs on tribal life and culture and the present one also, I am sure, would be a significant contribution in unfolding a hitherto unknown tribal community of our neighbouring State.

Dr. Naik has manifested an able and dedicated leadership in Teaching, Research and Extension in Social Anthropology and Tribal Culture. Such indepth studies on our hundreds of Tribes all essential to recognise and appreciate the vitality of our rich Tribal Culture though socially progressive languishes in economic backwardness. It is hoped that this monograph would be welcomed by social workers, anthropologists and administrators in meeting the challenge of Tribal Development in India.

27th April, 1984  
Gujarat Vidyapith  
Ahmedabad-380 014

PROF. RAMLAL PARIKH  
Vice-Chancellor



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I went to the Saharias off and on for studying them during a broad time-span beginning from the days when I was Director of the Tribal Research and Training Institute, Chhindwara, Madhya Pradesh (1954 onwards) through when I was Additional Director and Director, Public Instruction, MP (1974-78). In those days every one concerned with me was helpful to me in the study. That means, a number of my Research Assistants and Research and Field Officers of the Tribal Research Institute, MP and Divisional Superintendent of Education and District Education Officers and Principals of Higher Secondary Schools of the Gwalior Division, MP, directly or indirectly helped me in collecting the data about this tribe and in putting them in a readable form. Whatever good there is in this book is their contribution; the drawbacks belong to me. I thank those old colleagues for all that they did for this work. To all the Saharia friends and informants my grateful thanks for standing my queries patiently and for always welcoming me in their midst.

I am extremely grateful to Prof. Ramlal Parikh, Vice-Chancellor of the Gujarat Vidyapith, whose academic vision and dynamism has strengthened my idea that Social Anthropology has to be a discipline concerned with the study and eradication of poverty, with peace and microplanning, with decentralized village industries and participatory development and that all local actions must be set in global terms. Prof. Parikh has constantly encouraged me in various ways including the publication of this book so that it can be of some use for the guided development of the concerned primitive group. I also thank Shri Vinod Tripathi, Registrar, Gujarat Vidyapith, who has a flair for trouble shooting, for sorting out various difficulties (before they ever arose!) during the publication of this book. I have discussed various aspects of the culture of the Saharias with my colleagues in the Tribal Research and Training Institute and in the Department of Social Anthropology, Gujarat Vidyapith and they have been much helpful to me in clarifying some of my ideas about the culture of the primitive groups. I am grateful to them for their cooperation in this and all other work that we are doing here.

Shri Jitendra Desai, Managing Trustee of the Navajivan Press has done really good job of a shabby manuscript. He has earned my gratitude for this kindness.

7-5-1984

Gujarat Vidyapith  
Ahmedabad-380 014

T. B. NAIK

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In compliance with the recommendation made by the Dhebar Commission on Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission, to study the tribals who are comparatively in the undeveloped stage of economy, the present study was undertaken with a view to understand Saharia culture and their problems of economic development.

In fact traditional monographs of this type are now going out of fashion but it must be admitted that our knowledge of tribal cultures is still inadequate. About the Saharia tribe also there is no past record and even pioneers like Russel and Hiralal have not written any thing on this tribe.

The present study concerns the Saharia tribe of Morena district only but the findings are equally applicable to other parts of the State inhabited by this tribe though some regional differences are bound to be there. Though all the aspects of Saharia culture have been given equal place in the report, special emphasis has been laid on their economy so that a plan of economic development could be made for their uplift.

### **The Saharia country :**

The Saharias are chiefly concentrated in the Bhind, Morena, Gwalior, Shivpuri, Guna and Vidisha districts of Madhya Pradesh and also in Rajasthan. The latest population figures of the tribe are not available but on the basis of 1951 census, population figures of this tribe for former Madhya Bharat and Bhopal regions are given below. Saharias are not in the list of Scheduled Tribes in Vindhya Pradesh and Mahakaushal regions.



| S. No. | District | Population |
|--------|----------|------------|
| 1.     | Bhind    | 378        |
| 2.     | Gind     | 10,913     |
| 3.     | Morena   | 21,941     |
| 4.     | Shivpuri | 41,709     |
| 5.     | Guna     | 28,188     |
| 6.     | Rajgarh  | 898        |
| 7.     | Shajapur | 101        |
| 8.     | Ujjain   | 12         |
| 9.     | Ratlam   | -          |
| 10.    | Mandsaur | -          |
| 11.    | Bhilsa   | 13,022     |
| 12.    | Indore   | 209        |
| 13.    | Dewas    | 49         |
| 14.    | Dhar     | 1,18,738   |
| 15.    | Jhabua   | -          |
| 16.    | Khargone | 31         |
| 17.    | Sehore   | 7,579      |
| 18.    | Raisen   | 26,289     |

Details of SEHARIA Population in M.P. according to 1971 Census are as follows:

| S.No | Dist.     | Rural   |        |        | Urban   |      |        |
|------|-----------|---------|--------|--------|---------|------|--------|
|      |           | Persons | Male   | Female | Persons | Male | Female |
| 1.   | Morena    | 44,442  | 23,028 | 21,414 | 491     | 285  | 206    |
| 2.   | Bhind     | 397     | 206    | 191    | 4       | 3    | 1      |
| 3.   | Gwalior   | 13,155  | 6,806  | 6,349  | 890     | 479  | 411    |
| 4.   | Datia     | 4,876   | 2,488  | 2,388  | 108     | 62   | 46     |
| 5.   | Shivpuri  | 55,434  | 28,392 | 27,042 | 641     | 324  | 317    |
| 6.   | Guna      | 52,580  | 26,704 | 25,876 | 600     | 335  | 265    |
| 7.   | Tikangarh | 235     | 135    | 100    | -       | -    | -      |
| 8.   | Satna     | 39      | 13     | 26     | -       | -    | -      |
| 9.   | Rewa      | -       | -      | -      | 1       | 1    | -      |
| 10.  | Mandsaur  | -       | -      | -      | 4       | 2    | 2      |
| 11.  | Ratlam    | 148     | 82     | 66     | 299     | 172  | 127    |
| 12.  | Ujjain    | -       | -      | -      | 29      | 17   | 12     |
| 13.  | Dhar      | 2       | 2      | -      | -       | -    | -      |
| 14.  | Indore    | 49      | 26     | 23     | 200     | 102  | 98     |
| 15.  | Dewas     | 184     | 109    | 75     | -       | -    | -      |
| 16.  | Khargone  | 7       | 2      | 5      | 1       | 1    | -      |
| 17.  | Khandwa   | -       | -      | -      | 351     | 199  | 152    |

|       |          |          |          |        |       |       |       |
|-------|----------|----------|----------|--------|-------|-------|-------|
| 18.   | Shajapur | 3        | 2        | 1      | -     | -     | -     |
| 19.   | Rajgarh  | 1,668    | 852      | 816    | 15    | 8     | 7     |
| 20.   | Vidisha  | 22,334   | 11,309   | 11,025 | 280   | 158   | 122   |
| 21.   | Sehore   | 2,086    | 1,115    | 971    | 56    | 33    | 23    |
| 22.   | Raisen   | 4,169    | 2,195    | 1,974  | -     | -     | 1     |
| Total |          | 2,01,808 | 1,03,466 | 98,342 | 3,980 | 2,281 | 1,699 |

**Note :** The tribe includes Sosia, Sor, Sehariya, Sehria or Sahariya

#### Topography of the area :

Most of the area inhabited by this tribe is covered with forests and is full of mountain ranges. Hard rocks are very common resulting in poor communication. Most of the places are accessible only on foot. In view of the unfavourable topography of the area it provides good hideouts for the dacoits as it becomes difficult for police to reach such places easily.

#### Forests :

The forests in the district as a whole are dense and provide enough opportunities for big game. Forest produce is also available in abundance and is a good source of income to the Saharias. Important forest produce include teak, bamboo, cane, resin, honey, wax and gum of various varieties. The estimated output of major and minor forest produce for the year 1961-62 is given below :

| Produce                       | Quantity     | Value in Rs. |
|-------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| 1. Bamboo and Cane            | 25,247 tons  | 1,153.21     |
| 2. Fodder and grazing         |              |              |
| A. Animals                    | 1,20,171     | 53,423.42    |
| B. Grass                      | 13,853 tons  | 19,368.50    |
| 3. Gum                        | 331 "        |              |
| 4. Cheed                      | 8,000 mds    |              |
|                               |              | 73,000.00    |
| 5. Honey                      | 106 "        |              |
| 6. Wax                        | 5 "          |              |
| 7. Katha                      | -            | 20,891.00    |
| 8. Tendu leaves               | 404 tons     | 51,990.00    |
| 9. Other minor forest produce |              | 4,509.49     |
| 10. Timber                    | 1,22,415 cft | 29,943.49    |
| 11. Fire wood                 | 1,666.76 "   |              |
| 12. Charcoal                  | 2,845 mds.   | 4,07,816.72  |

From the table it is clear that so far as forest produce is concerned, the area is rich. The Saharias are mainly associated with the collection of minor forest produce like resin, gum, wax, honey and tendu leaves.



#### 4 : The Saharia

##### Climate :

The climate of the area is extreme. It is very hot in summer season and nights are extremely cool in winter. In the summer season the temperature shoots up to even 116° F although the forests and hills in the interior are comparatively cooler.

##### Previous Accounts :

Nothing is known about the early history and migrations of this tribe. Even the older generations fail to give any account of their past history.

From etymological point of view Saharia means a companion of tiger SA-HARIA (SA - companion, and HARIA means tiger in the riddle verse (कूटपद) of Saint Surdas). This clearly shows that Saharia has always been a forest dweller living in the midst of jungles and because of his ageold dependence on forest he is so bold and never afraid of moving in the jungles even in the dark of night. His early dependence on forests has also shaped his economy in such a way that even today he is very much dependent on forests. Minor forest produce forms an important part of his diet and in exchange of forest produce like resin, gum, wax etc. he gets jowar, gur and other necessities of life.

So far, no anthropometric work has been done among the Saharias and in the absence of this it is very difficult to establish the ethnic affinities of this tribe.

##### Physical Characteristics:

The Saharias are generally of a medium stature and constant use of liquor has taken away much of their charm of youth. Even a young Saharia does not look impressive. Their skin colour varies from brown to dark. Their hair is generally coarse, straight and dark. They have thick growth of hair on head but have scanty moustache and beard. Skin colour among the women also vary from brown to dark though fair complexioned girls are not uncommon. In their youth young women look impressive but since they get married at an early age and constant child bearing takes away much of their charm of youth and a woman of 20-25 does not look impressive at all.

Even when young, they do not bestow considerable amount of care to keep themselves neat and tidy. Hair are also not regularly combed and use of oil is very casual. Clothes are also not regularly changed and cleaned.

With the Saharias bathing is not regular. They simply clean their hands and feet. Since their economy is very poor they are not in a position to change the clothes on and often and use of worn out clothes is very common in both the sexes.

A Saharia feels at home only in his natural surroundings. He is fond of forests and can toil for long hours in the forests extracting resin and collecting gum, honey, various tubers and edible roots. But he feels out of way whenever he is required to work for others. Saharia laziness is proverbial and he will never go out to work unless he reaches the stage of starvation. If you advance him some money in lieu of work he will never show his face next day. But the whole tribe is in transition today. Prof. S. C. Dube's remark about the Kamars holds true in case of the Saharias also. "The transition from their old virtually self-sufficient tribal economy to the new partly exclusive and partly interdependent economy has greatly changed the status and outlook of the Kamars. The children of the soil, who were once the 'kings of the jungle' are now degenerated and gradually becoming human drudges."



## 2. MATERIAL CULTURE

### The Village :

Unlike the Baigas, the Saharia villages are generally situated on plain land but in view of the topography of the area which is full of hills and valleys some of the Saharia villages are situated on hilly sites. There is no hard and fast settlement pattern of the villages inhabited by this tribe. Usually the houses are constructed in rows one facing the other forming almost a rectangular pattern. The Saharia settlement is known as *Sahrana*.

In most of the villages, the houses are constructed in such a way that the roof of most of the houses looks like one continuous piece.

If the village is a bigger one normally the whole settlement is divided into various Sahrana (wards). Sahrana simply means a place where the Saharias live in a cluster. Karhal village which has a Community Welfare Centre run by the Tribal Welfare Department is divided into a number of Sahrana and these Sahrana to some extent behave as independent units from one another. For example, at the time of marriage, there is no necessity to invite the persons from another Sahrana though both the Sahrana are situated in close proximity. Invitation is sent to only those who are closely related and other persons of the tribe are not invited. Similarly the disputes of one Sahrana are settled within the Sahrana itself and only in serious matters persons from another Sahrana are invited to intervene.

Usually each Sahrana or a village inhabited by the Saharia has some sort of a booth known as Bungla (बंगला) in the centre of the settlement. This bungalow has a roof of tiles but is open from all sides. This is the place where all the Saharias sit together to discuss matters relating to them. It is also used to accommodate the visiting guests. The bungalow can easily accommodate 30 to 40 persons.

In the matter of the selection of a site for their settlements, both natural and supernatural considerations play their part. Since this is a water scarcity area nearness to water, sufficient supply of wild root, nearness to forests provide the ideal conditions for a Saharia settlement.

Though no elaborate procedure is followed in selecting a site from magico-religious point of view but it is generally ascertained whether the place is free from evil spirits and ghosts.

In some of the villages like Goras and Karhal where housing schemes of the Tribal Welfare Settlement is being implemented the village settlement is different from the traditional one. In the former case the settlement is more systematic and all the houses have been constructed in such a manner that the whole settlement looks like a compact structure, every house facing in the same direction. The Saharias call it a 'colony'.

Ordinarily Saharia village is not a pretentious affair. There will be one or two central paths which are the main streets and which the houses face. Between the houses there are little lanes through which one may squeeze to get to the back of the village where the rubbish and other waste material is thrown. There is no street in the ordinary sense of the word and the lanes which provide the outlets for the various houses are narrow, dirty and tortuous.

### Houses:

Houses are very simple and it does not take much time for a Saharia to erect a hut to accommodate his family. The Saharias construct their huts on plain surface without any foundation.

For selecting a site the Janter (magician) is consulted who tells the person concerned whether the place is suitable for erecting a dwelling or not. Sometimes the Pujari (priest) of the village is consulted. Haldi, copper coin and dub are put in one of the pits dug for putting a pole. The work is generally started on Monday or Sunday. But this is confined to some people only. Most of the persons just start the work after remembering God Shanker who is very much revered by these people.

The Saharia technique of house construction is very simple and no professional advice is sought from anybody but elderly persons are always consulted when required. A rectangular piece of land is selected. The four sides on which the walls are to be raised are marked out. In the four corners four poles of a uniform height are fixed. Then on the two sides in between the poles two stronger poles about six to seven feet high with a forked top are fixed. This is known as Geda. Then one strong pole is kept lengthwise on these two side poles having forked top. The skeleton of the roof is completed by fixing rafters (generally poles are brought



## 8: The Saharia

from the jungle). The roof is then thatched with parbau grass. For making the walls, small branches of trees are neatly tied with bark or roughly interwoven in split bamboos in the shape of sheet (tatia). These are then plastered with mud. When these walls dry up they are washed with cow-dung mixed with water. They may later be washed with white, red or yellow clay. A Saharia hut is not a costly affair and ordinarily costs around Rs. 200/-.

Some of the houses are more simple and without mud plastered walls. The Saharias those who are economically more well off have houses of first category and others only have small thatched huts without pucca flooring.

These two types of houses can be easily seen in the same village. For example, in the Karhal village some of the houses belonging to Saharias have been very well built though mere hut. Structures are also not wanting there. Only recently Tribal Welfare Department has started housing scheme for the rehabilitation of this tribe and Saharias have willingly accepted this scheme. Housing subsidy to the tune of Rs. 750/- is being given to individual family for the construction of a house.

These model houses are no doubt better than the traditional hut-structure and have stone roofing, and are comparatively more ventilated.

### Household Possessions:

Lazy, carefree and backward as the Saharias are, they generally do not have much worry about the future and, as such possessions in their household are meagre. They own only the barest equipment necessary for their life. A few utensils for cooking and eating their meals, sickle, axe, a few clothes, and a few other sundries of every day use are all they possess.

The following is the list of household possessions:

1. Earthen as well as metal utensils for water. Earthen utensils are more common.
2. Handi for cooking rice.
3. One wooden Karchul (large spoon).
4. Katori - small pots.
5. One moosal for crushing mahua.
6. Wooden pan for crushing mahua.
7. Baskets made of bamboo. These are of various shapes and size.
8. Sickle - of various shapes and sizes,

9. Axe - for cutting wood.
10. Grinding mill.
11. Supa (Winnowing fan).
12. A few small agricultural implements.
13. Chulha.
14. Kothis (containers) of various sizes for storing grains and forest produce.
15. Chenka for keeping edibles away from cats, dogs etc.

The possessions may vary according to the taste and economic status of the owner. Those who are economically better have started purchasing brass utensils, umbrella, cosmetics, petromax and other such articles.

### Condition:

Most of the houses of the Saharias are nothing but simple structures unfit for human dwelling. Each and everything is dumped in the same room which is used for cooking and sleeping purpose. Except a few houses of well-to-do families all are ill-ventilated and provide a good place for breeding flies and mosquitoes. Cattle are also housed very near to human dwelling with the result that they pass urine and dung throughout the night making the surroundings dirty and unhygienic. Houses are broomed everyday in the morning and the floor is also washed with cowdung and clay once in a while. Most of the houses remain damp in the rainy season and ash is used to keep them dry.

### Daily life:

The daily life of the Saharias centres mainly about the problem of daily bread. Since they are hand-to-mouth, they have to bother much for two square meals a day. Before daybreak women get up and are busy with domestic work. They clean the house and go to the well to fetch water. By the time they finish up this work menfolk are up and go out in the open to ease themselves carrying water in a lota (small pot of metal).

Whatever food or forest produce is in the stock, it is eaten and then they go out for work. Saharias as a whole are very idle and if a family has something to eat today, the members will not go to work anywhere. They will simply waste their time in gossiping.

Men and women go out to the jungle in the early hours of the morning and collect various types of forest produce. They



return in the afternoon and exchange it with the local shopkeeper in form of jowar and other items of daily necessity. It is almost evening when they return. Jowar or bajra thus produced is ground and food cooked. It is a very common sight in a Sahrana to see all the womenfolk busy in grinding jowar. Food is generally ready by 8 p.m. and after taking it they retire.

The children have their tasks too. They also go with their parents to the jungle and help them in their work. The girls assist their mothers, gather cow-dung for use as fuel and as a plaster for the walls and floor.

The main variations of this routine are occasioned by social requirements or by religious observances. They do much to break the monotony and to provide a change.

#### **Foods and their preparation:**

Only a few Saharias have two meals a day in view of their pitiable economic condition. Those who cannot afford simply eat mahua and such other forest produce to satisfy their hunger while quite a few remain hungry. Jowar is the staple food and is eaten in the form of chappatis. Along with bread a little vegetable curry is also taken. Meats are not taken regularly as they are too expensive.

The main foodstuffs are :

1. Grains—Jowar, Gram, Bajra, Maize and Wheat.
2. Oil, Mustard and Gulli.
3. *Vegetables:* There is a lot of seasonal variation in the use of vegetables. Since the Saharias are mostly dependent on forests they have a thorough knowledge of various green leaves suitable for consumption. They go to the forest, collect them, bring them back and eat after cooking.
4. *Fruits, roots and tubers:* These are also consumed in a large quantity and their use varies according to the season. The important ones are plums, mango, achar, tendu, jamun, guava, bel, khajur.
5. *Meats:* Ordinarily a Saharia cannot afford to purchase meat except on very important social occasions, but they go out for hunting in the jungle to hunt spotted deer, stag, wild boar, deer, and various types of birds. Communal hunts are also organised from time to time.
6. Condiments include salt, various chatnis made from tamarind, mango, ber. Among the spices, haldi (turmeric), chillies, garlic and onions are common.

The method of preparing food is very simple and the preliminaries are also not very elaborate.

Chappatis are made of jowar and wheat is rarely used. Jowar flour is mixed with a little salt and it is moistened and made into a dough which must be well mixed before it is rolled or patted into a pancake. This is baked on a hot fry pan until well browned. It must often be turned in the process. Cheap varieties of rice are also consumed. Rice is simply boiled with water until the grains are well done. The rice water is poured off and is often used as a gruel. Meats are usually boiled in large vessels. Fish is eaten boiled as well as roasted. It is wrapped in dry grass and the grass burnt and the fish is ready. Meats are generally eaten on festive occasions.

It is interesting to note that even today in some of the Saharia families thin and flat stone is used as fry pan in place of iron-made pan. The use of stone fry-pan shows their economic backwardness.

Meals are generally taken two times a day. But it is also common to see quite a few Saharias eating mahua in the absence of any thing to eat.

#### **Liquor:**

Use of liquor is a must for a Saharia. Whenever they are hungry and have nothing to eat they simply drink in order to satisfy their hunger. Liquor is extracted from mahua which is collected and stored in the summer season. Liquor is generally home-made and to this purpose every Saharia house is a miniature distillery. Some of the Saharias in village A are in the habit of selling liquor to others at the rate of Rs. 2/- per bottle and even police officers do not hesitate in accepting liquor free of charge from these people. In return, these policemen give them protection and the question of raiding their homes does not arise.

#### **Appearance and Personal Decoration:**

The Saharias are of a medium stature. In no way their bodies are well-built and under-nourishment and semi-starvation are responsible for this. Most of them do not earn enough to earn their livelihood. Landholdings are just meagre and they have to depend on forest and casual roadside work to support themselves. Their skin colour varies from brown to dark brown and even



## 12 : The Saharia

light black. Their hair is generally coarse, straight and black. Often wavy hair is also met with. The growth of chin and moustache is rather scanty.

Even the young men do not look very impressive and shapely. The women are also not very delicate, comely and beautiful. Strenuous work in the field, forest and constant child-bearing, sap most of their charm and youth and as they grow old a dull coarseness replaces the freshness of the delicate features of their youth.

The dress of the Saharia is very simple and they require very few clothes. The men put on a small dhoti and salooko (shirt). Turban (safa) is also commonly used. All these are purchased from the weekly markets as the Saharias have no knowledge of weaving. Use of shoes is rare. The following is the list of clothes worn by a Saharia:

| Man                   | Approximate Price |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
|                       | Rs.               |
| 1. Dhoti              | 5/-               |
| 2. Shirt              | 3/-               |
| 3. Salooka            | 2/-               |
| 4. Safa (Turban)      | 2/- to 3/-        |
| 5. Shoes if purchased | 7/-               |
| 6. Chappal            | 1-50              |

### Woman:

The dress of a Saharia woman also cannot by any means be said to be very elaborate. They put on Ghagra, Lugra and Choli (bodice). Use of Choli is not common to all. Women are also seen without blouse or bodice.

The dress of a Saharia woman is comparable to a Rajasthani woman, and in the way of dressing there is hardly any marked difference. The following is the list of clothes required by a Saharia woman:

|                  | Approximate Price |
|------------------|-------------------|
|                  | Rs.               |
| 1. Ghaghari      | 8/-               |
| 2. Lugra         | 7/- to 8/-        |
| 3. Angi or Choli | 1-25              |

Young boys and girls also put on clothes and only very young children are seen nude. Their dress is:

## Material Culture : 13

### Boy:

|                                  | Rs.  |
|----------------------------------|------|
| 1. Pancha (small piece of dhoti) | 2/-  |
| 2. Salooka (shirt)               | 1-50 |

### Girl:

|              |            |
|--------------|------------|
| 1. Ghagharia | 5/-        |
| 2. Polka     | 1-50       |
| 3. Faria     | 2/- to 3/- |

Garments are generally purchased in the weekly markets. Karhal is one such good centre where these people buy and sell their commodities.

### Ornaments:

Among the Saharias both men and women put on few ornaments as they are not in a position to save enough money to purchase ornaments. Those who are economically well off possess more ornaments. The list of ornaments worn by women is given below:

| Name                                       | Part of the body                      | App. Price      |
|--|---------------------------------------|-----------------|
|  |                                       | Rs.             |
| 1. Todai (तोडई) made of brass              | Foot, 2 in each foot                  | 4/-             |
| 2. Bichia (बिछिया) made of brass or bronze | In the fingers of the foot, 3 in each | 1 to 1-50       |
| 3. Chala (Ringers made of brass or copper) | 2 in each finger of the hand          | 0-25 to 50 each |
| 4. Choorā (चूड़ा) with bangles made of lac | hand, 1 choora+4 bangles              | 1 - 25          |
| 5. Janjeera (जंजीरा) made of beads         | Neck                                  | 1 - 25          |
| 6. Choorā (चूड़ा) made of brass            | 4 in each hand                        | 0-25 to 50 each |
| 7. Kanthi (कंठी) made of black beads       | Neck                                  | 0-25            |
| 8. Nose ring made of silver                | Nose                                  | 2-50            |
| 9. Earrings made of silver                 | Ears                                  | 5/- for 2       |
| 10. Jhela (जेला) made of silver            | Head                                  | 12/-            |
| 11. Rakhdi (राखड़ी)                        | „                                     | 1-2             |



## 14 : The Saharia

| Those who are rich put on:                     |      | Rs.          |
|--|------|--------------|
| 1. Silver kade in the foot                     | Foot | 60/-         |
| 2. Bichia (बिछिया) made of silver              | "    | 6/-          |
| 3. Dar (दार)—Similar to bangles made of silver | hand | 40/-         |
| 4. Jhalar (झालर) made of Silver                | Neck | 50/- to 60/- |

There is actually no variation in the design of ornaments worn by poor and rich women of the Saharia community except that the former group uses ornaments made of bronze, brass, aluminium and other cheap metal while the latter group uses those made of silver.

Menfolk put on few ornaments and most of them are made of silver. They are:

|  |     |              |
|--|-----|--------------|
| 1. Choorā made of silver—10 to 50 tolas in weight costing from | Rs. | 20/- to 60/- |
| 2. Silver buttons with chain                                   |     | 10-00        |
| 3. Chokara: made of silver to be worn in the ears              |     | 3-00         |

### Children:

|  |      |
|--|------|
| 1. Choorā in the hands.                | 10/- |
| 2. Sankri (Small chain made of silver) | 5/-  |

### Hair dressing:

The job of hair-cutting is shared within the tribe itself and no professional barber is employed for this work. But it is interesting to note that a few Saharias those who are working as peons and in forest department and are a bit educated they go to the professional barbers for their hair-cutting. They say that the barber cuts hair more smoothly causing less pain. There is no taboo as such if somebody gets his hair cut outside from a barber.

Hair-cutting is done once in a month or so. Instruments necessary for this purpose are mirror, scissors, comb and the razor. Invariably every family possesses this and total cost of all these four instruments comes to:

## Material Culture : 15

|             | Rs.  |
|-------------|------|
| 1. Scissors | 0-50 |
| 2. Comb     | 0-20 |
| 3. Razor    | 1-25 |
| 4. Mirror   | 0-50 |

Rs.2-45

Beard is also shaved once in a week or so. Coconut and other perfumed oils are commonly used by those who are in a position to earn a bit of cash.

Saharia men and women are not very particular about their hair and no efforts are made to keep them trim. Hence they look coarse and untidy. They share the task of hair-dressing among themselves. There is no particular style. They get their hair cropped in the ordinary style. Women comb their hair carefully and after tying it lightly with a rope allow it to hang backward. Hair among the women are tied very tightly and when tied it looks like a straight bamboo pole.

Young girls tie their hair after parting them in the middle. Young girls are more particular about their hair dressing.

Once in a while soap or clay is used to clean hair. But use of soap is confined to few families.

### Personal Hygiene and Bathing:

With the Saharias both men and women bathing is not a regular habit. Nor are they very particular and regular in washing their clothes which they have few. The clothes emit a peculiar smell and their breath gives out an odour which is caused by regular and constant smoking.

Womenfolk go out in groups to defecate in the open fields all around the village. They observe more privacy than men who simply sit anywhere to answer the call of the nature. Water is used by all to clean the private parts after defecation but while working in the jungle and when water is not available in the surroundings, they use leaves to clean the private parts.

### Tattooing:

Every woman should have tattoo marks upon her body. This is done by Saharia women themselves and by outsiders also. Pana Saharia of Bhojke village is very efficient in this art.



**Method:**

A few small pieces of Beeja wood are kept in water in a small pot for some time till its juice comes out. With the help of a needle, tattoo marks are made on the body by using this coloured juice of Beeja. The tattooed parts get swollen but come to normal stage in 2 to 3 days and these marks become permanent.

Tattooing is common at the age of 10 to 12 years that is before marriage. Tattoo marks enhance beauty and tattoo marks about the ankle are protection against snake bite.

**Hunting:**

Hunting is one of the traditional occupations of the tribe. Since these people were exclusively dependent on forests at one time, hunting used to play an important role in their economy.

The Saharias are not very reputed hunters. It is strange to know that they have no knowledge of bow and arrow which is a chief weapon used for hunting animals by most of the tribes in India. Their main weapon is axe which he always carries with him while going to work in the jungle. Although he occasionally supplements his diet with the Shikar he brings from the forest, hunting cannot be regarded as a regular source of food supply. The introduction of new forest rules and harassment by forest officials have checked their freedom of the forest.

Yet dogs are also employed by some to chase small games like hare, jungli murgi etc. Traps are also used. Sateeka (a variety of trap) is used for catching birds. Such traps are laid down in a number of places from where hare is likely to pass. When a hare passes through this trap its knot becomes tight and it is caught.

When they go collectively for communal hunt, a party of six to eight persons try to locate the part of the forest in which they are most likely to find the animal. Others go in a team for the beat. They yell at the top of their voices in different voices and make various other peculiar sounds. From the sound produced by the movements of the animal they easily know the direction from which it is coming. As soon as the animal comes within their range they attack it jointly. In a communal hunt whoever strikes the first blow gets major share in the hunt. Sometimes

the Saharias go with the Shikari who has a gun and help him in getting game. Whenever something is killed they get some share out of it. The Saharias cannot be put in the category of expert hunters. They are ignorant of the efficacy of bow and arrow as the chief weapon of hunting.

**Fishing:**

Fishing is yet another source of Saharia livelihood but that itself does not occupy important position in their economic pursuit. It is more a pastime than a profession. Men, women and children all are equally interested in fishing in the rainy season. They go to the nearby streams and nallas for fishing.

Surprisingly enough they do not have nets as used by other tribes for fishing. Theirs is a very crude and simple way of fishing. They go to a pond or stream and dam up a stream with sand. Then they spread the powder of chelha, golhar or bel on the surface of the water. This powder is a mild poison and fish come up and run from one place to another in search of shelter. At this time the Saharias beat them with sticks and take them out.

Another common method employed is to throw the water out of a little pool and catch the fish. This is more common in late winter and early summer when the water level of pools decreases.

Yet another simple method is to spread a piece of long cloth on the bed of the stream or river. It is then taken out by catching the four corners carefully. This is not a very effective method and only small fish are caught.

Besides fish, tortoises are also eaten which are easily available in ponds and streams in late winter and early summer.

What has been written in the foregoing pages clearly shows the level of simple technology of this simple tribe. Their material culture is not very rich. They have simple houses, few utensils and limited means of earning their livelihood.

In the field of hunting and fishing they have limited weapons. The use of bow and arrow is still unknown to these people and they do not use fishing nets for fishing. Theirs is a very simple and crude method of fishing.



### 3. ECONOMIC LIFE

With a view to get a fairly general idea of the economy of the Saharias, six villages of Sheopur T. B. Block were selected for intensive work covering 109 families with a total of 565 persons.

It may be pointed out here that Saharia is the major tribe in the Sheopur Tribal Development Block representing a total of 16,174 persons out of the total population of 25,776 which comes to about 64% population of the block. In all the six villages selected for the collection of data regarding the economy of this tribe, the total population of the Saharias comes to 88%. In such a case whatever is being written in the following pages should speak well of the economy of this region also.

In general the tribe lives in scattered and small settlements in groups of 20 to 30 families, the settlement known as Saharia. As a rule they do not prefer to live in close proximity mixed up with the other tribes and castes. A Sahrana leads a very corporate life and a feeling of oneness exists among all the members of the Sahrana.

In Sheopur Block, Saharia is the most important tribe but they are not good agriculturists. Agriculture in this region is not very much developed and to a number of families it does not provide livelihood for the whole year. Naturally they have taken to some new trades in order to supplement income which they get from agriculture. The main subsidiary occupation in the area is wage earning and collection of minor forest produce. The Saharias are mostly landless or possess small and uneconomic landholdings. They earn their livelihood by engaging themselves in agriculture labour and forest and P. W. D. labour. About six thousand Saharias earn a substantial portion of their income through collection of minor forest produce like cheergum (resin), gums of various types, honey and wax.

#### Land holdings:

One hundred and nine families in six villages were studied in order to know the average land per family. The total land possessed by these families is 471.83 acres which comes to 4.32 acres per family which is not enough to support an average family of 5.18 members throughout the year.

#### Size of land holdings:

Land holdings are small as well as uneconomic because of fragmentation. The total land holdings of 471.83 acres are divided into as many as 213 fields which comes to 1.96 (about 2 fields) per family.

It can be safely concluded from above that land holdings are small in size and fragmentation of holdings is also at large which is not of any advantage to the cultivators from economic point of view.

#### Soil types :

Soil types differ from one place to another and from one village to another. Land revenue is fixed according to the fertility of the soil. Five types of soil are found here and the best variety is called Gohan and the least fertile is Rakad. The types of soil and land revenue fixed for each is given below :

| S. No | Type  | L. R. Per acre |      |
|-------|-------|----------------|------|
|       |       | No.            | Rs.  |
| 1.    | Gohan | 1              | 1-25 |
| 2.    | Gohan | 2              | 1-00 |
| 3.    | Gohan | 3              | 0-87 |
| 4.    | Mar   | 1              | 0-87 |
| 5.    | "     | 2              | 0-75 |
| 6.    | "     | 3              | 0-50 |
| 7.    | Padva | 1              | 0-75 |
| 8.    | "     | 2              | 0-50 |
| 9.    | Dowar | 1              | 0-69 |
| 10.   | Dowar | 2              | 0-42 |
| 11.   | Rakad | 1              | 0-31 |
| 12.   | "     | 2              | 0-25 |
| 13.   | "     | 3              | 0-19 |

The rate of land revenue for irrigated land is charged according to the quality of land. It ranges from Rs. 4-00 to 50 P. per acre depending on the fertility of the soil.

#### Crops :

The main crops raised by the Saharias are : 1. Jowar, 2. Makka, 3. Tilli, 4. Bajara, 5. Wheat.

#### Jowar (*Sorghum vulgare*) :

Jowar is the most important crop raised by the Saharias. The principal local varieties are KHITAU or the late variety and SURAU or the early variety.



Plough is used in late variety jowar only and in case of Surau or the early variety plough is not used.

Land is prepared for jowar with the bakhhar and the seed is sown at the commencement of the rains. It is pressed into the soil, after sowing has been completed by a harrow. Sometimes the bakhhar is taken over the field after sowing and this improves germination.

Surau is sown in poor soils and it becomes ready for harvesting before khitau.

When plants are about 2 to 3 feet high ploughing is carried out. This operation is known as Kurapna (कुरपना). This is done to increase their vigour and the size of the cobs produced. About this operation it is said:- "जो तू डारे टोर मरोर, तो मैं डारुं कोठा फोर". This simply means that if you crush jowar plants when desired you can expect a bumper crop.

A firm seed-bed is important for jowar because if the crop is sown on loose soil, there is considerable risk of logging by rain or wind. As a rule on well-prepared ground jowar only requires weeding once or twice.

The process of watching the crop is most laborious in the case of jowar. It is watched by night for three months to keep off pigs and by day also for two months after it comes into ear to scare away birds. The traditional method followed by the Saharias is to throw stones with the help of a sling (Gufan) to scare away the animals and birds. Another method followed to scare the animals and birds is known as Halan (हलान). In this system a long rope is tied to a number of branches of a tree standing in one's field or just near the field. The other piece of the rope is pulled by the farmer while sitting in the watching booth (machan). This pulling of the rope produces sound and scares away the animals and birds.

When the crop is ripe for cutting, the stalks are lopped off a foot from the ground and tied up in bundles, or sometimes only the cobs are cut off and the stalks left standing so that they remain fresh and can be cut gradually as required. Each stalk usually bears only a single cob, and if more than one is produced they are of small size. Each cob contains 2 to 8 oz. of grain.

Crop is carried to the Khaliyan (threshing floor) on head or in a cart. Then the cobs are removed from the stalks. Threshing is done by the bullocks. Jowar when threshed is known as sedh (सेह). When wind is favourable winnowing is done.

Jowar is a hardy plant but its growth varies immensely with the quality of the land. The plants on a fertile piece of land may be so high as to conceal a man while on a less fertile land will hardly afford cover to a jackal. Jowar is a favourite food of the Saharias and the cobs are very good eating even when raw. The labour involved in the cultivation of jowar is very great. But on the other hand it is very popular looking to the condition of land and there is practically no initial expenditure on seed-grain, the out-turn is nearly as large as that of wheat and it does well in a dry year.

Jowar is liable to smut from wet weather when it is in flower and also to attacks from caterpillars and a green fly and to damage from a weed called agia (*striga lurea*) in a very dry season. Its fibrous roots entwine round the roots of the plant and check its growth. The most common pest is the sugarcane borer (*chilo simplex*) locally known as Illi, the larvae of which eat the young leaves and bore into the stem, killing the plant. Its body is yellowish white with purple lines along the back and a brown head. Damp and cloudy weather also damage the crop. Excessive rains occurring soon after the seed is sown prevents it from germinating and rots the plants. The jowar stalks known as Karbi form a valuable by-product, supplying fodder on which the cattle depend for the greater part of the year.

#### **Til (*Sesamum indicum*):**

Til is another important crop raised by these people. It is sown both in fertile as well as in inferior soil. There are two varieties of til—the early one and late variety. The early variety matures early and is ready for harvest by the end of September. Late variety is sown at the commencement of rains but is not harvested till November or December. The Saharias generally sow the seeds by broadcasting and at times small pieces of stones are also mixed with seeds so that broadcasting of seed becomes easier and convenient.

When the crop is ready for harvestation, it is cut and kept in a khaliyan (threshing-place) to dry up. In due course of time



seeds break away. Ankuri (a multi-phanged stick) is used to beat the dry stalks and tilli come out. This beating method is repeated twice so that nothing remains in the stalks. When the seeds have been removed, the remaining beaten stalks are kept in some corner. This useless material is known as Panijara (पनिजरा) and lies useless. Sometime this Panijara is again beaten after some time to remove whatever til has been left. Whatever til thus comes out is known as "Khore ki tilli" (खोरे की तिली).

### Bajra :

Bajra is grown on a small scale and is sown at the commencement of rains. Bajra is an inferior crop and is ready for harvestation in 4 to 5 months' time.

### Wheat :

Wheat is grown on a very limited scale and is a rainfed crop as there are no facilities of irrigation. Wheat is generally sown in the superior quality of soil and the fields are well-prepared before sowing. Fields are generally ploughed at least thrice before sowing. Other practices associated with the cultivation of wheat are the same as practised by most of the farmers.

### Other crops :

Besides the above, other crops include kodo, kutki, gram, and tuar.

Tuar or arhar (*cajanus incicus*) is sown only on the better class of soils. Only the red variety is sown. The tuar stalks called kathi (काठी) are sometimes used for fuel but more commonly plaited into mud walls for protecting the sides of mud houses from heavy rain.

Average seeds sown : and Average produce per Bigha.\*

| S. No. | Crop  | Seed sown per Bigha | Average produce in mds. |
|--------|-------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| 1.     | Jowar | 5 Seers             | 5-6 mds.                |
| 2.     | Makka | 20 ,,               | 3 ,,                    |
| 3.     | Tilli | 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ ,,  | 4-5 ,,                  |
| 4.     | Bajra | 20 ,,               | 3 ,,                    |
| 5.     | Wheat | 18-20 ,,            | 3 ,,                    |

\* Bigha is about  $\frac{1}{2}$  acre.

### Implements :

Agricultural implements of the Saharias are in no way peculiar. Most of the implements are old and primitive. Implements commonly used are :

1. Plough, 2. Bakkhar, 3. Khurp, 4. Kudali, 5. Shovel, 6. Sickle, 7. Axe, 8. Cart (possessed by few), 9. Ankuri-A multiphanged stick, 10. Tifan (seed-drill), 11. Okhar (ओखर) for erecting fencing.

But the main implements are Hal (plough), Bakkhar (harrow), Tifan (seed-drill), axe and sickle.

*Hal (plough)* : Plough or Hal like that of an ordinary non-tribal cultivator is extremely simple. Wooden part of the plough is made by the cultivator and iron part by the blacksmith (lohar).

*Bakkhar (harrow)* : Harrow is known as Patilla. It is fitted with an iron share (Pans पॉस) and is used for breaking down the clods already ploughed up. This is invariably locally made.

Other implements are either made locally or purchased from the markets.

### Manures :

Use of manures and fertilizers is an important factor in increasing crop yield. But the Saharias do not use it regularly.

Cow-dung, leaves, ash and such other waste material is used as manures.

### Irrigation :

Sources of irrigation are practically nil in this area and the Saharias do not irrigate their fields as they are not in a position to do so. Whatever crops are raised are rainfed and to a great extent agriculture is a gamble for them.

### Storing methods :

Grains are generally stored in various types of earthen containers made of clay mixed with hay. Such containers are locally known as Kothis. Their capacity varies according to the size and an average size Kothi can easily retain between 10 to 20 maunds.

Earthen wares used for storing grains are known as Kanari. They are barrel-shaped and purchased from the markets costing Rs. 1-50 to 3/-. Another type of clay container is known as Mathna used for storing seeds for the next season. It costs about Rs. 1-00 or so and is purchased from the markets.



Grain is carefully stored and due precautions are taken so that climatic conditions and insects do not affect the contents of the containers. The Saharias generally mix Neem (Margo) leaves with the grains so that they are not affected and remain intact even for the next sowing. Leaves of Jamrasi tree are also mixed. Ash is also commonly used. All these steps are taken so that the seeds do not decay and are not eaten by ants and other pests.

Use of insecticides and pesticides after purchasing them from the market is still unknown to them and they still resort to the primitive methods of preservation.

#### Division of Labour :

There is no very clear-cut distinction in the duties performed by man and woman respectively. It is more or less a joint responsibility and both husband and wife work together to earn their livelihood.

The work of clearing the fields before sowing is done both by men and women though ploughing operations are carried out exclusively by Saharia men. At the time of sowing operations, both men and women attend to it. The Tifan (seed-drill) is drawn by bullocks. While men drive the bullocks, the women go on putting grains in the funnel of the seed-drill. Weeding is done by both men and women. When crops have come up and require watch against wild animals and birds, it is the duty of the menfolk to sleep in the fields and keep a watch. They construct a Machan (watch-tower) raised from the ground about 10' to 15'. It has an umbrella shaped roof which offers protection against rain and scorching sun. The watchman sits on this Machan and sleeps there. He keeps a bamboo stick and an axe with him. Harvesting of crop is done by both. Similarly the work of threshing is done by both the sexes. While threshing the crop, the bullocks are driven by men and women help them. Winnowing is done by men and women alike.

When men and women go to the fields the grown-up boys and old persons look after the younger ones. If there is nobody to look after them a woman takes her young kids to the fields. Besides helping her husband in agricultural operations woman goes to the jungle to collect forest produce, wood for fuel and

tendu leaves. When she returns, she very often exchanges these items for grain, generally Jowar, and returns back to her home. She grinds the grain thus received in exchange and prepares meals for the family.

Women are the first to be seen in the village in the early hours of the morning. They broom their houses and fetch water from the village well. By this time the menfolk are up and after finishing morning duties prepare themselves to go to the fields or to the jungle after eating whatever is available.

The following list of important occupations shows the division of labour among the Saharias:

| S. No. | Occupation                     | Who does it   |
|--------|--------------------------------|---------------|
| 1.     | Gathering wood in the forest   | Men and women |
| 2.     | Collection of tendu leaves     | do            |
| 3.     | Grazing cattle                 | Men           |
| 4.     | Ploughing the fields           | Men           |
| 5.     | Sowing of seed                 | Men and women |
| 6.     | Threshing operations           | do            |
| 7.     | Winnowing                      | do            |
| 8.     | House repairs (major)          | Men           |
| 9.     | Routine house work             | Women         |
| 10.    | Grinding Jowar                 | Women         |
| 11.    | Shopping                       | Men and women |
| 12.    | Cleaning the cattle sheds      | Women         |
| 13.    | Day labourers in the fields    | Men and women |
| 14.    | Dancing                        | Men and women |
| 15.    | Illicit distillation           | Men only      |
| 16.    | Sacrificing an animal          | Men           |
| 17.    | Making fire places             | Women only    |
| 18.    | Collection of roots and tubers | Men and women |
| 19.    | Milking of cows                | Men and women |
| 20.    | Preparation of storing bins    | Women         |

It is clear from the above that there are few works which are confined to one sex only. Most of the works are shared by men and women both and they assist each other.



**Magico-Religious Ceremonies associated with Agriculture :**

Magico-religious ceremonies associated with agriculture are not very elaborate.

Before sowing a crop the farmer keeps an earthen vessel on his head. Before keeping on head, the vessel is applied cow-dung on four sides and doob grass is stuck on the cow-dung. Any ornament made of silver is kept on the mouth of this vessel. Then the farmer keeps it on his head and in this position his forehead is marked with tika\*. This is supposed to ensure good crop and plenty of rains.

After the completion of this ceremony sowing starts.

In order to get rid of the nuisance of mice who destroy crops the Saharias worship Ganesh Bhagwan.

When the crop has been threshed and lying ready in a heap (सेँड़) for winnowing then the peg around which the bullocks move during threshing is worshipped. This worship is known as *Medh ki Pooja* (सेँड़ की पूजा).

**Sources of Income:**

After collecting data regarding family budgets of 109 families from six villages, it has been possible to analyse the various sources of income of this tribe.

*Agriculture* : Agriculture being the main source of income occupies important place in the economy of the tribe. Since cultivation supplies food and work to other members of the family this is considered more stable, dependable and regular than other works. Relatively speaking income from agriculture is definitely more regular, as the organisation and scale of farming are within the capacity of the cultivator. But income from agriculture is not so secure. With the Saharias agriculture is of crudest type. Average income per family from agriculture is Rs. 144.13.

*Cattle*: Income from this source is just negligible. On an average it comes to about Rs. 9.68 per family. The main reasons for this are that Saharias do not breed cattle for sale nor for selling milk. This trade is solely confined to Marwaris and Gujars who have settled in this area. So far as the Saharias are

\* Tika—putting a mark of red powder on the forehead.

concerned their cattle breed is poor, fodder is of the coarsest type and not much attention is paid by them to keep their cattle wealth in good condition.

*Agriculture Labour* : It is another source of income to the Saharias. Those who have no land or do not have enough land work for others. Average income from agriculture labour is Rs. 45.78 per family. The landless labourers work in the fields of others during the agricultural season to earn their livelihood. The demand for agricultural labour being seasonal provides employment only during the agricultural season. After the season is over, most of the labourers become idle. They either go in the forest to work as forest labourers or to collect minor forest produce.

*Minor forest produce*: The Saharias collect minor forest produce like cheer-gum (resin), wax and honey from the forests to supplement their income. They exchange these things with jowar, bidi, salt, oil etc. The average income from collection of minor forest produce is Rs. 84.70 per family. This comes only next to income from agriculture.

*Income from forest, P.W.D. labour and other labour*: Those who are small land-owners and those who are landless go in the forest to work as labourers for felling trees and for loading and unloading of timber. Average income from such work comes to Rs. 8.72 per family. Some people work on the P.W.D. roads. The total income of the surveyed families during the year 1962-63 from labour on P.W.D. roads was Rs. 1046/-. Thus average income from this source comes to about Rs. 9.60.

Besides agriculture, forest and P.W.D. labour, some people earn their livelihood by working as labourers for construction of houses, for cutting stones, for digging wells, and some other similar jobs. Total income of 109 families from labour other than forest, P.W.D. and agricultural labour during the year 1962-63 was Rs. 5177/- which comes to Rs. 47.50 per family.

**Average income :**

Average income of a Saharia family during 1962-63 stood at Rs. 502.39 which is not sufficient to meet the basic requirements of an average family of 5.18 persons. In a Saharia family, men, women and children all put in their might to earn something and to



add something to their family's earning. Women work with their husbands or independently to supplement their husbands' earning. In the family every able-bodied person does something—it may be collection of fruits or digging of roots and tubers.

After examining these various sources of Saharia income it can be safely said that theirs is subsistence economy and agriculture is the main source of income. Besides agriculture, other sources of income are supplementary. But minor forest produce definitely plays an important role in their economy. Looking to the size of an average family the average income of Rs. 502.39 is not enough to support all the members. In this type of economy the question of surplus production and saving hardly arises.

#### **Expenditure :**

Saharias are in a very primitive stage of economic development. Theirs is a simple life with limited needs. Their diet is equally simple and to some extent poor also and they supplement it with various kinds of tubers, roots and jungle fruits. The main items of expenditure are:

*On food:* The biggest item of expenditure is food which comes to about Rs. 348.67 per family per annum. But it must not be presumed that food contents are very nutritious. Daily food is very simple consisting of jowar, mahua, bajra or such other coarse grain. Use of vegetables is not regular. They do not use ghee and oil except on special occasions but oil of 'Mahua gulee' is commonly used.

Food is simple and coarse. Refinement and delicacy in preparation or eating are practically nil. However, some roots, leaves and fruits bring a variety to them.

*Clothing:* Next to food the most important item of expenditure is clothing, the average being Rs. 120.96 per family. Clothes are generally purchased from outside. Weekly markets and some important fair or festival provide an opportunity to purchase ready-made clothes.

*Fuel and Lighting:* Expenditure incurred on fuel and lighting is generally less since the Saharias themselves collect fuel wood from the forest and very few families use kerosene oil regularly. As a matter of fact, the Saharias use a small lamp or no lamp at all during night. The total expenditure of a Saharia family on fuel and lighting comes to about Rs. 8. 22.

*Housing:* House requires annual repairs; hence some amount is spent. Saharias themselves construct their own huts and repair them when required. On an average an amount of Rs. 5.87 is incurred on this item.

*Medicine :* Since medical facilities are inadequate and not easily available to these people they still resort to their traditional magico-religious therapy. When their indigenous treatment fails they go to a Vaidya and use Ayurvedic medicines. Use of allopathic medicines is confined to few. On an average the expenditure on medicines comes to Rs. 10.64 per family per annum.

*Social and Religious Ceremonies including birth, marriage and death:* Social and religious ceremonies are very important to the tribals. Marriage is one such occasion when they spend lavishly even if they have to take a loan. Spending extravagantly at the time of these social ceremonies is also responsible for indebtedness. The average expenditure per family is Rs. 86.79.

*Liquor:* Liquor is one of most important item of expenditure. Saharias brew their own liquor from Mahua and also purchase from licensed shops.

The total expenses come to Rs. 23.08 per family per annum which seems rather small sum in view of the extent of drinking. The reasons for this are not far to seek. Illicit distillation goes on unchecked in this area.

*Tobacco:* Expenditure on tobacco is rather high. Smoking and chewing tobacco are a must for the Saharias both men and women. Bidis and cigarettes are purchased from the weekly markets. The average expenditure of a family comes to Rs. 22.46.

*Miscellaneous Expenditure :* It includes visit of the guests, contribution in religious functions, visit to fairs and festivals.

When all these items of expenditure are combined it comes to Rs. 37.98 per family per year.



The following table shows family expenditure item-wise :

| S. No. | Item  | Average Expenditure in Rs. per family during 1962-63 |
|--------|---|--|
|        |   | Rs.  |
| 1.     | Food  | 348.67   |
| 2.     | Clothing  | 120.96   |
| 3.     | Dwelling and House repairing etc.                                   | 5.87   |
| 4.     | Fuel and lighting   | 8.22   |
| 5.     | Medicines   | 10.64  |
| 6.     | Social and Religious ceremonies including birth, marriage and death | 86.79  |
| 7.     | Liquor  | 23.06  |
| 8.     | Tobacco   | 22.46  |
| 9.     | Miscellaneous   | 37.98  |
|        | Total   | 664.47   |

An analysis of the sources of income and the items of expenditure when compared shows a deficit of Rs. 162.08 per year per family, income being Rs. 502.39 and expenditure Rs. 664.47. There is an excess of expenditure over income to the tune of Rs. 162.08.

This proves that the area is submerged in poverty and extent of indebtedness must also be wide. But there is some room for discrepancy in the collection of data. Since people are illiterate, it is difficult for them to give correct figures. Only approximate figures were given. It has been observed that there is a tendency among the Saharias to underestimate their crops and not to give correct figures of their income.

#### Property and Savings :

**Land holdings :** The total area of land under land holdings of 109 families is 471.83 acres. This means that average size of land holding per family is about 4.32 acres which is not enough.

**Dwelling :** The total cost of the houses of 109 families was estimated at Rs. 18,234/-. This means that average cost of the house per family is Rs. 167.14.

**Ornaments :** Very few ornaments are used by Saharia men and women. Silver is rarely used. The survey of 109 families revealed that in all the villages except in Panwada, villagers do not possess ornaments made of precious metal. The cost of ornaments owned

by 109 families was estimated at Rs. 345/-. This means that average cost of ornaments per family is Rs. 3.16.

This clearly speaks about the economic condition of the Saharias. Land holdings are very small, houses are kachha and they are not in a position to save any thing substantial out of their earnings.

#### Animal Husbandry :

The number of cattle owned by each family is also negligible and they do not form a major part of their property. The following table shows the average number of cattle owned by an individual family during 1962-63 :

| S.No. | Animals   | Average number of cattle animals |
|-------|-----------|----------------------------------|
| 1.    | Bullocks  | 1.16                             |
| 2.    | Cows      | 2.33                             |
| 3.    | Buffaloes | 0.45                             |
| 4.    | Calves    | 1.21                             |
| 5.    | Goats     | 0.01                             |
| 6.    | Horses    | 0.03                             |
| 7.    | Poultry   | 0.22                             |

It is clear from the above table that whatever cattle wealth the Saharias possess, it does not play an important role as a source of income.

Saharias are not very particular so far as maintenance of cattle is concerned. Scrub bulls are allowed to breed with the result that the general condition is poor.

**Grazing :** A grazer is known as Genwara (गेवारा) for cows and Bardia (बरदिया) for bullocks. Both of them are generally from the tribe itself. The charges for grazing are:

1. 0-87 P. to Re. 1/- for cow
2. Rs. 2/- for bullock

Besides this at the time of harvest a Bardia gets about 1 seer of jowar from every cultivator whose cattle he takes for grazing.

At the time of ploughing a Bardia is generally free as most of the cattle are engaged in ploughing the fields.



The cattle are turned out early in the morning to graze under the charge of the village cowherd.

There is a problem of grazing cattle and in some of the villages it is difficult to get a bucket of water for cattle. In hot weather, the cattle fare still worse. The ploughing season is upon them at the time of their direst distress and they then gorge themselves with the unhealthy grass which sprouts on the advent of the rains.

*Castration:* Indigenous method of castration is adopted. The cattle are castrated when three years old by securing the testicles in a cleft stick and rubbing them together till they are quite soft. The operation lasts about ten to fifteen minutes and causes great pain. From that time they are trained to cultivation and continue working for six or seven years.

*Diseases:* Cattle diseases are common as proper care is not paid to keep them in good condition.

Cattle sheds known as KHIRAK (खिड़क) are unhygienic and breed flies and mosquitoes resulting in the loss of vigour of these animals and they succumb to various diseases.

The common diseases are :

1. Mata - Rinderpest, 2. Khure - Foot and mouth disease, 3. Fadsuja - swelling near the throat, 4. Jara (जरा), 5. Snake-bite.

Rinderpest commonly breaks out once in two or three years, and buffaloes suffer more from it. The animals generally die within a week, and if they live to eight or ten days will probably survive. The Saharias sometimes feed them on Kodon gruel and give them potash nitre dissolved in water and worship mata. The segregation of affected cattle on the outbreak of the disease is quite a foreign idea among the people who regard the visitation as a decree of fate.

Foot and mouth disease is very troublesome in the rains when worms appear in the sores, and also in winter, but it is not usually fatal. The animal is tied up in the miry portion of the tank so that its feet stand in the mud, as the disease more commonly attack the feet.

The commencement of rains is the most unhealthy time for cattle as after being half-starved through the hot weather, they

gorge themselves on young grass, and cultivating cattle which are then put to the plough are more liable to succumb to disease than others. Very few Saharias prefer to go to veterinary dispensary.

*Indebtedness:* This is one of the most serious problems facing the Saharias and requires more than casual attention at the hands of development workers.

A comparative study of the income and expenditure of 109 families reveals that the average expenditure per family exceeds by Rs. 162.08 when compared to average income of Rs. 502.37.

*Extent:* In all 109 families were surveyed and 90 families have been found in debt. This means that 82.64% families are in debt and only 17.36% are free from the clutches of the money-lenders.

*Size of loan:* The number of loans taken by the indebted families is 110 and the total amount involved is Rs. 31,923/-. Average size of loan comes to Rs. 290.20 and the average amount taken on loan is Rs. 354.47.

*Source from where loans are obtained:* Loans are generally obtained from local money-lenders. Majority of the money-lenders are unlicensed. Money lending business in this area is primarily in the hands of the Rajputs. Brahmins also advance loans and in one village they are the greatest exploiters. Out of total number of loans 74.55 per cent loans have been taken from private agency, 23.64 per cent loans from cooperative credit society including banks and only 1.81 per cent loans have been taken from Government.

*Term of loans:* Loans are generally taken for short terms. The number of loans which are less than one year old are 75 or approximately 68.19 per cent of the total number of loans. The number of loans which are more than one year old but not more than five years old are 34 or nearly 30.90 per cent and the number of loans which are more than five years old is 0.91 per cent of the total number of loans.

*Rate of interest:* The rate of interest charged on loans obtained from government or from Cooperative Land Mortgage Bank is 9%. Money-lenders charge it between 6.25% to 37.50%. But they generally charge at the rate of 25%. Out of the total number of



loans recorded in the survey, 25.46 per cent of loans are taken on below 10% rate of interest; 73.64 per cent loans have been taken on above 10% but below 25% rate of interest and 0.90 per cent of loans are taken on more than 25% rate of interest.

*Purpose:* Generally the loans are taken to meet the domestic requirements of a family. Out of total number of loans 68.19 per cent loans were taken for meeting domestic requirements of the family regarding food, clothes etc., 24.54 per cent of the loans were taken to meet the requirements of agriculture and finally 7.27 per cent of loans were taken for meeting the expenses of social functions like marriage, birth, death etc.

This means that most of the loans are taken for unproductive purposes.

*Security offered:* The Cooperative Bank advances loan on land-mortgage basis. The licensed money-lenders advance loans against the mortgage of land and movable property like ornaments, and cattle also. The unlicensed money-lenders whose number is very large advance loans on very easy terms like personal credit. Out of the total number of 110 loans 82 loans were advanced on personal credit and 28 loans were advanced against mortgage of movable and immovable property. This means that out of a total number of loans 74.54 per cent loans were advanced on credit and 25.46 per cent loans were advanced on mortgage basis.

*Terms and conditions of repayment:* Out of the total number of loans 6 loans were advanced on the condition that they would be repaid in equal instalments with interest only; one loan has been advanced on the condition that the amount of the loan will be repaid along with the interest in lump sum and 103 loans were advanced on the condition that they be repaid according to one's convenience but interest should be paid regularly. Talking in terms of percentage, the loans which can be paid back according to convenience form 93.63 per cent of the total number of loans, 5.46 per cent loans are to be paid in equal instalments while the loans which are to be paid in lump sum come to only 0.91 per cent of the total loans.

At the time of survey not a single family had paid back the amount taken on loan.

In view of the average income of Rs. 502.39 per family coupled with economic handicaps and low rate of saving it seems this section will not be able to repay their debt in near future and they are likely to continue in debt for long.

*Other sources of Livelihood:* The Saharias are mainly a forest tribe and to a great extent they are dependent on forests as they collect minor forest produce from the jungles and exchange it or it is stored for own consumption.

A Saharia feels at home only in his natural surroundings. He can toil for long in the forest felling or shaping the trees. He can easily cover long distances. They are not afraid of wild beasts of the jungle and do their work without any fear.

Whenever they are free, they prefer to go to the jungle to collect fruits, leaves and tubers which are easily available.

*Fruits:* The following fruits are collected from the jungle:

1. Achar, 2. Mahua, 3. Tendu, 4. Ber, 5. Pipar, 6. Kharesana, 7. Kandoori, 8. Gofle.

Ber and tendu are dried up and preserved in containers for future use. Ber are ground into powder known as Mirchan and after mixing salt and water is eaten with great taste.

*Herbs:* A number of medicinal herbs are collected and sold in the market. The following is the list of important herbs and medicinal plants:

1. Moomar Goothi, 2. Mathni, 3. Kareed, 4. Sharbabali, 5. Vrihatdandi, 6. Vikshaiyapara, 7. Chitabar, 8. Mahdevi, 9. Fukun, 10. Kali, 11. Sander, 12. Dharantar, 13. Dhoodi, 14. Juda, 15. Kasai, 16. Goomber, 17. Mithar, 18. Dharenta, 19. Bobai, 20. Bana, 21. Tipra, 22. Badhwar, 23. Devdaroo, 24. Fang, 25. Bada Balara, 26. Chota Balara, 27. Lambi Balia, 28. Chamar karari, 29. Mar-karari, 30. Negad, 31. Madra, 32. Mainar, 33. Rohraya, 34. Satmooli, 35. Naisat, 36. Aakat kala, 37. Karaj, 38. Pach Bala, 39. Bada kand, 40. Kala kand, 41. Dokar kand, 42. Dukaria kand, 43. Aasaiya, 44. Marchia kand, 45. Teliya kand, 46. Patal Tumbdi, 47. Gwara, 48. Jamikand, 49. Ghorge of three varieties.

*Flowers:* 1. Kasai, 2. Hadwa, 3. Kosam, 4. Rohitak, 5. Dhanera.



*Trees:* 1. Sal, 2. Ber, 3. Dho, 4. Renja, 5. Kher, 6. Bhoka, 7. Chela, 8. Babool, 9. Saras, 10. Beeja, 11. Mahua, 12. Tendoo, 13. Mango, 14. Jamun, 15. Khirni, 16. Anwala, 17. Kanker, 18. Aundhi.

These trees provide fruits to eat as well as some of them are used for medicinal purposes.

*Gum:* Gum of various kinds is collected from the forest of this area.

Gum extracted from kher, babool and keer is generally eaten. But the most important product from the forest is cheer gum (Resin). This area is full of cheer gum trees and Saharias have the monopoly of collecting cheer gum. This is collected during summer season. The trees in a particular area are distributed naturally among the Saharias and they will confine their work to those trees only. Encroachment on somebody else's trees is not favoured.

*Method of extracting resin:* When a particular tree is selected for extracting cheer gum an incision of about one foot long and 2" deep is made on the trunk of the tree. This is done by the axe. After 3 to 4 days resin starts oozing from that mark and the Saharias collect it in a big leaf or bark of some tree. The implement used in scrapping gum is known as SALOO.

In a day man or woman can easily collect 1 to 2 seers of resin. Since the contract of minor forest produce is given to Adivasi Sahakari Samiti at Sheopur it collects various products from these tribals through its small societies functioning in a number of places. Resin is exchanged @ 1 seer of cheer gum = 3 seers of jowar. The rates of exchanging the various products are fixed by the society.

*Tendu leaves:* Collection of tendu leaves also brings some monetary gain to the Saharias. These leaves are generally collected in the month of May and June. The contractors purchase the leaves from the Saharias. Men and women both engage themselves to pluck them and sell to contractor at the rate 3 nP for 100 leaves. If somebody does this work seriously he can easily earn 0-75 nP per day. But this is not very profitable and the Saharias also go just for an hour or two for plucking tendu leaves.

*Mahua collection:* Mahua trees are found in abundance in the jungle and it provides food as well as liquor to the Saharias. Mahua flowers are eaten in various forms. Sometimes they are fried or boiled with rice and eaten. Country liquor is also extracted from mahua. Since liquor sold in a government distillery is costly people indulge in illicit distillation. Even the women know the art of extracting liquor and they prepare it.

#### **Hunting :**

The Saharias are not very expert hunters. It is strange to know that they do not have any knowledge of bow and arrow so commonly used by the other tribals of Madhya Pradesh.

Hunting is one of the traditional occupations of the tribe. Since these people were exclusively dependent on forests at one time hunting used to play an important role in their economy.

The Saharias while going for hunting prefer noon time as this is the period when most of the animals prefer to take rest and can be easily attacked. Three to four persons move around the forest in search of some animal and attack it all of a sudden from all the directions. Pits are also dug in certain places from where the animal is likely to pass. The animal is forced to pass through that particular tract where pits have been dug. It falls in one of these pits and is caught.

Dogs are also employed by some to chase small game like hare, forest murgi etc. Traps are also laid down to catch a game.

The Saharias have good knowledge of the movements of the animals found in their area and with this knowledge they try to locate the tracks and the portions of the forest frequented by them. In the summer season they locate the streams where animals generally come to drink water. Sudden attack on the animal is their only strategy as their hunting weapons are few.

#### **Fishing :**

Fishing is yet another seasonal source of livelihood. All men, women and children are interested in fishing. They have a fairly good knowledge about the varieties of fish.

Fishing is confined to rainy season only. Sometimes a fish is beaten with a stick or some poisonous powder is spread on the



### 38 : The Saharia

surface of the water to kill the fish. If the place is small they simply drain up water and catch fish. They do not have good traps used by other tribals of Madhya Pradesh.

#### Honey taking :

Although honey does not form a regular source of their income yet many Saharias are expert in honey taking. When they have to take honey during day time they make a large heap of half-dried leaves and branches under the comb and set fire to it. This produces a column of smoke and bees fly away. Then they pierce the comb with a sharp instrument locally known as Palta (पलटा) and collect honey in a basket. When the comb is that of bigger (भोर) bees at least three persons go in the night. It is believed that it is easiest to collect honey in the night than day as the bees cannot see properly. A large heap of branches and leaves is set on fire to produce smoke. All the three persons climb the tree. One of them carries with him ignited dung cake producing smoke, the second one carries palta and the third one bucket. When they reach near the comb, they bring the ignited dung cake producing smoke very near to the bees and keep it in such a position that the bees fly away. In the meantime the comb is pierced with palta and they collect honey in the bucket. This operation does not last long. When honey has been taken out, the comb is also removed and wax is separated from it.

Though the Saharias are expected to exchange all their forest produce with jowar, match-box etc. at the Cooperative Societies functioning in a number of places yet they very often sell their products to private contractors who pay them in cash and also pay a bit more than the Societies.

#### Other produce :

Besides the above-mentioned items collected from forest, the Saharias also make hectic search for stag horns and skull of Chousingha (a four horned animal similar to stag) in the jungle. Stag horns are sold at the rate of Re. 1/- per seer. Skull of Chousingha is generally purchased by agriculturist to keep it in the threshing floor as it is expected to ward off ghosts and other evil spirits.

### 4. SOCIAL ORGANISATION

In the social organisation of Saharias the following important social units have come to notice and all these units have important roles to play to allow the social mechanism to function smoothly. Social Institutions have been dealt elsewhere.

The important units of Saharia Social organisation are:

1. The family, 2. The clan, 3. Purkhat and kutumb, 4. The local group—Sahrana.

#### The family:

The family is a structural-functional unit of first degree for every Saharia man and woman. They call it "Kutumb". Mostly vertically extended families are popular with them. The separation generally takes place after marriage of the sons. The usual reason is bad relations between the women in the family. Sociological fatherhood is more important and in cases where women with living foetus get married their husbands do accept the issue as their own. This son enjoys the same status as any other and has the same claims everywhere. The line of descent passes from father to son.

Adoption is permissible but rarely practised. If there is no issue then the property goes to brothers and "Kutumb Kabila"; sometimes they keep "Ghar jawai" but in such cases 50% of property still is acclaimed by "Bhai bunds". Usually they adopt someone of their own tribe, *gotra* and preferably on *agnate* side. Sometimes they adopt their wife's brother's son. But adoption does not change the Gotra of the adopted. Any form of marriage other than Biyah is known as Kari. When a widow is recruited in the family, she can bring her issues especially the one who is still suckling. These issues are known as "legette". Marriage, adoption and other methods besides birth help in recruitment in the family. On the other hand death and fission lead to retirement. Generally they prefer polygamous families but sometimes they have up to four wives.

The authority in the family lies with male sex, rarely with female. The simplest type of unilateral grouping in the tribe is



called "Purhat" (lineage) where blood relations only of one line (agnate in this case) form the group. It was found that sometimes the ego is able to trace his real ancestry up to "Pur Aja" (five generations) which he calls as his "Pirhi". All these lineally related are known as "Bhai Kabila" and this group is treated as an extremely exogamous unit. They trace the homogeneity by actually reciting the genealogical relations in group sittings.

However the lineages may differ but members of the different lineages propitiate the same deities, because the clan is one.

The Saharias treat in the following gotras as Incestuous 1. Fathers, 2. Mothers, 3. Nani, 4. Aajee, 5. Phupha. Even a "Galiar" will have to avoid them. Same holds good for a "Lagetta".

#### **Adoption:**

Adoption is socially approved by them but rare in practice. Generally in the absence of a son, daughter's husband comes and lives with his in-laws. Following case history was recorded to show the presence of this institution. Bansi-Chauhan adopted "Rona". She is about fourteen years old and after marriage will go to live with her husband. In fact Bansi had four sons and one daughter. "Rona" is Bansi's "Bhanuju". Her mother died when he was 32 years old. Later on her father lost his eyes due to eye sore. There was no one left to look after the little girl and so Bansi took her to his place. Her father is still alive but leading the life of a beggar.

*Adoption ceremony:* The ceremony of adoption is simple and the idea is to make it known to the villagers. This is done in evening at the home of a doctor. "Batasha" (Sugar bubbles) is purchased and distributed after the ceremony is completed. The adopter will stand and say to the Panchas, "Aaj may ya larki ko kaniya dan lai raha hon, koi bap mahtari, kutumb pariwar ko dawa jhugroo nahin hai".

Then panchas will say, "Iski larki ho chooki", and he will have to bear the expenses of her marriage. The day for the ceremony is fixed by panchas. Bansi meet the arrangement for the distribution of bidi, tobacco etc. to panchas and other villagers. The girl has lived with him for over twelve years and is to be married in village Khori four miles away.

Adoption of daughters is rare but socially approved. Generally it is a member of bhaiband group that is adopted. Adoption of son is done so that he may look after agriculture and other economic activities. After adoption there is almost no problem of change of gotra because usually he belongs to his foster father's clan. He loses right in his natal family's property but regains it here. He will do "Ganga har" (last rites) to his new parents, Nookta, dagdena, garhi nikarana (ceremony after two to three years when there is bumper crops) and participate as full-fledged member in family ceremonies. No precedence was found where an adopted son was deprived of his privileges from the family. Usually the age for adoption ranges between six months to three years. When the mother of newly born child dies, the baby is given goat's milk. But if he feeds on the breast of some other women then they treat it as fostering. The child can suckle at the breast of following relations:

- Father's elder brother's wife,
- Father's younger brother's wife,
- Father's sister.

But preference is given to "Ajee" (father's mother) and next chance lies with bariba. An illegitimate child cannot be adopted nor can be considered for "roti and beti" relationships unless sociological fatherhood is conferred. If fostering of a daughter is done then the fostering mother gets Rs. 1.25 from the bride price at the time of marriage.

Family is the basic unit of Saharia Social Organisation. The family among the Saharias is patrilineal and patrilocal. It consists of parents and their children. So long as daughters and sons are unmarried, they remain with their parents. The trend is that immediately after marriage the sons start living in a separate house because it becomes difficult for mother-in-law and daughter-in-law to remain on good terms.

Among the Saharias one does not generally come across a joint or extended family in which parents and their married sons with their wives and children live together. One will hardly come across a joint family in the village. The reasons for this are:



1. The economic position of the Saharias is not very sound. There are only a few families who are in a position to manage two square meals a day. Others either they have nothing to eat or they simply remain satisfied by eating tendu, mahua or some other tubers available from the jungle. Obviously small families manage their own affairs and the chances of frequent quarrels among the family members are minimized.

2. Secondly the houses are very small and it is not sufficient even for nuclear family, the average size of the family being 5.18 members. Saharia house is in no way better than ordinary thatched hut which is unfit for human dwelling. In such circumstances a new hut is erected when a boy after marriage starts living separately from the parents.

3. The last reason for this trend toward individual family is that a woman among the Saharias enjoys considerable liberty and there are certain occasions when she can cut jokes even with the unknown members of the tribe. But the presence of mother-in-law in the family cuts her freedom of movement to a great extent and this results in the strained relations between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law.

The husband among the Saharias remains very much attached to his wife and she goes with him on every occasion. The life of a Saharia without a woman is not worth living goes a common saying.

But this too much of attachment gives rise to strained relationship between other family members and to avoid such a situation a person prefers to stay alone than in a joint family. Separation in time saves economic friction within the family and does not let the social relations of the members of the family itself get strained.

Separation from the family involves the boy's duty to set up an independent house for himself and his wife. He and his wife have to work hard to earn sufficiently to equip their home with the bare minimum essentials for their life.

Family is the unit of economic life and authority is vested in adult male member. When he grows old then the responsibility is shouldered by the eldest son. There is definite division of labour in economic pursuit based on age, sex and other factors.

An adult male will do most of the hard work needed in agricultural operations. He will plough the field (Har hakana), cut the trees in the forest, take the animals to grazing land in the morning and remain there up to 8 or 9 p.m. Besides, he will do the lighter jobs also where women also participate, like sowing, weeding (Needdla) and will do "rakhwali" of the crop by sleeping over "mara" during night. He will drive the bullock cart preparing the threshing ground and help in "chhotni" (harvesting of) jowar etc. On the threshing ground he will drive the bullocks (danda chalata hain) over the harvest crop and after it will do the winnowing (barsani). Sometimes he will go to dang (forest) to bring gum from salai (it gives chir gound) and karai tree. Sometimes they go for dharki (majoori to the forest coups). Collection of tendu, aachar and kankaria is also done by them.

Women do the household work like cooking, cleaning of the house, fetching of water, grinding (pisai-darai), sewing of the clothes, making of the manure (ghora) heap etc. She may go to fetch tendu, aachar, firewood and grass from the jungle. During the season she collects bidi leaf also and goes for majoori in road construction and works as rajja. She will participate with male members of the family in sowing and weeding operations. When the menfolk of the family do the ploughing work she will take the meal for them in the noon and while they eat it she will cut the bushes growing in the field. In weeding their contribution is maximum and also in harvesting.

Young boys and girls are the usual cow-herders. Boy over 10 years helps his father in cutting the bushes, weeding, brings water from the well and also looks after his younger siblings at the time of ploughing. He helps in harvesting, threshing and driving the bullock cart. They are given qualifying names according to the nature of their work as follows:-

- Bardia — One who grazes bullocks
- Gaimara — One who grazes cows
- Bhainswara — One who grazes she-buffaloes
- Jangerwara — One who grazes calves.

The girls about 10 years old do the grinding, a little cooking, cleaning the house with cowdung, fetching of water and cleaning the utensils.



Sometimes she may help in weeding and bringing the fire-wood from the jungle. When other elderly members are busy she is expected to look after the younger siblings.

In agricultural pursuit no work is tabooed for male but females cannot plough the field, make the bagur (fencing round the house) and cannot load a cart with wood and grass nor can she sit in it. Men cannot do the work of grinding. House deity which generally lives over the family hearth can be worshipped only by the male head of the family. Holi fire can be set by males only. Saharias celebrate their holi separately but some times kachis, malis and kumars join them. At the time of diwali the lakshmi puja is done by male but women do the ritual cooking.

Duties and obligations between various members towards each other are well defined. Thus a father will provide his small children with food, clothing and shelter. Sometimes he helps the bathing and also loves to sleep with them. The son is given training to work in field, drive bullock cart and sometimes in felling the trees. When the son or daughter gets grown-up he will arrange their marriage. In his old age the major burden of the work will be shared by his son. Daughter gets most of her training from her mother in household works. She makes to learn sewing, cooking, grinding etc. She learns to do the "Pani pangar Roti jharana" etc. She will at times wash her parents' clothes also. The younger brother when grown-up will not allow his brother to do much work in his presence. Grown up sisters rarely talk with their elder brothers and father but they are quite free with their mother and their elder sister-in-law. In the family the status of father is treated to be more superior than the mother. Only father or in his absence elder brother can sell or pawn the property. Father can give his son as "hali". Sons get equal share in father's property and debt but daughters get none. If there is division of property then father, mother and sons all will get equal share. Sociological fatherhood is given preference over biological.

#### **Interpersonal Relations:**

##### **Husband and wife :**

According to traditional norms of the society a husband is expected to be an authoritarian figure whose will should always

dominate the domestic scene. The wife should regard him as her 'master' and should serve him faithfully. But the position of wife is in no way inferior. After marriage, the chief duties of the wife are to care for the house, prepare the meals and be a mother to her children. In between she is expected to find out means to supplement the family income, either by directly engaging in remunerative work, or by gathering roots and tubers from the jungle, cowdung from the roads and paths or wood for the kitchen fire. She does the washing of clothes for herself. Men wash their own clothes.

The relationship between the two is that of affection for each other, though this atmosphere of love and affection is broken at times when the wife errs and the husband reprimands, abuses and beats her.

So long as husband and wife remain under the parental roof, they are not supposed to show special concern for each other. The boy is afraid of his father's authority and the daughter-in-law has to obey all the orders of her mother-in-law. Even if she bangs her, she has no right to raise her voice against the harsh treatment. She has to share the major burden of domestic work.

But the moment her husband settles in a separate house, the whole atmosphere is changed. She feels more free and thinks herself the master of the new house. With the setting up of an independent household the nature of husband-wife relations undergoes a definite change. Now the two are free to run their own affairs. The husband is now the head and has to work hard to provide for the maintenance of the family. In a sense they have to decide about their own affairs without the guidance of the elders.

Both husband and wife watch each other's activities closely. Excessive drinking, sex-intrigues, not going for work on the part of the husband are critically watched and commented by the wife. She often expresses her anger and discontent by neglecting the children and other household activities. This goes on until it takes the form of open conflict. Running away with somebody, divorce, murder and suicide are the various ways through which this is manifested.



**Daughter-in-law :**

The daughter-in-law, coming from a different family and often from a different village, finds herself in totally new surroundings in her husband's home. Now she enters the new phase of her life about which she has heard so much since the beginning of her later childhood. She has now to encounter mother-in-law for whom she has an unmistakable dread.

In the beginning the daughter-in-law is always given good reception but as the time passes the behaviour of her mother-in-law changes. She thinking that her son is now very much attached to his wife and does not care much about the other members of the family. This ultimately prejudices his mother towards daughter-in-law. To a mother-in-law, none of the daughters-in-law is perfect. Quarrels and occasional banging of the daughter-in-law are very common in a joint family and this is also one of the factors working against the solidarity of joint family system.

In a joint family a daughter-in-law has to maintain sufficient distance from her father-in-law and husband. She should not talk to her husband before her father-in-law and should not unveil her head. But the husband's younger brother is on joking terms with his elder brother's wife and while they are not expected to cross certain limits, tradition permits them to indulge in joke and banter. Unmarried brother-in-law provides sympathy and friendship to the harassed wife but when they grow up they too are drawn to their wives and the former ties of intimacy are gradually forgotten in the humdrum realities of life.

**Siblings :**

The relationship between brothers is that of mutual love and affection. So long as their interests do not clash they remain on good terms and help each other. Elder brothers are respected by the younger ones and they are the guardian of their interests. When a joint family is separated the brothers continue to live in the same village because migrations are comparatively few among the tribals.

**Parents and children :**

The common belief among the Saharias is that children are the gift of the god hence there is no necessity to check their

number. Both the sexes are welcome in the home and there is no evidence that they favour one above the other.

When children are old enough they start sharing household work. The girls learn cooking, gather wood and cow-dung. No formal moral training is imparted nor the children are severely punished for not obeying the orders of their parents. A slap over the ear is usually all that is attempted. Children by and by learn the prescribed code of conduct and in due course of time start following them.

**Other Relatives within the family :**

Due respect is given to other relatives within the family. An uncle must be treated like father and an aunt like the mother. Cousins should be regarded as brothers and sisters. It naturally follows from this that one should treat one's nephews and nieces as one's own children though this is found to be rather difficult in actual practice.

It may be pointed out here that family among the Saharias is an economic grouping also. It provides food, shelter and clothing for its members. All the members put in their mite in the economic sphere. Husband and wife both contribute to the maintenance of the family and one does not find very clear-cut division of labour based on sex though certain activities like hunting, fishing, collection of resin (cheer gum) are mainly contained to menfolk only and women collect fruits, tubers and edible herbs. This economic cooperation ultimately strengthens family ties making it more stable.

**Clan Organisation :**

The Saharias like most of the tribes of Central India are divided into a number of clans. A clan is known as Got or Goti. The tribe is endogamous and marriage outside the tribe is not approved. But territorial exogamy is not followed. A Sahrana may consist of a number of clans and marriage within the Sahrana is not a taboo.

The following are the important clans of the tribe:

1. Sameria, 2. Dacheria, 3. Gobaria, 4. Barelia, 5. Dubaria,
6. Chauhan, 7. Masania, 8. Badrelia, 9. Pipari Baderia, 10. Mangria, 11. Jinjhar, 12. Barboolia, 13. Kudwas, 14. Dungaria, 15.



Solakia, 16. Dhondia, 17. Bajulla, 18. Parondia, 19. Selia, 20. Karwaria, 21. Khadia, 22. Kadho, 23. Rawania, 24. Kellala, 25. Panwar, 26. Mohar, 27. Bagluia, 28. Umria, 29. Karondia, 30. Narbaria, 31. Jhilmilia, 32. Wogaiya, 33. Abkaun.

It is not possible to give the exact number of clans (gotras) present in the tribe. The following are the important clans of the tribe arranged according to the hierarchy found between the various gotras :

1. Sahu chauhan, 2. Ragpeta chauhan, 3. Pamar, 4. Bajulla, 5. Devaria, 6. Karoria, 7. Piper Barodia, 8. Bilonhria, 9. Karwania, 10. Mohania, 11. Daccharia, 12. Pallia.

The clans Bajullas, Chauhan, Devaria, Govaria and Pamar are treated as a whole to be superior than Balliya, Sonaria, Billon, Pharia and Karoria etc. Naming of the various clans is somewhat on the following pattern :

*Sahu Chauhan*: This is after the Chauhan shattria and the word 'Sahu' stands for the highest amongst the gotras.

*Bajulla*: The root word for it is 'Baj' a type of bird (hawk).

*Devaria*: This is after Devar, (husband's younger brother) the one whom 'Bhujai' likes and bestows affection and love.

*Karoria*: Those who speak harsh, (Karua) called Karoria (neem tree).

*Piper Barodia*: This clan name originated after the two trees Piper and Bar.

*Bilonhria*: A vegetable found by the side of rivers and streams. There is a story also as to how this clan originated from the survivors of a famine who could save their lives by eating it.

*Karwania*: One who speaks harsh.

*Mohania*: Those who can 'Moh' attract with their sweet talk.

*Sanaria*: This name is after "sun" (hemp fibre).

*Dachairia*: Those who "Dachaire" put others to inconveniences.

*Palliya*: The one who churns the water in the pond so that fishes raise their head above the water surface.

#### Origin of the clans:

Interesting stories are narrated to show the origin of some of the clans.

*Palliya*: There was a pond by the side of a village. It had varieties of fishes in it. One day the villagers planned to have group fishing. One of them stepped in it and with the help of his feet started churning the water so that it may become densely muddy and fishes may raise their heads and could be spotted. Now the churner came to be nicknamed as "Palliya" and after him the clan was so named.

*Sanaria*: A farmer was sowing "sun" seeds. By chance one seed fell over his chest and remained there and in the same condition he went to sleep. Now the seed due to sweat moisture started germinating and overnight a 'sun plant' grew up. When the man woke up he found a small jute plant grown over his chest. He adopted it as his clan symbol and his successors came to be identified with it.

Once a man went on a fishing expedition. As usual he went in a pond and started churning it. All of a sudden a "Matiyas" fish jumped and struck his face with its tail, as a result the man lost his left eye. Thence onwards he started worshipping the "Mat-iyas" fish and his future generations come to be known as "Palliyas". It was late in the evening that the man had just returned after fishing and losing his one eye. His mother got anxious and asked how he lost his eye. The son replied: "Taliya main Hari Lapaklolia Main Kiya Karon Mori Maiya".—In the pond the fishes were mechanic. How could I have helped it, Oh mother?

*Pipar-Barodia*: Raja 'Inder' once saw a 'Barat' passing on its way. He ordered the rains to pour down heavily and the clouds started doing so. The marriage party started running helter skelter in search of shelter. Nearby they saw a Pipal tree. They all assembled under it but still they were getting wet. The Pipal tree got worried about them and said to God, "Hai Ram Maira sahar Ghaita unnai.—They came under my shelter so I must help them." Then the tree ordered its branches to come close and the leaves to join together and form a water-tight envelope. So did it happens, and people were saved. Since then they adopted it as their clan and worshipped it. Thus besides the examples given above a neem tree is worshipped by the Karwarias and the Karorias. The Palliya worship a Talliya (pond).



In some cases a popular relation has also led to the naming of a clan, e.g. after "Dewar" (husband's younger brother). Members of the Chauhan Gotra worship "Bejasan", "summur walai Assmani", "Nar singh" and "Naihal Devi". (But "Narsingh" and "Nahal Devi" are propitiated only during crisis situations, by individual families.) Their clan is not always a local group and is sometimes widely distributed. Members of the same clan are known as "Gotias".

A feeling of "clanship" is present and is manifested in terms like "Bhai Bahan", "Kutumb", "Bhai Bund" etc. But it is best revealed in some sort of extraordinary and critical situations like marriage, "Jhagra", death and birth. Loyalty to one's clan's men is seen in village fights and to eat from one another's "Thali" also shows the loyalty to the clan. If a Chauhan commits breach of sex taboo like incest then the stigma will be borne by the whole kindred. Non-Chauhans will say "Chauhanan main aaisi hogi". They have a faith in blood found but it is revived only upto five generations.

Though the clan is a very important functional substructure for them the political structure is one important exception and is based on the organisation of the tribe as a whole. But the "Kinship system" is still the basic substratum for them.

#### **Purkhat:**

The next important social unit which may be called as more effective group is lineage which they call as Purkhat. They trace their origin through father's side, normally up to 4th generation. This may be due to the fact that it may not be possible to trace beyond that.

#### **Kutumb:**

Another important and closely knit social group is 'Kutumb' which is an extension of joint family. Marriage within the Kutumb is a taboo.

#### **Sahrana:**

The last important unit of social organisation is the local group which may be termed as Sahrana. A Sahrana comprises of different families living in a common settlement and performs important function.

It is just possible that a village may have a number of Sahrana but the families living in one Sahrana have more attachment to the other families of the same Sahrana than the whole tribe excluding close relatives.

In the social and economic life of the Saharias the Sahrana as a local group plays an important role. Although there is no definite system of rights and obligations which formally binds together the members of a Sahrana but a close observation of its life and activities reveals that within the group itself, there is a great degree of economic and social cooperation. Much of this cooperation is voluntary, mutual and reciprocal.

At the time of marriage or some other social function in one of the families in a Sahrana all the persons of that Sahrana are invited while this invitation is not extended to the members of another Sahrana except close relatives. In the communal hunts organised all adult members of that Sahrana concerned participate and go to the jungle. In social matters also mutual and reciprocal help is distinctly discernible.

Whenever some dispute arises in a Sahrana, persons from other Sahrana are not invited. Attempts are first made to settle the case through the good offices of the elders of the Sahrana concerned and only in case of difficulty others are invited to intervene. In view of this type of inter-Sahrana relationship there is a bungalow (hut) in each Sahrana where the villagers assemble to discuss the affairs of that Sahrana only. The naming of the various "Sahranas" is very interesting. Names like "Mirchiwala" after chillies, "Bari wale" after hedge and "Acharwala" after Char tree are a few popular examples. Every 'Sahrana' has its own Patel (Sahrana headman) who belongs to "Bhai Kabila" group and also a "Pradhan". The posts are almost hereditary. Their rights and obligations get dramatised at the time of crisis, e.g. in the institution of marriage. During the marriage of a boy a Patel and Pradhan get nothing, but if a girl is married, officials are given 4 Rs. and 2 Rs. respectively as a share from the bride wealth.

A Patel has a number of duties towards his "Sahrana" to do:

- (a) In issues involving illicit sex relations he may impose a fine.



- (b) He is people's representative and is answerable to Govt. officials on their behalf.
- (c) He represents his 'Sahrana' in inter-Sahrana and other similar meetings.
- (d) He will go with the village Barat.
- (e) Guests of the village will be entertained by him.
- (f) Problems regarding agrestic serfdom involving the villagers in any form will have to be settled with his advice.

Similarly the Pradhan also has well defined duties towards the village:

- (a) He will make arrangement for stay and food for the village guests.
- (b) He acts as Patel's messenger.
- (c) He accompanies Patel at various panchayats.
- (d) He accompanies the village marriage party,
- (e) and goes for saggari problems.

Patel and Pradhan are sometimes instrumented in ousting the inhabitants from the 'Sahrana' on the pretext of breach of some code of behaviour.

Patel along with other panchas (who are generally village elders) penalize the wrong doers for faults like "chari chinnar". The fine ranges between 20 to 25 Rs., capital punishment and some times out-casting.

Generally the village Panchayat which is a bigger unit than Sahrana panchayat comprises of all Patels and Pradhans of Sahrana and sometimes other important 'caste' members. They settle disputes between different Sahrana and of important consequences. But it is mostly the cases involving woman that are brought to its notice. Besides these two types of village councils there is one, more superior with extensive jurisdictions and for serious crimes endangering the solidarity of the tribe. This is known as "Athairi" involving of villages. It decides cases of murder, incest and killing a cow.

#### A case history:

In village 'Pairaha' 4 years back wife of a Saharia died. This fellow had a married daughter. She was living with him. At that time he was about 45 years old. He did not allow his daughter to go and live with her husband in a different

village on the pretext that there is nobody to look after him. She lived with her father for about 1½ years and became pregnant without any visits from her husband. Gradually and gradually the rumour spread. Her husband also heard it and on his request the "Athairi" was organised. In the panchayat the girl admitted that the foetus is from her own father. Father had to confess it, but could not survive the shock and was found dead in his hut next day; girl is alive still. Usually for the ritual purification they go for a holy dip to the "Gange jee" near Allahabad but sometimes they have to be contented with a visit to "Sita Badi". This bathing of "tenath" is known as "Aujle karma".

Generally in such cases the girl is almost given to anybody who can keep her. In the Panchayat the Panchas ask "panch ka Kare kon khaiye", that means who is ready to accept the girl. Then somebody will stand and give his consent and the girl will be almost sent with him without the rituals for a formal marriage.

#### Kinship Terms of Reference:

E—Elder

Y—Younger

1. Father—Baap
2. Father's father—Aajo
3. Mother's father—Nana
4. Father's brother—(E) Dajee, (Y) Kaka
5. Mother's brother—(E) Mama, (Y) Mama Kakki, Kaki.
6. Mother—Maiya
7. Mother's mother—Nani
8. Father's mother—Dadi, Badi Ba, Aaji
9. Father's sister—Bhua
10. Mother's sister—Mousi
11. Brother—(E) Bade Bhaiya, (Y) Addressed by name
12. Father's brother's son—(E) Bade Bhaiya, (Y) Bhaiya
13. Father's sister's son—(E) Bade Bhaiya, (Y) Bhaiya
14. Mother's brother's son—Bhaiya
15. Mother's sister's son—Bhaiya
16. Sister—(E) Bahina or Jiji, (Y) Choti Bahina. Generally addressed by name.
17. Father's brother's daughter—Didi, Jiji



18. Father's sister's daughter—Bahin, Didi
19. Mother's brother's daughter—Bahin
20. Mother's sister's daughter—(E) Didi, (Y) Addressed by name
21. Son—Larka, Moda
22. Brother's son—(Man s.) Addressed by name
23. Sister's son—(M.S.) Bhaiya, Bacha
24. Son's son—Nati
25. Daughter's son—Nati
26. Sister's daughter—(M.S.) Bhanji
27. Father's sister's husband—Fufa
28. Wife's father—Sasura
29. Mother's sister's husband—Mausia
30. Mother's brother's wife—Maen
31. Father's brother's wife—(E) Badi Ba, (Y) Kakki or Kaki
32. Husband's mother—Sas (F.S.)
33. Wife's mother— Sas (M.S.)
34. Husband's brother—(E) Jeth (F.S.)
35. Husband's younger brother—Dewar (F.S.)
36. Wife's brother—Saro, Sala (M.S.)
37. Sister's husband—(M.S.) (E) Bahinoi, (Y) Jeeja
38. Son's wife's father—(Parents) Samdhi
39. Daughter's husband's father (Parents)—Samdhi
40. Wife—Berwani
41. Husband's sister—Nand
42. Wife's sister—Sali
43. Brother's wife—(M.S.) Bhoji, Bhabi.
44. Husband's elder brother's wife—(F.S.) Jethani
45. Husband's younger brother's wife—(F.S.) Devrani
46. Son's wife's mother—Samdhin
47. Daughter's husband's mother—Samdhin
48. Daughter's husband—Damad
49. Son's wife—Bahoo, Choti or Badi
50. Sister's husband's sister—Saraj
51. Wife's brother's wife—Saraj
52. Father's father's father—Parjo or Tirajo
53. Father's father's mother—Aji
54. Father's father's brother—Ajo

55. Father's father's brother's wife—Parajec, Dadi
56. Father's father's mother's brother—Ajo
57. Father's father's mother's sister—Aji
58. Father's father's sister—Aji
59. Son's daughter's husband—Jabai or Sago
60. Daughter's daughter's husband—Sago
61. Co-wife—addressed as Badi Luhri as the case may be.

On careful examination of the Saharia Kinship terms it is evident that it has all important features of the classificatory system. For many relatives the same relationship term is used. i.e. the term Didi is used to denote Father's brother's daughter, mother's sister's daughter. The term 'Ajo' is used to denote father's father's brother, father's brother and father's father's mother's brother.

#### Avoidance:

A few strict relationship taboos separate relatives from each other among the Saharias. Marriage or any other type of sexual relationship is strictly prohibited.

The first set of such rules of avoidance govern a woman and her husband's elder brother (Jeth-Bahu relationship). A woman should avoid all the real or classificatory elder brothers of her husband. The relatives coming in this category do not talk to each other directly and the woman is expected to observe Purdah (veil) before them. She should not uncover any part of her body before them and should not even talk to her husband in their presence. She should not mention them by name.

A second set of such taboos governs the relationship between father-in-law and daughter-in-law. The daughter-in-law has to observe purdah before her father-in-law and she cannot communicate anything to him directly. Both of them should not remain alone in a room. In the presence of her father-in-law, she should not talk to her husband and attend to him.

Avoidance is also followed between mother-in-law and son-in-law. But this is more strict in the first few years of marriage and gradually avoidance is not strictly followed. But the mother-in-law always talks to her son-in-law in a formal way.



**Joking relationship:**

Contrary to the usage of avoidance a privileged familiarity is permitted between certain relatives. These relatives may indulge in jest and banter and may make obscene jokes to each other. Such relationship exists between a man and his wife's younger brothers and sisters. A husband's wife's younger brothers and sisters are termed as 'sala' and 'sali' respectively.

A woman can also joke with her husband's younger brothers and sisters. The dewar-bhauji relationship has a special tinge of romance. Since system of junior levirate is practised, the husband's younger brother is the potential mate to his elder brother's wife. A husband's younger brother teases her on many occasions and tells her of bringing her younger sister.

"I will bring your sister, Bhabi" says Dewar. On hearing this she says "you don't have courage and money to bring her here. You are lean and thin."

The Dewar gets annoyed and says, "I shall bring her at any cost whatever may happen, even if I am required to sell my cattle and land. But I shall bring her."

He further requests his Bhabi to cook Ghogri (boiled gram, jowar and wheat) "for her sister".

Whenever her husband is out and she is all alone, Devar teases her and talks of sending a message to her husband in view of her getting impatient.

In fine it can be said that a daughter-in-law keeps her head covered in the presence of her sausra and jaith. But with rolling of years she becomes more free. Joking relationships exist between husband and wife, dewar-bhauji, nand-bhauji, sali-bahnoi, samdhi-samdhi and interestingly enough between mami and bhanuj. However between husband and wife it takes overt form on full. The wife will serve her husband with food and after he has finished will like to take the same of the left over. The maternal kins are known as "mahtari ka kutumb pariwar" and kins (agnates) "hamara kutumb pariwar". Mother's and father's brother's sons are treated as bhai (own brother). They do not try to differentiate between parallel and cross cousin. 'Rakhi tying' is sufficient to

create brother-sister relationship. This leads to extension of kinship relations to non-kins also for reasons of old family relation. This relation may be in the form of bhaughi, kaki and others. Friends of wife are treated as salis irrespective of any other consideration. Joking relationships exist on gotra basis also because sometimes members of one gotra treat the members of other gotra as potential need. Age also helps in establishing relations; for example an old man and woman irrespective of their caste affiliations will be addressed as dadjee and aaji respectively. When a man goes to his in-laws' house he gets the same treatment in all the families of the village as their own kith. A wife if biyatha is assigned a better status than a kari because of the heavy expenditure, ceremonies and because she is first new entrant which all goes with a regular marriage.

Avoiding relationships are also observed though degree of avoidance there is. Thus the relations like jaith bahu, sausra bahu, memia sausra bahu, bhuhiria sausra bahu, sas janwai are few examples where avoidance is strict. But between daughter-in-law and mother-in-law, son-in-law and father-in-law it is mild.

**Position of women:**

Among the Saharias the position of woman is not very inferior. She enjoys considerable liberty in the economic and socio-religious fields. The women do not keep themselves completely in seclusion and are free to go about though they cover their heads in presence of the elderly persons of the tribe and the outsiders.

In the family, the husband is the main authority and he exercises considerable influence on the other members of the family. To some extent his wife has to bow before him but she can in no sense be called his slave and plays an important role in the management of the house.

Though extramarital sex relations are not allowed but cases of such lapses are not wanting. A woman is at liberty to cut jokes with others even in presence of her husband on certain occasions like 'mela' and other such social gatherings. Husband and wife both go together to visit a mela and other Saharias pass remark at her even in the presence of her husband. She also enters into



jest with them and sometimes goes with somebody of her choice without intimating her husband. In such a case the only alternative for her husband is to ask for compensation from her next husband. Because of this freedom allowed to women the frequency of divorce is more among the Saharias when compared to other tribes.

Since Saharia women go to the jungle every day and remain in the forest for a considerable period of the day they get enough opportunity of developing intimacy with other Saharias. Whenever they are alone in the jungle and a Saharia happens to pass by he simply passes some remark indicating his interest towards her and in case she agrees both of them retire in some place for sexual congress.

A Saharia displays his inclination towards Saharia woman in the following way whenever he happens to see her all alone in a jungle:

कायरी आऊँका (may I come?). She gets annoyed and says —  
आ तेरी सनेनी (ठठरी) बांधू तोये बहेरी की लकडी में जलाऊँ—

If you dare to come to me I shall prepare your Thatri and burn you in the wood of bahera tree.

or बर्रे (you be ash)

But if the person is determined to develop intimacy he displays his love towards her in very many ways and when she agrees takes her in some corner of the jungle.

This clearly shows that though extra-marital sex-relations are not socially approved, they do take place and so long as they are not known to others no serious view is taken.

#### Saharia woman as a wife :

After marriage the main duties of the wife are to look after the house, cook meals for her husband and be a mother to her children. When she is free from domestic work she is expected to supplement the family income by gathering roots and tubers from the jungle, collection of cheer gum (resin) and tendu leaves, fuel and other such things from the jungle. Most of the time she is busy in house-hold work doing something or the other.

When she is in her monthly period, there is some interruption in her routine work but she goes to the jungle to collect gum, fruits and roots.

Domestic quarrels are not uncommon and husband and wife very often abuse each other. Beating is also common. A woman takes a serious view when her husband shows undue interest in some other woman than her and does not look after her and children well. Excessive drinking is also responsible for domestic quarrels.

Whenever a woman is beaten by her husband she very often goes to her neighbours and relates the story of her husband's cruel behaviour towards her. She also requests them to intervene. When situation goes out of control and she finds herself helpless, she threatens her husband to desert him in case he does not change his behaviour towards her and in actual practice she runs away with somebody.

It is interesting to note in this regard that at the time of marriage ceremony when send off (बिदा) is given to groom's party, the father advises his daughter to behave properly in her father-in-law's house and blesses her to lead a happy married life. He says to his daughter —

भग विडर के अइयो और मायके रख देख जइयो

“Father asks her daughter to come in future to her parents' house no matter even if required to run away.”

This clearly shows that girl's parents do not take a serious view if she has to run away from her in-laws' house to meet her parents.

What has been written so far clearly indicates that among the Saharias woman is not a family drudge and she enjoys considerable high status in their society.

Since theirs is a deficit economy both husband and wife have to work hard to earn their bread. Obviously she continues to work as usual even in her monthly period and advanced stage of pregnancy.

Except a few restrictions imposed in socio-religious field the major responsibility for the management of the household remains on the women who are treated with understanding and friendliness by the menfolk.



## 5. LIFE CYCLE

Pregnancy is a matter of pride for a Saharia woman as a woman with children enjoys better status than a barren woman. The following lines throw more light on it —

“लरका जिन करियो बंजर खेती  
तेरो बीज अखारत जाय”

“There is no point in ploughing barren land as the seed is bound to go as waste.”

Pregnancy is generally known to have occurred as soon as woman misses her normal period known as Kapde Se Aana — ‘कपडे से आना’. She informs about this to her husband first but no ceremonies or rituals are observed at this time. She continues to work as usual till the very advanced stage of pregnancy. Even her husband does not stop sexual inter-course till 7th or 8th month.

A few taboos are observed during pregnancy. During her pregnancy a woman is not allowed to go near the burial ground or cross it. They say that since such a place is inhabited by witches they might inflict some injury. She also avoids too much of rest and does not eat substances which contain too much oil or fat.

### Abortion:

Abortion is known as Adhoora Girna — ‘अधूरा गिरना’. But this is not favoured by them and deliberate abortion is regarded as sin. In natural course abortion may be caused due to following reasons:

1. Malevolent effect of the witches,
2. Crossing a burial ground,
3. Too much use of achar, mahua and country liquor at the time of pregnancy,
4. Weakness in the body due to anaemia.

Delivery generally takes place in the room adjoining the kitchen. Sometimes delivery takes place in the jungle also while working there. In such a situation, she is assisted by the other women and they manage every thing.

At the time of delivery Dai is called but if she is not available then some elderly and experienced woman of the Saharia community is called to assist. Some time a Bhangin (woman from the sweeper caste) is also called to assist the expectant mother. When the time for child birth draws near, the expectant mother is required to sit on the floor with her knees drawn up. Immediately after delivery the umbilical cord is cut with any sharp instrument and it is buried in a pit. After delivery mahua is given to eat for three days and after that she again starts doing all work. There are no taboos attached on her.

Since theirs is a subsistence economy every member is important and a woman cannot afford to remain in confinement for a long time. After three days both mother and child are bathed with hot water. A chicken is sacrificed in the name of Gelhari Mata (गैलहारी माता) (goddess of the roads) and then she goes to work as usual.

### Difficult labour:

Sometimes the delivery does not take place in a normal manner and labour pains continue for long. Then some mantras are pronounced by menfolk and they pray for easy delivery. When these mantras prove ineffective, water is filled in a thali made of brass. On this water Nokhat (a design) is drawn and this water is given to the expectant mother to drink. The observance of this ritual is believed to make the child birth easy.

When a woman dies during pregnancy the whole case is dealt with in a different way. In such a case a Bhangi (a person from untouchable caste) is called to operate on the belly of the woman in order to remove the child. The Bhangi operates on the belly and removes the dead child out. He charges between Rs. 20/- to 25/- for his services. Both the mother and child are cremated.

There is no special ceremony for the naming of the child. Common names given are Gyarasa, Mukundi, Bhadain, Amrita and Hateela etc. Among the females Komal, Meeda, Bundi etc. are common.

### Growing up:

Age ceremonies, such as practised by the other primitive tribes at the time of birth, naming, weaning, ear boring, hair-cutting, puberty etc. are absent in the Saharia socio-religious life. The Saharia children, from their birth to adolescence, and from adolescence to manhood, grow in the lap of nature free and unhindered, and all the early education they get in their vocations,



tribal lore and custom is through the constant company and imitation of elders.

There is no marked segregation of the sexes till the age of six or seven. After this girls start helping their mother in some way or the other. The boys also start sharing the work and invariably go with their parents to the jungle.

At this age the boys are expected to begin putting on their lingoti (loin cloth) regularly. At the age of thirteen or fourteen they are capable of doing quite a few things. By this time they acquire some knowledge of folk songs, dance and sex life.

Similar is the case with the girls. By the time they are six, they begin putting on Ghagra regularly. They start sharing domestic work. They start collecting fuel from the jungle and also broom the house regularly. Most of the time they assist their mothers in the domestic work.

There are no special puberty rites for women and no ceremonials connected with first menstruation. The Saharias do not have special menstruation huts for women. At the time of menses a woman is treated unclean for 3 days. On the fourth day she goes to the nearby river, stream or nallah and takes bath, and starts doing her routine work. But even during her periods a woman is not stopped from going to the jungle and collect whatever produce she can. The taboos are not very strictly adhered to.

### Marriage:

Among the Saharias the primary function of clan organisation is the regulation of marriage. No marriage is permissible between persons belonging to the same clan. The tribe, itself being endogamous, no marriages with outsiders are permitted. There are a number of rules which prohibit unions between certain relatives. For example a person cannot marry in his mother's, father's, mother's mother and father's sister's husband's (phupha) Gotras. Similarly a woman cannot marry any of the elder brothers of her husband. All these rules and regulations aim at keeping the social mechanism intact and control the behaviour of certain relatives towards each other in the interest of the social organisation of the tribe.

Marriage is an important phase of a Saharia life. He may acquire a mate through one of the following ways :

1. Vivah—Regular marriage
2. Elopement

3. Kari
4. Widow-remarriage

The commonest and the most popular form of marriage is the vivah which is formally arranged by the parents of the bride and the bridegroom and is celebrated with all the prescribed rites and ceremonials.

### Betrothal:

Betrothal is known as Sagai. Preliminary enquiries are made about the girl and her gotra by the boy's parents through somebody. After this some one related to the groom is sent to the girl's parents to know their reactions. If the girl's parents show willingness to marry their daughter then the boy's father along with Patel, Pradhan or some other elderly person go in a party to the girl's village. They carry with them Rs. 1.25 and one necklace (kanthi) made of beads.

On hearing the news of their arrival, girl's father comes out and wishes them Ram Ram. They are seated. Then the details of the girl, for example her age, colour, training etc. are given to boy's father. The person who gives the details is known as PANYA. A good girl is termed as Lonchal — 'लोनछल'.

In the meantime the girl's bhua (girl's father's sister) prepares chouk (a design) with flour on the ground. Half a seer of jowar is kept on this chouk and on it is kept a small vessel (Ganga-jali) filled with water. An earthen lamp is also lit. Then all of them sit around this.

Money and kanthi brought by the boy's father are given to the girl to put them on. Kanthi is worn by the girl while money that is Rs. 1.25 is given to her mother.

Then drinks are taken. This gathering must represent seven gotras. This is known as सात गोतए की छग । Left hand's last finger is kept near thumb of the right hand. This forms some sort of cup. Liquor is poured in this and taken.

Then they solemnly declare, "The marriage of such and such is being fixed. If the girl dies all of us shall give her fire and if she runs away we shall tell you the place and the person where she goes."

आज फलौं फलौं की शादी तय हो रही है । यदि लड़की मर गई तो हम दाग बनायेंगे और यदि कोई दीगर कर जाईओ तो ठौर बतायेंगे कि फलौं फलौं के यहां गई है ।

The girl does not come in the open but watches all this from some corner.



Then they say, "यदि लड़केवाला नट जायगा तो १२ बेटे और १२ समान (शराब) देयगा और यदि लड़कीवाला नट जायगा तो १२ बेटे और १२ समान देयगा।"

Then they say if the boy's party breaks the promise then they will have to marry twelve girls and offer drinks twelve times and if the girl's party breaks the agreement they will also have to do the same thing.

After this drink is taken freely and they sing Rasia songs.

The Saharias believe that important decisions like setting marriage should be decided in the presence of a few elderly persons, so that all the issues involved therein could be settled amicably through their good offices. Hence why even today the Saharias prefer to take their cases to the Tribal Panchayat than going to the law courts.

Betrothal or engagement should not be broken. It is commonly said, "सगाई नहीं जायगी व्याही भलेही चली जाय।" This simply means that once engagement (Sagai) is performed, it should not be broken. The marriage will have to take place no matter the woman may run away immediately after marriage.

#### Marriage :

After fixing the marriage, the boy's party returns. The girl's party goes again after a month or so to fix the dates of the marriage. Pipal leaf, haldi, doob, coconut and a few coins are taken to the boy's village. All this is known as cheetha 'चीठा'. This is given to boy's parents by Patel or Pradhan. This ritual symbolises the confirmation of marriage.

When the dates of marriage are fixed no professional pundit is consulted. Persons from both the sides sit together and decide the date.

When the dates of marriage have been fixed, the boy's party makes enquiries—regarding the food and other requirements from girl's parents—as all these things are sent before marriage. The boy's party has to share food expenses incurred by the other side for the first day only. The boy's parents send about 3 maunds of jowar to the girl's side.

Preparations for marriage are started by both the sides. The boy's parents purchase the following clothes for the girl:

|    |        |          |
|----|--------|----------|
| 1. | Lugra  | Rs. 7/-  |
| 2. | Ghagra | Rs. 12/- |
| 3. | Polka  | Rs. 3/-  |

|    |              |                |
|----|--------------|----------------|
| 4. | Dhoti (Male) | Rs. 3/- to 5/- |
| 5. | Shirt        | Rs. 3/- to 4/- |
| 6. | Pagri        | Rs. 1.25       |

"Chali" that is the dej (bride price) is rather low and traditionally it should not exceed Rs. 15. It does not go to bride's parents exclusively but is distributed. On chok the Panch and Patel of the bride's side sit together. Then the members of the bridegroom party are called and the Patel says to them "basu maharaj". They sit and the amount is given to bride's party and they in their turn laid over the "jajim", then the distribution is done by the Patel in the following manner:

|           |                                 |
|-----------|---------------------------------|
| Ist share | Bride's mother (Rs. 1.25)       |
| IIInd "   | Mandir (Rs. 1.25)               |
| IIIrd "   | Bride's buwa (Re. 0.25)         |
| IVth "    | Kumhar (Rs. 2.50)               |
| Vth "     | Bride's jeeja (Rs. 3.00)        |
| VIth "    | Patel (Rs. 1.25)                |
| VIIth "   | Pradhan (Re. 0.50)              |
| VIIIth "  | Nau (Rs. 2.50)                  |
| IXth "    | Hijara (Rs. 2.50)               |
| Xth "     | Chowkidar (Rs. 2.50)            |
|           | The rest goes to bride's family |

#### Saggai:

Saggai or Betrothal is followed in arranged marriages. This is a ceremony held in the initial stages to assure the solemnization of marriage. The boy's father due to contacts with other people at the time of fairs, festivals, melas and markets comes to know that there is a suitable girl for his son. Some times the girl belongs to the same village and every thing is known. The gotra of the girl is enquired and finally two to five people from the village go to girl's place for negotiation. Generally father, elder brother, Patel and Pradhan go on this mission. They will sit for a while at that place and talk about matters of common and general interest. Generally it is evening time and after formal talks some person of the visiting party will initiate the talk. Sometimes the prospective bridegroom also accompanies them. They all will have drinks and then the father of the girl will be asked for his daughter's hand. Suppose if he agrees to it then he will accept the proposals.



**Biyah:**

The date for the Biyah is fixed during sagai. One after sagai they have the laggan ceremony. At the bridegroom side preparations are done for it and the laggan worth Rs. 40 to 50 is taken in the evening. Rasia is sung throughout the night, handiatta is done and chok is also made by buwa. Then heavy drinking is done. Patel and Pradhan of the bride's side sit at the chok. After that in a pipal leaf turmeric is brought. A little of green grass, one copper pice and a little of vermilion is added to it. All these things along with coconut are given to the bride's party. Like hundus maraha is made agoni is done and finally bida takes place. They also fill "shouda ki chali". The biyah takes place one month after the laggan. Generally sagai is done in the month of kartik, laggan in aghan and biyah in poos, magh, chits, baisakh. Pandit and nau are not needed. Aganawa goes and settles the date of laggan with the bride's people. During biyah, on bridegroom side the house is well cleaned and plastered with cowdung and mud. The flour is collected and so also the wine. Then navta is sent to bhai saggai and other relations. All the residence of the Sahrana are also invited. Invitation is sent in the form of batasha and supari.

**First day:**

On this day the ceremony of "tail charhana" is performed. In the evening the bridegroom is given a bath by mai (mother), bhaujai (elder brother's wife) etc. He wears new clothes and will be taken to "maa devthan" near the hearth. Father or mother will take tail oil in "kulhari" and give it to "tak-arra". Bhouji or mami will apply the tail to bridegroom's forehead. Then haldi-mehndi is mixed in water in an earthen pot and applied over the body of the boy by his mami, bhauji and sometimes by kaki. After that he is given food, called choorma. It consists of ghee, sugar and gum. Juwar bread is served. After this ceremony, the family members start apply haldi to each other as a mark of joy and happiness.

**Second day:**

On this day "maroh" is fixed in the evening. Bridegroom will take bath helped by ladies and turmeric will be applied on his body. Then he will be taken to the "maroh". The maroh consists of four poles, one of galbe wood and three of dakrai. He will sit on "patli" and "diya" will be lighted in maroh. Then kankan is tied of kachcha thread by bhai on right hand wrist. Then bhatiya (mama) comes and gives clothes to his sister which are known as

"bhat" clothes. They are ghanghra, polka, phariya. Clothes are given by him to his sister's husband also. "Dhoti", "Kumez", "pichoro", "pagadi" and sometimes a pair of shoes is also given. After that food will be served and taken by all.

**Third day:**

This is the day on which the bridegroom's party leaves for the bride's village after taking mid-day meals. Ten to fifteen bullock carts are arranged and the bridegroom under the cover of sheets is taken out and seated on one of them. All the while, women of the family keep singing and dancing. The bridegroom will be taken to the cart on the shoulder of a man. Before that he will be taken from door to door in the Sahrana. At every door aarti is done and he is given money. The man carrying dula over his shoulder also keeps dancing.

The barat leaves the village in the afternoon in the accompaniment of baja which is known as daphla played by mahtaras. When the barat reaches the village it is taken to janavasa where they all stay. The bullocks are given fodder and also the food for barat is prepared.

Next morning the barat will be received at bride's place where the bridegroom will be given Rs. 2 to 5 and coconut by bride's father. Then bhai saggai will take the bridegroom to hit the "touran" (a wooden bird) over a wooden pole, after which they will come back to janavasa and have the food. In the evening the couple will have to have seven rounds, in  $4\frac{1}{2}$  the boy will lead and in the remaining  $2\frac{1}{2}$  the lead will be given by the girl. After that before sunset the party will leave (bida) for the bridegroom's place. Bride will accompany them. She will be received at her in-law's place in the morning. Bridegroom's mother and bhauji will receive her by giving "Juwar" in her right hand, "rahi" in left hand and keep two "cursia" with a little of water in them over her head. The aarti of the newly wedded couple is done and they are allowed to enter the house. The bride will stay for three days in the meanwhile her bhai saggai will come and take her back.

**Gaona:**

This ceremony is held after about one year of biyah, when the bridegroom will come to take her and after this the normal



married life starts. On the bride's side arrangement for food for the visiting party is done. Wine, meat and rice will be served. New clothes are given to the bride by her parents. Sometimes she may be given cows, bullocks, utensils and cash amounting to Rs. 10 to 15 depending on her parents' economic status. She is well decorated and turmeric and mehndi paste is applied to her body.

The bridegroom leaves his place on a fixed date to fetch his wife. Father and two to five important persons of the village accompany him. The party leaves in the noon, and carry with it liquor, foodgrain and some other things of necessity. They go in bullock carts and reach in the evening. Bridegroom is neatly dressed. In the village "Khat pidhi" is kept ready in the "Bangla" and the party stays there. After their arrival liquor is served and bridegroom is taken to the house, where he passes the night. Mother-in-law serves food which is eaten by the couple. In the morning they get up, have breakfast (Kaleva) and leave for their village. Before that Aarti of bride and bridegroom is done and four to five annas are kept in their hands. A piece of batisha is put in their mouth and is treated auspicious.

#### **Kari marriage:**

In this type of marriage sometimes the boy loose the girl and takes her to his home. In the evening five to ten seers of "batisha" is brought and distributed in the neighbourhood. After that the village Patel is informed that such and such woman from such and such village has come to live with me so all the bastiwalas may be informed about it. "Baho-betis of the village after taking their meals in the night, come to see the new arrival. Songs are sung on the beating of dholok (they are not with the same spirit as in the biyah). Five bhais gather and keep a "mousar" on her shoulder and a water tumbler over her head and say to her, "daikho bhai, tum unka laj thok lakkiya dengi kai nahim deggai". Then she says that her husband will also have to do the same. She will be again asked, "Are you telling the truth or lie" and she says that she is telling the truth. Then husband and wife will catch hold of each other's hands and enter in his house. Traditionally when she reaches the village for the first time she will not go straight to her husband's house but will have to stay somewhere

else. After "lota pani" ceremony when she will enter the house with her husband the "bahen beti" will allow them to cross the "dehri" when the husband gives them money. After this minor ceremony they will start leading normal life.

On getting the news after a few days her previous husband, sausar, kakia sausar, jaith, Patel and others will come to this village with bamboo sticks. They will sit at a far distance from the village and send a go between "Aurhya" to settle the issue of "jhagra". They will go and find out whether the culprit is present or not. He will come back and tell them that he is present and the runaway wife is also there. After that the whole party will move to the Sahrana "bungla" where Patel will receive them. Then he will be asked whether such and such woman has come to village or not and he will reply in affirmative. Then her previous husband will ask the Patel whether you want to decide the "jaghara" now or after one year. Patel will say he wants to finish it at the earliest. Then four representatives of the aggrieved party and four from the offender's will sit together at a distance of three to four furlongs to discuss the matter. This distance is maintained to avoid any untoward happenings. Sometimes during the discussion tempers are lost and they start abusing each other. The aggrieved party demands a sum of Rs. 500 to one thousand as compensation. But generally they agree on a sum of Rs. 150 to 200 or sometimes more. After the final agreement has been reached major part of the sum is paid and the remaining is promised to be given. A part of the compensation goes to the Patel and Pradhan.

Kari are irregular form of marriages and take place when a man is not able to get a spouse or when his wife is dead or when he wants to have more than one wife or when she is sterile. This type of marriage takes place between widower and unmarried girl, married man and unmarried girl and the like. The only possibility where kari cannot be done is when the girl is virgin, all the other possible combination may lead to kari form of marriage.

Another observer adds as follows:

The marriage ceremony is a simple affair among the Saharias. The marriage party starts in the night to reach the bride's village. On their way they sing Rasia songs. The party includes relatives



and friends of the boy's family. The number of persons varies between 20 to 30. When the party reaches the village of the bride they are welcomed and accommodated in some place. Arrangement for water, sleeping etc. are made.

Next day in the morning groom's sister's husband (बहनोइ) takes him on the back to the bride's house and the groom breaks Toran (a long rope on which mango leaves are fixed) with his dagger. A coconut, bed sheet and Rs. 1/- to 5/- are given to the groom in Tika. Then both of them enter the bride's house.

Household deity (Kuldevi) resides inside the house. Both bride and the groom are seated together and they worship her. Then choorma (sugar mixed with bread) is given to eat. The groom gets some money from his father-in-law at this time.

Then bride and the groom are sent to Janwasa (a place where boy's party is given shelter). After this both the parties summon a meeting and some discussion takes place. Sugar cakes and coconut are given to the girl. Now the girl is again sent to her house and the boy remains there.

In the evening the bride and the groom sit under the booth and then they go around the marriage pole 7 times. This is known as Bhanwar and completes the marriage. Immediately after this the bride and the groom go to 'Janwasa' place where Barat is given shelter to take their food.

After this turmeric is dissolved in a pot and is applied to everybody on his back. Then the preparations are made for the send-off of the groom's party. Utensils, clothes, ornaments, axe, sickle and such other items are given to the groom. After dancing, the party (Barat) returns to their village.

Immediately after their arrival to home the bride and the groom are welcomed by the womenfolk outside the house. A yoke is brought and both of them are asked to put their hands on the yoke and mathani (मथानि). Two small pots filled with water are also kept on their heads. Then they are asked to worship Bijasen. After the worship is over they enter the house. Inside the house they are asked to worship Kauria Devi (Family Goddess). This is followed by singing and dancing in the evening.

The daughter-in-law coming from a different family and often from a different village, finds herself in a totally new surroundings in her husband's home. Now she enters the new phase of life about which she has heard so much since the beginning of her later childhood. She comes to her new home with considerable diffidence and fear. She leaves her parental home with a sorrowful heart. Gradually the enthusiasm for the bride cools off as she does not remain new for a long time. She is expected to pass the rest of her life in this house and as such it is necessary for her to adapt herself to its new ways.

The daughter-in-law must maintain sufficient distance from her husband's father (father-in-law) and his elder brothers. Familiarity and intimate talks between them is regarded as highly improper.

Marriage by elopement has also been reported from this tribe. In such a case on the reportation of girl's parents, a Panchayat is called and the boy's parents are required to pay the amount imposed by the Panchayat. This varies from Rs. 100 to 200—and is known as झगडा का पैसा.

Among the Saharias widow remarriage is permitted and all the eligible widows marry again. She may either become the wife of her husband's younger brother (levirate) or may go away with somebody. In such a case the person who accepts her as his wife has to pay some compensation to her former husband's parents or relatives.

#### Divorce :

Divorce is known as छोड देना (to desert). Among the Saharias there is no formal procedure of divorce. If a husband wants to turn out his wife, he will quarrel with her regularly, beat her and maltreat her in several ways. Naturally the wife will not tolerate such behaviour for a long time and will ultimately run away with somebody. If a woman wants to get rid of her husband, she may either elope with some other person or may go back to her parents. The common advice given to daughters by their parents at the time of marriage — भाग विडर के अइओ और गांवके सूख देख जइओ. Whenever a woman elopes with some other person and when this is



known, her former husband demands compensation known as झगडा लेडना, from her later husband. Attempts are first made to settle the dispute mutually but in case of difficulty the matter is reported to the Panchayat and it takes the decision which is binding to both the parties.

Barrenness on the part of the woman is also responsible for divorce.

### Death :

The Saharias associate various causes to death. It may be caused by —

1. Natural factors—like prolonged illness, some serious disease etc.
2. Accidental factors—like snake bite, being eaten by wild animals.
3. Malevolent effect of the witches and other evil spirits.

When the time of death reaches near, the person is laid on the ground and the relatives sit all around and wait for the zero hour. When a person is dead the news is conveyed to the near relatives through somebody. If they happen to live just in the nearby villages, the family members wait, otherwise preparation for cremation are made. Only the persons of the Sahrana concerned are informed to participate in the funeral procession.

A bier is made of a few pieces of bamboo and two long wooden poles. Grass is spread on this. The dead body is laid on this bier and covered with a piece of cloth generally of white colour. Those who can afford buy a new cloth, those who cannot use one of the old clothes of the deceased. All the male members go in procession to the crematorium. When they reach there, fuel wood is gathered and a pyre is made. Then the coffin is removed and dead body is kept on this pyre. The head of the corpse is kept towards the north and it faces upwards. The position of the dead body is straight and the legs are stretched. Then the pyre is lit by one of the nearest relatives of the deceased.

When the funeral is over, all people return back and take bath in the nearby stream or the river. The womenfolk also take bath and wash their clothes.

On the third day, they go to collect ashes of the deceased. On this day hair including moustache and beard are removed.

In the evening, a small pit is dug in the house where the death took place. In this pit 3 small pieces of wood measuring about 6 inches are put in a vertical position and on these small pegs a piece of white cloth is spread. Whatever is cooked on that day is offered to the dead and is put in the pit. Water is also sprinkled. After this, these pegs along with the cloth is taken out and thrown in a nala outside the village along with the pot which is used for sprinkling water. The pit is again refilled with soil.

Those who have means throw a death feast (Nukta नूक्ता) on the 12th day after death. But those who cannot afford can arrange it after 4 or 6 months.

Burial is also practised. Children and those who die of small-pox are buried. Some of the belongings are also buried with the deceased.

### Accidental Deaths :

Accidental deaths are treated in a different manner. When a person is killed by tiger or some other wild beast, the Janter (magician) is consulted and he performs some pooja so that the soul of the dead man may not haunt the members of the family.

A woman dying in pregnancy is also a potential source of harm to the people. In such a case a sweeper is called to operate on the stomach of the dead in order to remove the child and then both of them are cremated. The sweeper charges about Rs. 25-/ for his services.

The dead ones are remembered on all the important occasions and offerings are made to them to keep them satisfied because offending one's vanity can inflict some injury. The constant efforts of the tribe remain that the dead ones should be kept pleased with periodic worship and sacrifices.



## 6. RELIGION AND MAGIC

The presence of religion of one kind or another has always been reported by Investigators from all tribes. The fundamental features differentiating higher religions from the primitive is the absence of philosophical speculation in the primitive religions.

To the Saharias life without religion is unthinkable. Their pantheon is as comprehensive as that of the Hindus and certain gods and goddesses are common to both.

The following gods and goddesses are worshipped by this tribe.

1. *Bhagwan* : is believed to be the supreme god responsible for the creation of the world. There is no temple or any abode of this god.

2. *Hanuman* : Hanuman or monkey god occupies an important place in their pantheon. A stone coloured with sindur is worshipped and offerings of coconut, sweets, are made to him.

3. *Mata* : (Female deity) Mata is known by several names like Sitala Devi, Sardamai. When the village is under the grip of small pox, she is worshipped and offerings of gulgula and flour cakes cooked in ghee are made to her. Mata is believed to be a very sensitive goddess and gets offended soon.

4. *Moti Singh* : is the god of typhoid and whenever there is an outbreak of typhoid in the village offerings are made to him.

5. *Tejajee* : is the god who can cure snake bite. Whenever a snake bites a person, a thread in the name of Tejajee is tied around the wound. Later on he is taken to the platform of Tejajee. Offerings are made to him. The Janter goes into trance and in this State of trance he removes that string with the help of an iron trident (Trisul) from the body of the affected person and he feels alright. The shrine of Tejajee (a platform) is near the main settlement in the village. In the month of Bhado a mela is also held near the shrine of Tejajee. The Saharias dance there and make offerings to him.

6. *Hiraman* : is a male deity and is commonly worshipped by all. Hiranman does not hold any special portfolio and he may be worshipped at any time.

7. *Nahar Singh* : is the tiger god and it has its abode in the jungle. Since the Saharias go to the Jungle everyday and roam about in dark the Nahardeo is revered by all.

8. *Bhairon Deo* : is another male deity revered by the Saharias.

Other Gods are :

1. Thakur Deo.
2. Ramdeo.
3. Nagdeo—snake god.
4. Gangaji—Holi river Ganga.
5. Krishna.
6. Ram.
7. Ganesh.
8. Satyanarayan.

It is clear from the above list that most of the gods and goddesses worshipped by the Saharias are those worshipped by the caste Hindus. Since these people have been living in close proximity with the caste Hindus it seems probably that most of the gods of Hindu religion have become part and parcel of Saharia religion.

*Village God* : Each village has its own village God known as Bhumia (भूमिया). Each Sahrana has a shrine of Bhumia which is generally located under some shady tree or in one corner of the village. The village deity is supposed to protect the village from epidemics like cholera, typhoid etc.

Once in a year village deity is worshipped with all pomp and show. In this pooja the whole village participates. This worship is performed on Dashehra festival.

Funds are collected from the whole village. A pig is purchased. Near the deity of Bhumia a peg is thrust in the stomach of the pig and then it is lifted by two persons who take it all around the village. Drops of blood ooze out and fall on ground and the pig cries. A third person follows these two persons who carry pig and he drops a bit of liquor on the drops of blood. When the round is complete the pig is buried in the same place from where it started its journey. Then a coconut is broken and pooja is performed near the Shrine of Bhumia deo. This pooja is known as Chihare Ki pooja (चिहारे की पूजा) because in the worship the pig cries



(चिहारना) when it is pierced and taken around the whole village. The total expenses of the worship comes to about Rs. 100/-.

*The Priest* : The Saharias do not employ professional priests from Brahmin caste. Even at the time of marriage they do not require the services of the Brahmins. Except on certain occasions like Satyanarayan Ki Katha, they themselves manage their own affairs. The Brahmin priest has nothing to do with the religious observances. A person from among the Saharias themselves performs pooja at the village shrine and making offerings to the family deity is one's personal affair.

*Nature of Worship* : Besides worshipping various gods and goddesses the Saharias also bow before the Sun and the Moon.

*Magic* : The Saharias are not so powerful magicians like Baiga. Their magic of to-day is weak and gradually they are also losing faith in the efficacy of magico-religious rites.

The magician among the Saharias is known as Janter (जंतर). The office of the Janter is not hereditary and anybody can become Janter by learning the secrets of this art. The Janter stands between mankind and all the malignant forces of nature and super-nature; his only weapons are a frail stick (broom) of straw and a winnowing Fan and hi ing Fan and his knowledge is more than a for all the hostile powers.

Janter is not consulted in ordinary time. It is only when a patient fails to recover from some disease within the normal times then only is consulted to diagnose the case.

Successive deaths in the family, failing of crops and spread of epidemics are some of the occasions when a Janter is consulted and he is expected to suggest ways and means to tide over the crisis.

Janter is the medium who interprets the will of the gods. He is a man who falls into a trance. Once a person passes into a state of his association any thing may happen. The belief is that he is possessed by a spirit who acts and speaks through him. He is supposed to be completely under its control and has no knowledge of what he says or does. Because all that he does or says is the representation of the spirit which the Janter is accommodated.

When the calling of spirits is associated with something that concern the whole village the act may be performed in some secluded place, mainly in a jungle where all the elderly persons of the village assemble.

When a Janter is in the state of trance he is asked to answer some questions put forth by the villagers and their answers are often suggestive. When this question-answer business is over, the Janter relaxes. Janter knows the art of going into trance.

When a Janter is called to the bedside of a sickman, his first task is that of diagnosis. There is a prescribed treatment for diseases. Much depends on the skill and the knowledge of the Janter. When the Janter has diagnosed the nature and cause of the disease from which his patient is suffering he proceeds to take proper remedies to ensure his recovery. He asks the sickman to make the offerings of pig, coconut, chicken etc. as prescribed by the tradition.

In case of a serious illness *Khapra Utaro* (खपडा उतारो) ritual is performed for the recovery of the patient. This is generally performed on Tuesday or Saturday. Gur, coconut, vermilion (sindoor), puri, some sweets and Rs.1. 25 are kept in a *Khapra* (tile). The Janter worships this *Khapra* and recites some mantras near the patient. When all this preliminaries are over; he lifts the *Khapra* and takes it to some crossing in the evening. He leaves this *khapra* at the crossing after pronouncing some mantras and returns back. It is commonly believed that the performance of this pooja enables the patient to recover.

The Saharias also believe in the malevolent activities of the witches. A witch is known as Toni, Churel or Dakan. It is commonly believed that a woman who dies in pregnancy or child birth or is eaten away by wild animals generally becomes a witch and she is a source of constant trouble to others. Whenever somebody is haunted by a witch the Janter is consulted to suggest the remedy. The recitation of some mantras is often effective to defeat the nefarious activities of witches.

Recitation of mantras is equally effective in treating the cases of scorpion and snake bite also.



Magical charms are also worn on the hand or neck by some of them as a protection against the evil effects of ghosts and spirits. These magical charms are prepared by the Janter.

*Magic-Religion in Life Cycle* : Pregnancy is a matter of pride for a woman but during pregnancy a number of magico-religious taboos are imposed on her. She is not allowed to go to a crematorium or a place where a child has been buried. She must not look at the Sun or Moon during eclipses and failing to this disfigures the baby in the womb.

If the delivery is delayed, then offerings are made to family goddess Kodia Devi.

From then and even after delivery attempts are made to protect the mother and child from the evil effects of the witches.

As the children grow they start participating in the religious ceremonies conducted by the community and in turn children are asked to put on certain magico-religious charms on their persons. Such charms worn on the body are believed to protect them from ghosts and other evil spirits.

Development of breasts and beginning of menstruation are regarded as the signs of puberty in the girls. From that time, the girl is considered fit for marriage. But the growth of a boy or girl towards maturity is not worked by any special ceremonies.

On the onset of menstruation, a girl has to observe several taboos. She remains confined in one place. She cannot take up any work and should not even fetch water from the village well. She is not allowed to perform any religious ceremony. All these checks on the part of the girl are a part of their religious beliefs and practices. But these days the taboos have lost much of their rigidity.

The whole marriage ceremony is also permeated with the observance of numerous religious ceremonies. Good omens are always taken into consideration while finalizing dates of marriage. So also at the time of death a number of magico-religious practices are followed.

In short it can be said that life apart from religion is unthinkable to the Saharias. Their social activities are permeated with magic and religion.

Most of the fairs and festivals of Hindu calendar are celebrated by the Saharias in the same manner as among the caste Hindus. The important festivals are :

1. *Dashera* : This is celebrated on the tenth day of the Hindu month KUNWAR (कनार). On this day wheat mixed with gram are boiled (Ghoogri) and offerings of the same are made to horse and mare (Ghoda-Ghodi) made of clay. This is a day of rejoicing and the Saharias spend the evening in dancing and singing.

2. *Diwali* : This is a festival of lights and is celebrated twenty days after Dashera. Every home, however lowly, is decorated with twinkling dipas (clay lamps lit with oil) to welcome goddess of wealth and prosperity. Cattle are worshipped and offerings are made to other gods and goddesses besides Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth. The festival is held on the new moon day (Amavasya) of the Hindu month Kartik (October-November).

3. *Haryali* : This festival is celebrated in the month of Sravan (July-August). On this day 'plough' is worshipped and offerings of jaggery and puri are made to it. The festival is mainly connected with agriculture and the Saharias pray for good rains and prosperity. On this day ploughing is completely stopped.

4. *Rakhune* : Rakhune is known as Raksha Bandhan and is celebrated in the month Sravana (July-August). On this day sisters tie Rakhis on the wrists of their brothers and they in turn take a vow of protecting them and give them cloth, and some cash.

5. *Holi* : This festival is celebrated in the month of Falgun (February-March). This is a festival of great rejoicing and all the Saharias irrespective of their old enmity and severed relations participate in it. It is a festival of colour. Riotously crowds throw coloured water on each other. From the highest to the lowest young and old all participate in this sport and yellow, green and red colours are commonly used. Quite a few throw dung and other rubbish on each other.

On the previous evening of Holi bonfires are lit. These symbolize the burning of Holika and destruction of evil. Obscene songs are also commonly sung on this occasion and abuses freely exchanged without creating a feeling of ill-will.



6. *Ganesh* : Ganesh Chaturthi is observed in the month of August-September. 'Prasad' of tilli is distributed to all after offering it to the deity. Rich and poor mingle freely while folk dances and music add to the picturesqueness of the festival.

7. *Festival of Annapurna devi* : This is celebrated in the month of Chaitra (April). On this day goddess Annapurna is worshipped and offerings of coconut, jaggery, udbatti and cakes cooked in ghee are offered to her.

8. *Desoni* (देसोनि) and *Deuthan* (देउठान) : Desoni is celebrated in the month of Asadh-Savan (July-August) when gods of Hindu pantheon go to sleep. Offerings of gur, pudi etc. are made to them. Deuthan is observed when Hindu gods and goddesses wake up after long sleep in the month of September-October. On this day offerings are made to numerous gods and goddesses. Whatever is offered is distributed as 'Prasad'.

Besides the above mentioned festivals Bhai-doj is also celebrated by the Saharias.

It may be pointed out here that most of the festivals celebrated by caste-Hindus are also celebrated by the Saharias and their way of celebrating is also the same.

#### Fairs :

Fairs are few and the Saharias do not go to distant places to participate in the fairs. Not that they are not interested but their economic condition does not permit them to go to distant places to participate in the fairs of the neighbouring areas. The important ones are :

1. *Tejajee Ka Mela (Fair of Tejajee)* : The fair of Tejajee is held in the month of Bhado and is attended by all. In most of the Saharia villages one finds an earthen platform named after Tejajee and it is believed to be the abode of this deity. Tejajee is one of the most respected gods of Saharia pantheon and even in case of snake bite people tie a string (बँध) in the name of Tejajee on the affected part which is believed to save the person.

Offerings of coconut, vermilion, jaggery, cakes cooked in ghee (pudi) and other such things are offered to him and 'Prasad' distributed to all.

2. Another festival commonly attended by the Saharias is SITAWADI KA MELA. Though this is not confined exclusively to the Saharias only, still it attracts a great number of Saharias. Sitawadi is a place a few miles away from Sheopur, a sub-division of Morena District.

3. *Panwada Fair* : The Panwada fair is celebrated on the 10th day of Chaitra (March-April).

The village Panwada has a temple of Hanuman. The fair attracts large crowds of the Saharias from the neighbouring villages and after taking dip in the village pond they propitiate God Hanuman.

#### DISEASES

It is very necessary to understand the background of the deep-rooted ideas, customs and practices in tribal areas regarding the causation and cure of disease. Such knowledge is of great importance in devising the ways and means of introducing scientific medicines in the villages.

Keeping in mind the above points, an inquiry was made among the Saharias to know as to what they think about certain diseases and what are their indigenous methods of cure.

Information on common diseases has been collected along with their mode of treatment. Some of the diseases like gastroenteritis, cancer, coronary thrombosis and the like are unknown to these people and they have no knowledge whatsoever about these.

The Saharias have knowledge of the diseases which are familiar to them and are common in this area.

#### Diseases :

1. *Syphillis* : is known as Garmi. (i) cure : Roots of चारु are ground and after mixing the powder in cow's milk the patient is asked to take it for 3 days. During treatment salt and chillies are not given to the patient. He is fed on rabdi (gruel) made of jowar or rice. (ii) Roots of Tipania plants are ground and then taken internally.

2. *Fever* : A. If the fever is due to cold then the patient is given liquor to drink. This should be fresh. B. Roots of Nao are also given to the patient. Decoction is made and he is required to drink



it. C. Gurbel is also used for curing fever. Decoction of gurbel is made and the patient is given this to drink.

3. *Typhoid* : The traditional explanation for the disease is that 'Motisingh' is responsible for the outbreak of this disease when he is offended and proper offerings are not made to him. Obviously the traditional cure is to make him offerings and pray him to release the patient from sickness.

In some cases roots of Lajari (लजारी) in powder form are mixed with mahua liquor and given to the patient to drink.

4. *Cough* : The bark of Hadron (हडरोन) tree is boiled with water, decoction made and given to the patient to drink in an earthen bowl.

5. *Whooping Cough* : Titi (टीटी) bird is killed and boiled in water. When it is completely boiled it is taken out and this water is given to the patient to drink.

6. *Scabies* : A. Leaves of tamarind are pounded with water and the paste is applied on the affected parts. B. Leaves of chirol are also used in the same manner. C. Roots of chitawar are also used in the same way as in A and B.

7. *Boils* : Roots of binns (बिन्नस) are taken. A powder is made after grinding it thoroughly and paste is made after mixing water. When the boils burst then the paste of the roots of yellow flower (पीले फूल) is applied to heal them up.

8. *Bishari* : (Boil around the Nail) : A paste is made of mirchiakand (मिरचिया कांदा) and applied on it. This is supposed to cure it.

9. *Jaundice* : The Saharias believe that jaundice attacks due to some defect in mother's milk. Jaundice is generally confined to children.

Roots and leaves of Sonrukh (सोन रुख) are boiled in an earthen pot. When decoction is ready the patient is bathed with this. A bit of it is also administered through mouth.

10. *Eye Trouble* : 1. Tobacco powder is put in the eyes. 2. Chillies mixed with water are also put in the eyes.

11. *Ear pain* : Juice of ripe lemon mixed with Sajji (सज्जी) is put in the ears.

12. *Headache* : A. Paste is made of jamrasi leaves (जमरासी के पत्ते) and applied on the forehead of the patient. He has to sit facing to the sun.

B. If the above medicine does not prove effective then an insect ( ) which resides on the Amreli (अमरेली) tree is caught and the patient is asked to smell it twice or thrice. Afterwards it is killed and applied on the forehead of the patient.

13. *Paralysis* : 1. A jungle fox is killed, oil is squeezed from it and the affected parts are massaged regularly for a long time. 2. Dhandel (धंधेल) bird is killed and its oil is also massaged on the affected parts.

14. *Dental Cavity* : 1. Juice of madar (मदार) tree is filled in the cavity.

2. Seeds of Kateri कटेरी along with ghee or sweet oil are put on fire. This produces smoke which is inhaled in the mouth. This is supposed to kill the germs in the cavity.

15. *Snake bite* : Patal gourd (पाताल तूली) and roots of Akol (अकोल) are ground in ghee and given to the patient. It is said that this prescription is very effective and snake bite of any type can be cured.

16. *Scorpion Bite* : Roots of Kanker (कांकेर) mixed with water are applied on the spot. 2. Mantras are also recited.

17. *Chronic dysentery* : 1. Bel is eaten 2. If it does not stop motions then Gudni (गुदनी) and Basai (बासई) are mixed in cow's milk and given to the patient to drink.

18. *General and sexual debility* : Tubers like Kamraj, Tejraj and Bhojraj are eaten.

19. *Rheumatism* : Roots of Koitar (कोयतार) and papaiya are thoroughly mixed with mustard oil and it is applied on the joints. Massaging should be followed for a long time.

20. *To increase milk in a mother's breasts* : Powder of Satawar (सतावर) is prepared and it is regularly taken with milk for some time.

21. *Evil Eye* : Jhar-phook is resorted to. Eye-black (kajal) is also applied on the forehead. Jharphook is generally performed on Sunday or Wednesday.



*Causation* : Various reasons for the causation of diseases are given. It may sometimes be due to natural causes, it may sometimes be aggravated by cold or heat but at the same time it may be traceable to some supernatural agency. The following are the important causes :

1. Natural causes : General debility, prolonged sickness etc.
2. Accidents—Drowning, eaten by a tiger or some other wild animal.
3. Offending the vanity of family gods and goddesses.
4. Offending the vanity of village god.
5. Due to witch-craft and magic.
6. Due to evil spirits.
7. As a punishment for the breach of tribal law, commitment of incest, breaking the rules of clan exogamy etc.

#### Medical Facilities:

There are no modern medical facilities available to these people. The existing indigenous medical specialists can be classified in the following categories.

1. *Magical Practitioners*: This comprises a set of mechanical techniques from wearing charms as prophylaxis to exorcism of the invading spirits as therapy. Exorcism when necessary is carried out by the specialists such as janter who blow and sweep the unwanted spirit out of the body by uttering a secret spell.

2. *Religious exorcists* : The practitioner of this method of cure is the adorer of some god whose help he invokes by their curing hymns. He drives out the troublesome spirit or god by singing spirited hymns. The effectiveness of cure depends on the intensity, talent and devotion of the performer.

3. *Regular Brahmin Priests* : These people, belonging to the highest caste, engage in a purely religious medical practice as a part of their profession of priesthood. They advise their clients to perform religious rituals which produce good health, prosperity. They prescribe the same ritual for cure of illnesses, for example offering of pooja to certain deities, sacrificial offering or doing some act of charity. Priests also know astrology which helps people to avoid illness and other calamities by correct timing of actions.

Though the Saharias do not employ regular priests to officiate at their religious ceremonies yet they consult the Brahmin whenever such an occasion arises. They pay them 25 to 50 paise for the services rendered.

#### 4. Snake Bite Curer:

A person who knows this art is the most respected and trusted of all practitioners because of his high devotion to duty. A person who is an expert in the art is the great adorer of Tejjee, the god whom people resort to in case of snake bite.

#### 5. Secular Physicians (Vaidya and Hakim):

They are relatively free from religious and magic doctrines. They charge fees for attending to patients and for giving medicines

Sometimes he may not charge any fee and apparently does the work on purely philanthropic motive. But the patient is expected to pay him in cash or in kind and thus the latter too gains the merit of charity by his grateful gift to the physician.

The modern doctor is a new idea to these simple folk and to make the modern health programmes acceptable to them knowledge of the following is essential:

1. Folk medicine and local curing practices.
2. Economics of the clientele.
3. Popular cause of the particular disease.



## 7. TRIBAL LAW AND ITS BREACHES

Society is an integrated whole. It consists of a system of usages and procedures, of authority and mutual aid of many groupings and divisions, of controls of human behaviour and of liberties. The society is ever changing and is complex. It is a web of social relationships so structured that a disturbance in one of its segments is likely to disturb the whole structure. Thus all community life involves methods of groupings and grading people for the effective carrying out of the various types of activities demanded for the common existence. The grouping of the people in the community may be by occupation, rank, ritual hierarchy. Those form the crux of organisations. The different organisations may be classified as social organisations, economic and political organisations.

In this chapter an attempt has been made to show how the political organisation of the Saharias control the political life of its members.

### Traditional Panchayats :

A study of the judicial system of the village reveals that every tribe or caste has some sort of political organisation to cater to the needs of the society for maintaining law and order. A close study of all the societies reveals that every society has some sort of indigenous or traditional political organisation. The simplicity or complexity of these organisations can be correlated with the degree of advancement of the community.

In order to clarify the working of the traditional panchayats and the village organisation, the working of the Panchayat system of the Saharias is given below.

The head of the Saharia Panchayat is known as Patel. Every Sahrana has one such Patel whose job is to look after the affairs of the Sahrana and decide the cases when required. The Patel is assisted by a few other members and all these persons together form a group known as Panchayat. The members and office bearers are not elected people. Either they hold the office by inheritance or some other sort of tacit acceptance like forceful personality,

ability to settle the disputes and capable of helping the people at the time of crisis of these people as leaders. The number of Panchas (members) is not fixed and the decision is never arrived at by voting. The decision has to be unanimous.

Next to Patel is the office of the Pradhan. The Pradhan is more or less like a Kotwar whose job is to attend to the comforts of the visiting officials. It is his job to inform the place and time of the deliberations of the Panchayat and to look after other arrangements necessary for the meeting.

### Meeting place :

Every Sahrana has a mandap known as Aatai/Bungalow (अताई या बंगला) where all the persons assemble to discuss the case. Aatai is some sort of a structure open from all sides but having roof like an umbrella. The platform is a bit raised. This place is used for meetings as well as for offering shelter to the guests.

Sometimes the meeting is arranged on the outskirts of the village also. In such a case people assemble under some shady tree or a mango grove.

### Time :

There is no fixed time for the meeting. But deliberations generally start at mid-day when the parties concerned arrive. There is no time limit also for deciding the case as it all depends on the seriousness of the case. But once a meeting has been arranged it should not be adjourned till the case has been decided. At times the discussions prolong throughout the day and night.

### Participation :

Women are not allowed to attend the meeting until they are a party. They also have no voice against the punishment pronounced on them. Children are also not allowed to participate.

*Offences:* The panchayat assembles to consider all the breaches of the established law of tribal life. Some of the common offences are :

*Adultery:* Illicit sex relations or adultery ( ) with a man of different caste or tribe results in the excommunication of the woman. This is a serious offence and the Saharias do not show any leniency in punishing the culprit.



Besides excommunication severe beating of both the offenders is also common. Both of them are flogged before the Panchayat.

In case a woman is to be admitted again in the community, she has to undergo purificatory bath and stand a dinner to the community.

*Pre-marital sex relations:* Pre-marital sex relations though socially not recognised are frequent and the parties concerned when caught red-handed are given a good beating. Pre-marital sex relations are also punished with a fine on the male partner. The guardians are also responsible for the payment of this fine in default of the guilty boy not paying it up.

From their early childhood Saharia boys and girls start going to the jungle and they get enough opportunities to meet each other and pre-marital sexual experience is not uncommon.

*Incest:* When an incest is committed a very serious view is taken and attempts are made to punish the culprits immediately. In most of the cases the parties concerned are beaten severely and then finally excommunicated from the tribe. All social connections with them are severed.

Sex relations between father and daughter, father-in-law and daughter-in-law, brother and sister, elder brother and younger brother's wife, cousin brothers and sisters and of persons belonging to the same clan are looked down upon and immediate attempts are made to excommunicate the persons concerned.

Sometimes a person feels so much downcast that he commits suicide just to escape insult.

When an incest is committed, the village panchayat is not competent to decide the case. In such a case panchas from 28 villages are invited to participate in the deliberations. The villages are not fixed and panchas from nearby villages are invited. The message is sent by the Pradhan.

The main idea of inviting persons from 28 villages is to constitute the panchayat in a more democratic way besides spreading the news of such an offence to these villages resulting in the effective social boycott of the parties concerned.

### **Killing a Cow:**

Killing a cow is another offence of serious nature and when committed, the person concerned is immediately excommunicated. When he wants to get entry into the community again he has to stand one Kachha (Food cooked in water) and one pucca (food cooked in ghee) dinner besides going to the holy Ganges for purificatory bath.

*Being beaten by or eating with a low caste people:* The Saharias do not eat with a person belonging to Dhobi, Chamar, Mehtar, Basor and Teli caste. If somebody breaks this rule, he is immediately excommunicated and is again readmitted after paying the penalty imposed on him in form of a feast or fine or both.

### **Running away with another's wife:**

This type of crime is very common. It has been observed that running away with another's wife is very common at the time of festivals or some fair. A woman may desert her husband and run away with somebody else when she is not given good treatment and is often abused or beaten.

In case of elopement, the party concerned try to settle the 'Jhagda' and they ask for compensation from the person who accepts her.

First of all, attempts are made to settle the dispute between the parties themselves but in case of any difficulty the panchayat is requested to intervene to settle the matter.

### **Panch Dehli: (पंच देहली)**

This is a term referred to a woman who changes four husbands one after another and goes to live with a fifth one. Such a woman does not command any respect in the tribe and the power of declaring her as Panch Dehli is vested in the Panchayat. When a woman has been declared as Panch Dehli, nobody cares about her and she leads the life of a vamp (आवार).

*Prostitution:* Prostitution is not socially recognised among the Saharias and a very serious view is taken whenever a woman is found indulging in this. In most of the cases excommunication and beating are the usual punishments.



But it is interesting to note that among the Saharias at least 4 to 5 women of village Karhal have been found indulging in this profession but so far no severe punishment has been given to them. When enquired about this the Saharias told that they had no knowledge of the secret activities of such women.

#### Cases:

Some interesting cases connected with sex taboos such as incest, breach of clan, exogamy, adultery, elopement, killing a cow etc. are given below:

1. Chaitoo, son of Asadia of village Karhal was married to Maida when he was thirteen years old. A sum of Rs. 250/- was spent in marriage which also included Rs. 50/- as Leva (लेवा) (bride price). The guana was performed after one year.

Since the marriage was celebrated in the village itself Chaitoo's wife used to go to her parents everyday. Chaitoo's father did not like this and he at times asked her not to go but she did not care. Another Saharia woman named Piyari who indulged in prostitution developed intimacy with Maida. Piyari acted as a go-between in bringing Maida and one forest guard named Kishori close to one another. One day a Saharia named Lakha caught Maida alongwith that forest guard in Piyari's house while indulging in sexual congress. He intimated this to Maida's father-in-law. Asadia immediately rushed there but by that time both of them had gone and finding nobody there he went to the police station to report the matter.

He intimated the Panchas also and summoned a Panchayat next day. In the Panchayat Piyari was called to explain the circumstances under which she dared to favour the forest guard. Piyari had nothing to say and finding her guilty, the Panchayat imposed on her a fine of Rs. 190.00 which she paid. This money was spent in arranging a feast.

Maida remained in her father-in-law's house for about 15 days and went with one Hari Saharia of Panwada village. Chaitoo's father Asadia reported the matter to the Panchayat and asked Hari to pay the compensation for the loss incurred by him as he had spent Rs. 250/- over his son's marriage.

Hari agreed to pay the fine imposed by the Panchayat. He gave one cow worth Rs. 100/- and Rs. 100/- in cash out of which Rs. 50/- went to the Panchayat which were spent in arranging a feast.

2. Phoolchand of Karhal at the age sixteen married a girl of fourteen years of the village Karhal. He has two daughters from first wife.

At the age of 25 he brought another woman Halki from village Bankuri about 5 miles from Karhal. His first wife did not like this and both of them used to quarrel very often. This went on for about a year.

When Halki's (2nd wife) maternal uncle came to know that Phoolchand had accepted his niece as wife, he came to Karhal to recover the expenses incurred on Halki from Phoolchand.

A Panchayat was summoned and after hearing the case, the Panchayat imposed a fine of Rs. 365/- which also included the amount of debt which his second wife owed. Phoolchand agreed to pay this and he gave one bullock worth Rs. 200/-, one cow worth Rs. 100/- and Rs. 65/- in cash.

Phoolchand erected a separate hut for his second wife and has 3 children from her.

3: Bindo age 17 daughter of Lakkad Saharia of Karhal was married to Ranga Saharia of Bagwaz village.

About 3 months back she came to her parents' house to participate in a marriage ceremony. During her stay here she developed intimacy with Piyari who indulges in prostitution and she has been also initiated in this trade.

So far this is going on secretly and nobody has been able to catch her red-handed. She has also refused to go to her husband's house.

4. Kesarbai daughter of Phoola Saharia of Karhal was married to a man from Kateera village about 15 miles from Karhal.

After marriage she stayed with her husband for some time and came back to her parents' house. When her husband came to take her she refused to go.



In due course of time she developed intimacy with one Basirkhan, a teacher in the primary school at Karhal. Wife of one Kamaria Saharia helped Kesar in bringing her closer to Basir as he used to give her money. One day the secret leaked out and there was a lot of discussion among the Saharias themselves. A few of them went to Basir and enquired about his affairs with Kesar but he refuted the charges. On the representation of the villagers, the teacher was transferred and Kesar was forced to go to her husband's house.

5. Samandi, daughter of Piyari Bai was married to a Saharia of Panwada village about two years back. She stayed with her husband for about a year and then returned to her parents' house when her husband was caught in a case of dacoity.

During her stay with her parents she developed intimacy with one Komal Bai who indulges in prostitution. Samandi's mother has not objected to this and she goes here and there. So far she is carrying her trade secretly.

6. Maida (25) daughter of Gyhasa Saharia of Karhal was married to a man of the village when she was 13 years old. She stayed with him for about 2 months and then refused to live with him on the pretext that his treatment towards her was undesirable.

She started going to the house of Piyari and got interested in the profession of prostitution and started entertaining people.

One day Maida was caught in the house of Piyari when she was entertaining one Kishori Nakedar of Palpur Forest Range. Nakedar managed to run away any how.

The villagers came to know about this and next day a Panchayat was summoned and Piyari was interrogated. Piyari refused the charges and pleaded not guilty. But the Panchas fined her Rs. 112/- for arranging the meeting of Maida with Kishori Nakedar. Nakedar sent a message to Piyari that he would pay the fine imposed on her and he paid it which was spent in arranging a communal feast.

Maida was also interrogated and she told that she had gone to Piyari's house to bring fuel and in the mean time Nakedar

came and forced her to lie on the ground. The Panchayat asked her why she did not cry? To this question she told that her mouth was covered with a piece of cloth and she could not cry.

The Panchayat took a somewhat lenient view and imposed a fine of Rs. 30/- on her father.

After this incident she went with one Hari Saharia of Panwada village and is living with him.

7. *Piyari wife of Dojoo Saharia*: Piyari of Karhal village is aged fifty now and at the age of 15 she got married to Dojee Saharia. After a few years of married life her husband met with an accident and broke one of his legs with the result that he became lame.

From the very beginning Piyari was not sexually satisfied with her husband and she was always on a look for somebody in the absence of her husband.

When her husband became lame, she lost all interest in him and started entertaining people. In the beginning police officials posted at Karhal police station used to go to her and they used to pay her a rupee or two. Her husband came to know of her activities and he beat her. She was also fined by the Panchayat but she did not leave this.

During this period of her youth she earned enough money and today she possesses ornaments made of gold and silver which are rarely seen in the Saharia tribe.

Piyari is now too old to attract customers in view of her age but she has become the leader and has converted a few women to indulge in this profession.

In her house other women of the locality carry on their secret trade and Piyari forces the customers to have fun with her also though she does not demand any money from them.

It seems probable here that though prostitution is not socially recognised by the Saharias and serious view is taken of it but at the same time so long as these activities are carried out under the cover of darkness no cognizance is taken of.

In case of habitual offenders like Piyari and Komal they take somewhat lenient view in view of the fact that some of the Saharias also visit Piyari's house.



8. Piyari Bai of Karhal had illicit sex relations with one Saharia of Bhojka village. One day this was leaked out and the villagers objected to this and summoned a Panchayat to decide the case. The Panchayat found that man guilty for developing sex relations with a married woman and asked him to pay a fine of Rs. 212/- and accept Piyari as his wife.

But he had no money to pay and both of them were ordered to be beaten with bamboo sticks. Both of them were beaten severely and were asked to pay a fine of Rs. 25/- each which they paid.

9. *Father and daughter (Incest)*: In a village Karoori a Saharia married his daughter at the age of 16 but he did not perform her 'Gauna'. Her husband used to come to take her but her father did not send her on some pretext or the other.

One day in the night this man went to his daughter's cot and tried to uncover her. Finding her father doing this she tried to cry but he threatened her to kill in case she cried. The girl had to surrender and he had sexual intercourse with her. In due course of time his daughter became pregnant and the villagers came to know about this. It was known to all that the girl was not sent to her husband's house even once after marriage and her becoming pregnant made the villagers suspicious. They interrogated the girl and she narrated the whole story how she was seduced by her father.

A Panchayat was called and the person was charged for committing incest. At first he refuted the charge and told that he had nothing to do with her. The girl was called and she told the whole story. Then her father was beaten severely by the Panchas and ultimately he confessed his guilt.

Her husband was also intimidated but he refused to accept her as his wife. Finding no other alternative the Panchas declared her as Panch Koria (पंच कोरिया). The term refers to a boy or a girl whom nobody accepts and ultimately the Panchayat has to share his or her responsibility of feeding till they find out some alternative.

Her father was ex-communicated from the community and after a few months he died.

10. *Father and Daughter*: A Saharia of village Tarhati after attending a Panchayat meeting went back to his home late in the

night. He was feeling drowsy and he went to sleep on the cot, thinking that his wife was also sleeping on it. But he did not realize that instead of his wife his daughter was sleeping on it. He stretched himself on the cot and tried to uncover her thinking her to be his wife. But he realized that she was not his wife but daughter whom he was trying to uncover.

He was very much shocked and felt guilty. He went to the villagers and narrated the whole story. Since the act was not done deliberately the villagers advised him to forget the incident. But he felt so much guilty and downcast that next morning he tied a big stone on his back and committed suicide by jumping into the well.

11. *Cousin Brother and Sister*: In the village Barwasan brother and sister (not real) aged 13 and 12 respectively used to go to graze their cattle and goats. They very often retired in the jungle and indulged in sexual intercourse. This resulted in pregnancy and when this came in light both of them were interrogated and they confessed that both of them used to indulge in sexual intercourse. Since this amounted to the commitment of incest their parents including the boy and the girl were excommunicated.

Later on, they requested the caste Panchayat to take them back. Since the boy and girl were innocent and did not indulge in sexual intercourse knowing its implications, a lenient view was taken and both of them were asked to go to the Ganges for purificatory bath.

A Kachha and pucca feasts were imposed on their parents and later on they were admitted in the caste. The girl was later on married to one poor Saharia boy.

12. *Father-in-law and daughter-in-law*: In the village Paida a Saharia finding nobody in the house except her daughter-in-law closed the door and caught hold of her and later on had sexual intercourse with her. When her husband returned home after day's work, she narrated the whole incident to him. Her husband reported the matter to the Panchayat and it called for an explanation from the culprit.

Since sexual intimacy between father-in-law and daughter-in-law is prohibited and amounted to incest they were excommuni-



cated. After three months they requested again to admit them back in the community. The Panchayat imposed a fine of Rs. 112/-, a kachha and pucca feast on the person (accused). He and his daughter-in-law were also asked to go to Sitawadi for purificatory bath. Later on his son shifted in a new house away from his father.

13. *Elder brother and younger brother's wife* : Sex relations between elder brother and younger brother's wife are a taboo and avoidance is observed.

Two brothers namely Fagua and Feloo were living together. Fagua was a widower, well-built and elder to Feloo. Feloo's wife was not very happy with her husband in view of his being physically weak.

One day in the night while Fagua was sleeping, his younger brother's wife got up and went out for pissing. When she came back she went near Fagua's cot and Fagua woke up. Fagua enquired as to what was the matter but instead of replying anything she came very near to him and caught hold of his hand. Fagua advised her not to do so but she did not care and slept on his cot. Fagua had sexual intercourse with her.

Her husband saw all this and next morning he informed the villagers about his elder brother's act and summoned the Panchayat. The Panchayat interrogated Fagua first. He told that he was not guilty as in spite of his repeated warning his younger brother's wife did not leave her in the night.

Then Feloo's wife was also questioned to tell as to what was good (सीढो) in Fagua that she preferred him in place of her husband. His wife narrated the whole story and told that her husband was not physically fit to satisfy her.

Later on both of them were severely beaten and excommunicated. A fine of Rs. 112/- and Rs. 101/- was imposed on Fagua and Feloo's wife respectively which they paid.

Both of them were asked to go to the Ganges for purificatory bath and later on admitted in the community.

14. In the month of March 1963 in the mela of Panwada one Sarban (31) Saharia while going around the mela developed intimacy with Anandi (22) wife of Beska Saharia who had come

to see the mela. In the evening both of them eloped. But they were chased by a few villagers who suspected some foul play. They were caught and beaten severely by the villagers.

A few Saharia formed a group on the spot to decide the case and imposed a fine of Rs. 25/- on Sarban. Since he had no money to pay he was asked to take off his silver choora (ornament worn on hand), Anandi was restored back to her husband.

15. *Going with an outsider* : In the year 1963 two snake charmers came to the village Karhal and identifying themselves as belonging to the Saharia tribe stayed in the village for some time.

During their stay, they developed intimacy with the married daughters of Ahira and Lalchand aged 15 and 14 respectively and later on they fled away with them. They left in the evening towards Sesaipura village. The villagers came to know this at 9.00 p. m. and a few young boys were asked to chase them on bicycles. All of them were caught and brought to the police station at Karhal.

These snake charmers bribed the police officials and told that they had not kidnapped the girls. Instead they named other two Saharia boys for doing this mischief. The police believing their statement as true beat the boys severely and later on released all of them.

Next day the Panchayat was summoned and the parents of these girls were banged for giving an opportunity to the girls of developing intimacy with the snake charmers. Both of them were fined Rs. 25/- each. Both the girls were also sent to their husband's house immediately.

16. A few years back when the building of Palpur Forest Range at Karhal was being constructed, a mason developed intimacy with the married daughter of Bisan Saharia named Balo (15) who used to go there to work.

Other Saharias came to know about their intimacy and they decided to punish the mason whenever the occasion came. On the advice of the villagers Balo was asked to invite that mason in her house in the evening. On the fixed day, he went there and the villagers caught him on the spot. He was beaten severely but



he told that he had gone in her house to purchase liquor and not to do anything with her.

Later on, the mason went to the police station and narrated the incident to the station officer. He gave him some bribe and assured that if he beat Behari and others who had beaten him he would get constructed a temple of Hanuman within the premises of the police station. The station officer agreed to this and he called for Behari and others and gave them good beating though they were not at fault.

Balo's father was also banded by the Panchayat and a fine of Rs. 60/- was imposed on him for allowing his daughter to develop intimacy with the mason and because of this a few Saharias were unnecessarily beaten by the policemen.

Balo was asked to go to her husband's house immediately.

*17. Husband and Wife:* Lakhha Saharia aged 27 years of Ranipur village had two wives. The first one was Bihayata (married as per traditions) and the second one was Kari (kept). Both of them were not on good terms and Lakhha used to love the latter more.

One day, Lakhha's first wife quarrelled with him and in a fit of anger Lakhha hit on the head of his wife with a moosal (wooden pole) with the result she sustained skull injuries and died on the spot.

Lakhha was very much scared and he rushed to the Sarpanch of the Panchayat and narrated him the true story. The Sarpanch advised him not to narrate the true story to the police as that would be treated as murder. So he advised him to say that in the night his wife went out for pissing and in the dark hit against the wooden peg (खूंटी) which is used for tying cattle with the result she fell on the ground and died.

The police registered a case of accidental death.

But the Panchayat imposed on him one Kachha and pucca feast besides giving a cow as a gift to some poor fellow. He was also asked to perform the marriage of a girl belonging to poor family. Later on he had to go to the holy Ganges for purificatory bath.

*18. Killing a cow:* A few years back a Saharia named Baldeo and his friends of Goras village went out for hunting in a moonlit night and killed a cow supposing it to be a Sambhar.

They buried the cow inside the river bed and returned back. After 3-4 days a few Saharias happened to pass from there and they came to know the incident. They reported the matter to the Patel of Goras village. Baldeo's father was called for interrogation and after a while he confessed that his son had killed the cow mistaking it to be a Sambhar. The Panchayat immediately excommunicated the whole family. The whole family shifted at the outskirts of the village.

In a day or two after this incident Saroop, son of Raghoo Brahmin of Karhal village, came to Baldeo and asked him for some money failing to which he would report the matter to the police. As Baldeo had no money to pay, Saroop reported the matter to the police. The police called Baldeo and his statements were recorded. At this critical moment one of Baldeo's friends named Abbas came to him and told him to give the statement stating that he had not killed the cow but one Gulamali of Sheopur had killed it. Since Abbas and Gulam had old enmity Gulam's name was dragged in. Baldeo agreed to this and gave the statement accordingly. The police officers went for spot inspection and when they returned they beat Patel, Kotwar and a few Saharias of the village. The station officer police told the Saharias that if they paid him at the rate of Rs. 5/- per family he would acquit Baldeo.

Baldeo met Badroo (His Bohra or mahajan from whom he used to borrow money) and told him that under pressure he had to say that Gulamali had killed the cow. Badroo took him to Sheopur in his tonga and hid him in the house of Abbas.

Then at 11 a.m. he took him to the court where his statements were recorded. He narrated the true story to the magistrate. Abbas also came to know that Baldeo had not given the statements in the manner he wanted him to narrate in view of his old enmity with Gulamali whom he wanted to drag in this.

The magistrate dismissed the case and wrote a letter addressed to Police Station Officer Karhal instructing him not to beat Baldeo and record statements under pressure.



When Baldeo came out of the court, he found Abbas and others armed with lethal weapons to kill him. Baldeo was attacked but his friends also helped him and a free fight broke out between the two groups. In the meantime police came and rounded up Abbas and his colleagues.

Baldeo returned to Karhal and gave that letter addressed by the magistrate to Station Officer but he did not say anything to him.

Baldeo engaged a pleader for self defence and he was acquitted. He had to pay Rs. 105/- to the pleader.

But the Panchayat later on ex-communicated him and he had to throw one kachha and pucca feast for readmittance.

He was also asked to go to the Ganges for purificatory bath. Baldeo's total expenses in this case came to Rs. 700/-.

19. About 10-12 years back a Gangbhoj was arranged in village Goras in which one Dhanni of village Radhey came to participate. Baldeo a resident of the village was a bachelor and he developed intimacy with Dhanni. She was a widow staying with her brother who had refused her to send her to her husband's house after her husband's death.

When Baldeo asked her if she would like to marry him, she replied in the affirmative.

One day Baldeo along with his friends went to her village carrying with him Ghagra (Rs. 10/-), Lagra (Rs. 7/-) and Bangles (Rs. 1.25). He sent a message to her to meet him and accompany him. In reply she asked him to take permission from her brother with whom she was staying. When her brother was contacted he did not approve this proposal. But ultimately he agreed. Clothes and bangles were given to her.

When the party was about to move her former husband's elder brother appeared on the scene and opposed the whole idea of Dhanni going with Baldeo instead of accepting his younger brother as her husband.

Her Jeth (husband's elder brother) left the place threatening Baldeo and his party with dire consequences. While they were going to their village he came again alongwith a few others and

blocked the way and there was an exchange of hot words. But seeing Baldeo's party stronger he left the place. Thus Baldeo returned home with her and distributed sugar cakes.

After a month her Jeth came again and demanded compensation. Panchayat was summoned to decide the case and Baldeo paid a sum of Rs. 140/- to him.

20. *Illicit Sex relations:* Nandoo Saharia was married to Bijoo who developed fancy of another Saharia named Ranga who was a widower. They used to meet very often.

One day the villagers came to know about Ranga's relations with Bijoo. A Panchayat was arranged and Bijoo was interrogated. She told the Panchayat that her husband was impotent and incapable of satisfying her hence she had to go to Ranga.

Her husband Nandoo told the Panchayat that he had no objection if his wife went to Ranga in case she chose to stay with him as his wife but since he was very poor he was not in a position to go for some other woman. The Panchayat felt pity and adopted too a very sympathetic view of the whole situation.

The Panchayat decided that Bijoo should stay with Nandoo only and Ranga should behave like Bijoo's son.

So they ordered Ranga to suckle Bijoo's breasts and say that she was his mother. Ranga had to agree to this.

Rang was fined Rs. 25/-. After that Ranga felt so much humiliated that he left the village and settled elsewhere where this episode was not known to anybody.

21. Madan Saharia was married to Kanchan. In their neighbourhood one Baloo Saharia used to live who was a widower. He was very healthy and well built and developed intimacy with Madan's wife. One day she went to Baloo's house and did not return. Madan reported the matter in the Karhal Police Station. Baloo and Kanchan were rounded up and brought to the police station. Kanchan was asked to tell as to what was good in Baloo that she preferred to stay with him instead of her husband. She told that Baloo was capable of penetrating her deeply at least 3 times in the night while Madan could hardly do only once.



The Station Officer took her to one of the rooms of the Police Station and had intercourse with her and asked her who she felt. She told that it was just like Baloo's.

The Station Officer brought her again in the open and asked her to name the person with whom she would love to stay Madan or Baloo. Kanchan went to Baloo thus showing her willingness to stay with him.

Later on Madan invited the panchayat to decide his case but here also he lost the case though Panchas imposed a fine of Rs. 50/- on Baloo and beat him as well as Kanchan but she was allowed to stay with Baloo.

22. Manishanker Saharia is a Chaprasi in Tribal Hostel at Sheopur. He married one girl but later on left her as she was bold. Then he kept another girl belonging to Bagwaz village. The girl used to come to Sheopur market and Manishanker developed intimacy with her.

When this news reached her village her relatives came to Manishanker to settle the dispute (Jhagda).

Manishanker wrote a letter to his uncles Baldeo and Behari residing in Karhal to come to his rescue.

So far both the parties have not been able to come to terms. The girl's side is demanding Rs. 300/- while Baldeo and others are willing to pay Rs. 250/-. The case is subjudice.

The letter written by Manishanker to his uncle is given here for reference (See page 103). It makes a good reading and tells something about one's reaction towards woman in such a case.

23. *Illicit Sex Relations* : Radhia wife of Bhagoo Saharia of Fatepur village had illicit sex relations with a person of mali caste living in the same village.

In the beginning Bhagoo did not take this seriously and advised his wife a number of times not to go to him but she did not care.

One day in a fit of anger he forced his wife to lie on the ground and covering her face with a piece of cloth chopped off

## पत्र

आदरणीय बलदेव कक्काजी तथा विहारी कक्काजी,

इति श्योपुर से मणिशंकर भतीजे का साष्टांग नमस्कार । आपके आशीर्वाद मुझे चाहिए । आप दोनों और साथके सभी प्रभुकृपासे भलीभांति होंगे । बाद लिखना यह कि बगवाजवाली बात मैं आपको पहले से मालूम कर चुका हूँ । लडकी यहाँ आती जाती थी । और मुझसे विवाह करनेको बोल रही थी । मैंने मना तो बहुत किया । ऐसे लोगोंका भरोसा क्या ? कब आवे और कब चले जावे ? शरितायों की जात खराब होती है । फिर भी वह यहाँ रही तो उसके बाद कक्का कुछ आदमियों को लेकर आये और झगडे के रुपये मांगने लगे । और जोर से चिल्लाते थे । मैंने यहाँके अपने कुछ लोगोंको बुला कर झगडा निकलाना चाहा । वे लोग तीन सौ मांग रहे हैं । मेरी ताकत ढाई सौ की ही है । उतना ही मेरे पास है । अभी कुछ तय नहीं हो पाया है । मैंने सही सच्ची बात आपको लिखी है । मैं कोई भी काम आप लोगोंकी मरजीके विरुद्ध नहीं करना चाहता आप बड़े हैं । कोई भूल हुई हो क्षमा कीजियेगा ।

घरमें चाचाजीको पा लागी । बहन भाइयोंको याद करता हूँ ।

आपका आज्ञाकारी

मणि



## 104 : The Saharia

her nose with his teeth. She struggled a lot but he succeeded in disfiguring her face.

The case was reported to the police and Bhagoo was prosecuted. In the court he narrated the whole story of his wife's illicit sex relations. The court acquitted him.

The Panchayat also did not punish Bhagoo as he was justified in punishing his wife.

After going through the above cases, it will have been noticed that in the tribal jurisprudence of the Saharias, offences connected with sex taboos such as incest, breach of clan exogamy, adultery, elopement, killing a cow, etc. are numerous and are regarded as grave. Incestuous relations between father and daughter, brother and sister, father-in-law and daughter-in-law and other such close relatives within the tribe and sexual relations between a Saharia woman and a person belonging to another caste are viewed seriously. Offences against person and property are not numerous. Most of the offences can be expiated by giving a feast or paying a fine. Authority devolves on men of age and experience who are the guardians of tribal law and life.

## 8. THE CHANGING SCENE

In the preceding chapters an attempt has been made to give some idea of Saharia culture.

Cultures how-so-ever primitive have been characterised as dynamic as no culture howsoever isolated can remain static for a long time. Since the Saharias have been living in close proximity with other caste Hindus they have borrowed a number of traits from outside as a result of culture contact with higher cultures. As a result of culture contact there have been changes in social, economic, religious and political setting of the Saharias and the picture of their tribal life presented here has undergone enormous changes. The Saharias of today are no more solely dependent on forests as they were some fifty years back and with the breakdown of their economic self-sufficiency they have been forced to leave their traditional moorings in search of new jobs to earn their livelihood.

### Main Streams of contact:

1. Higher caste Hindus like Brahmin, Thakurs and others. Saharias since time immemorial have been working as menials for higher caste Hindus.

2. Government officials have also been very frequently visiting tribal areas and for the purpose of administration they came in contact with these people.

### 3. Weekly markets, fairs and festivals :

Such markets, fairs and festivals also attract large number of tribals and they come in contact with the forces of outside world.

### 4. Traders, Merchants, Vendors :

Yet another source through which the Saharias come in contact with outside world is the agency of money-lenders, traders, merchants and other such vendors.

### 5. Contractors :

Forest contractors have also had long contacts with the Saharias. Since this area is very rich in forest produce like resin, gum, honey etc. contractors have been operating there since long. It is only in



recent times that the forest produce is auctioned to Saharia Sewa Sangh at Sheopur at offset price and not to private contractors.

#### 6. Administrative and judicial system:

Though tribal panchayat is still powerful and exercises potent influence on the conduct of the community yet the younger generation invariably flout the authority of such Panchayats and they prefer to go to modern judicial courts. This has also been responsible for bringing the Saharias in contact with the outsiders.

All these factors together have been responsible for bringing about changes in the traditional culture of the Saharias the results of which are visible in different fields. In the following pages an attempt has been made to examine the social changes and incorporation of alien traits introduced in the Saharia society by the operation of these streams of contact.

#### In the Economic Field :

The important change from the economic point of view is that this tribe which at one time was solely dependent on forests is moving away from the forests in search of new avenues of employment.

The new forest laws and restricted use of forests have considerably affected their food supply. Wild fruits, roots, tubers and game which held an important place in Saharia diet are now difficult to obtain. As a result, their diet is becoming increasingly inadequate in quantity as well as in quality. It may be pointed out here that the freedom which these people once enjoyed in the collection of mahua exists no more now. There is a restriction on collecting mahua. New excise rules have thus resulted in reduction of their favourite mahua drink. To the Saharias liquor is a must. They have therefore not yet fully accepted the new excise laws and illicit distillation goes on unchecked. Although in the recent years a number of Saharias have been caught and punished with fine yet this practice has not been stopped. In some of the villages, police officials get their liquor supply from these people and in turn they protect them. Where there is no illicit distillation, a considerable amount of their money goes into liquor shops.

The economy of the Saharia is fast changing not only in the relative importance of the traditional occupations, collecting,

hunting, fishing and cultivation but also in the introduction of new ways of earning a livelihood. Though collecting and hunting have decreased in importance strangely enough agriculture has not gained a place of much economic significance.

Increasing indebtedness, landlessness, low production resulting in consequent economic hardships have compelled them to work on P. W. D. roads, agricultural labourers, construction work etc.

Landlessness among the Saharias has been responsible for hali system (Bonded labour). The landless Saharias take some money on loan from the land-owning castes like Brahmins, Thakurs and in consideration of that sign a contract to serve them for as many years as will be required to repay the loan by means of the wages. The daily wages are generally very low and ordinarily a Saharia fails to pay up his dues in his lifetime. In many cases he dies in debt (while serving the family) which he bequeaths to his sons. As a 'hali' he is treated in a very inhuman way and at times beaten.

As a result of culture contact the needs of the Saharias have increased though they have not been able to raise their income to that extent. There is a demand for cash everywhere. In some cases the women have taken to prostitution to earn cheap money. In one village at least 3 to 4 women were found indulging in this trade. Though prostitution is not socially approved by the Saharias yet this trade flourishes secretly. Most of the money earned by way of prostitution is spent in purchasing ornaments, costly clothes, cosmetics etc.

#### In the social field:

In the social realm also changes have taken place due to culture contact. With the opening of new avenues of employment there is a growing sense of independence within the family. Though the individual is still dependent on the community yet some sort of ethnocentrism is visible. Since the Saharias have started working in road construction work and other such works, this has resulted in greater social mobility. A few years ago a Saharia was unwilling to go to another village even if it offered better wages but these days they willingly go to work in another village away from their traditional moorings.



Certain social customs have also undergone changes. The traditional father-son relationship no more exists. Sons invariably revolt against their parents and prefer to stay away from them more so immediately after marriage. In course of investigation in one of the villages it was marked that a son refused to support his disabled father and left him at the mercy of others.

The rule of observing 'Purdah' before certain relatives and outsiders is also becoming lax. The women folk no longer hesitate to talk to outsiders if something is asked from them. Even if they are asked to recite some song they do so willingly.

#### **In the religious field:**

In the field of religion and magic things are changing fast. Most of the old ceremonies are not strictly observed these days. Gods of Hindu pantheon have found place in the Saharia religion and Hanuman, Ram, Sita, Shanker, and others are commonly worshipped. It is not uncommon to see printed pictures of these gods hanging on the walls in a Saharia house.

The belief in magic has also considerably reduced and witches are rarely heard of.

#### **Political Organisation:**

Political organisation of the Saharias has not remained untouched with the modern forces of change. The authority of the tribal panchayat has been reduced by the impact of external economic and legal forces.

With the weakening of the village community and the traditional panchayat, traditional sanctions have understandably been losing strength. With the opening up of new avenues of employment on P. W. D. roads, forest, stone quarries etc. the effectiveness of excommunication from the society has lessened. The younger generation in particular show disrespect to the decision of the traditional Panchayat and prefer to go to the modern courts to get judgement.

With the establishment of educational centres and other such centres aiming to promote the welfare of the tribe there has been a change in the thinking part of the people. There has been a gradual increase in the literacy and now parents send their children

willingly to the schools. But it may be pointed out here that only a fringe of Saharia society has been touched by this spread of literacy and even today a greater section of the tribe feels critical about various government schemes meant for their welfare.

#### **Government Activities and the Saharias:**

By nature the Saharias are very idle and they do not want to take much pains to improve their economic condition. It is a common sight to see able-bodied young Saharias sitting idly and even if someone offers them work they show their reluctance to do it. It is said that if you advance some loan to a Saharia he will never show his face till he has exhausted all his money and can no more afford to remain hungry. The general concensus of opinion is that too much of drinking has impaired their physical strength and in the absence of proper nutrition coupled with their semi-starving economy they find themselves unfit to do hard work. Even a Saharia youth does not look impressive at all like other tribals of his age.

In the nature of the case the Saharias have not shown much willingness to cooperate with the government activities and the benefits of various development schemes have not reached them. It is only in certain fields that their cooperation could be sought and that too after great persuasion.

#### **Housing Scheme:**

Most of the Saharias do not possess sanitary houses for living. The traditional houses are nothing but mud structures with thatched roofs and they are unfit for human dwelling. With a view to help these people and to provide them ideal houses, housing scheme was undertaken. Housing subsidy to the tune of Rs. 750/- was given to the families willing to erect their houses with their own labour. In the beginning the response was nil and very discouraging. But after gradual and incessant efforts at the hand of development workers a few families could be persuaded. Now more and more families are coming forward to cooperate in this scheme.

There is a Community Welfare Centre at Karhal in Sheopur sub-division of the Morena district and through the sincere efforts of the Supervisor of that centre the scheme has succeeded. The



work of constructing huts was first started in 1957-58 and by now a number of model huts have been constructed at Karhal, Goras, Jakhda, Sarari and Morai.

#### Block Activities and the Saharias:

Saharia's attitude towards the block and its activities has not been very encouraging yet it cannot be said that of indifference. They have started taking part in some of the programmes organised by the block like Shivirs (camps) and organisation of village voluntary force.

In the month of February 1963 a Krishi Sahayak Shivir (कृषि सहायक शिविर) was organised at Village Pehla in which villagers from Bukhari, Suswada, Bhukhada, Jhirnia and Pehla participated. The total number of the trainees was 38 which included 19 Saharias.

The block has given training to 17 Dalpati and 22 Updalpati which includes 2 Saharia Dalpati and 7 Updalpati. The following Saharias were trained:

|              |           |             |
|--------------|-----------|-------------|
| 1. Kishori   | Dalpati   | Based       |
| 2. Kishanlal | -do-      | Goras       |
| 3. Mishri    | Updalpati | Bhondoopura |
| 4. Harchandi | -do-      | Ranipura    |
| 5. Siria     | -do-      | Kateela     |
| 6. Manphool  | Updalpati | Bandardar   |
| 7. Banshi    | -do-      | Panar       |
| 8. Faboo     | -do-      | Kali Talai  |
| 9. Badri     | -do-      | Kakardha    |

This clearly shows that the Saharias are gradually coming forward to share the new responsibilities.

#### Mahila Tailoring Centre:

A women's Tailoring Training Centre was started at Karhal on 11-4-63 by the block. At the time of survey (May '63) the centre had 13 trainees which included 7 Saharia girls. In course of my discussion with the Instructress of that centre I was told about the initial difficulties which she had to face while persuading tribal girls and women to join this centre but the response though slow has been encouraging. The clothes stitched by the Saharia girls are in no way inferior and they have been done nicely.

#### Introduction of smokeless Chulhas:

The block has also launched a programme of introducing smokeless chulhas and the Gram Sevikas have been entrusted with the task of explaining the advantages of such chulhas to tribal women and to use them. The idea has been welcomed by the Saharia women. Only in Karhal village 5 such chulhas are being used and more and more Saharia women are coming forward to use it. They are now convinced of the various advantages which this chulha has over the traditional one.

#### Imported seeds:

Saharias are also convinced of improved variety of seeds by the block. Seeds of wheat, gram, jowar, mung, flex ( ) Urad are commonly borrowed from the block.

#### Medical Aid:

Saharias have also welcomed modern medical aid being provided by the government. The belief in magic and magico-religious therapy is gradually decreasing and Saharias do not hesitate any more to approach the doctor or midwife whenever needed.

Prenatal and antenatal advice is also willingly sought and midwife is immediately summoned in case of complicated and painful delivery.

Standard of personal hygiene in both the sexes has improved and more care is taken to wash the clothes regularly though their economic condition is such that majority of men and women have no second dress to change.

To sum up the effects of culture contact are conspicuous in various fields. As a result of these changes, the Saharia's traditional way of living is changing. Changes are visible in the way of dressing, living, ornaments, increasing use of cosmetics, fine clothes, more frequent visits to Cinema, growing sense of individualism, increasing use of metal utensils, lantern, petromax and musical instruments like harmonium, modern flute etc.

The belief in the efficacy of magico-religious therapy in solving the problem of disease is being shaken. The beliefs, ideas and mental attitudes of the Saharias are also gradually changing.



**A Programme for Tomorrow:**

The Saharias even today are at a very primitive stage of development and they have not borrowed much from the outside world. Notwithstanding the universal operation of the forceful currents of contact, they have not lost the identity and distinctiveness of their tribal culture. But their undeveloped economy coupled with landlessness, illiteracy and their deep rooted traditional beliefs and practices have been responsible for their present state of affairs and something needs to be done immediately. S. C. Roy once said of the tribal people "Have they not for centuries been ground under the oppression of the rich and the powerful and groaned under the various economic and social evils, not the least of which is the cruel stigma of untouchability?". Therefore something must be done to raise their economic standard.

Most of the Saharias are landless and those who possess land do not produce enough to arrange for two square meals a day. The tribe as a whole is living in the state of semi-starvation, for major part of the year they have to depend on forest produce. From economic point of view the Saharias share common problems faced by others in rural areas.

So the main problem is that of economic development so that they could be brought at par with rural masses of India. Therefore any scheme of their rehabilitation should aim at improving their economic condition and providing better avenues of employment. Some of the problems which deserve immediate attention are:

**1. Landlessness:**

Most of the Saharias do not have land and those who have it does not yield them enough. The land is also of inferior quality and in the absence of irrigation facilities the yield per acre is very low.

Therefore attempts should be made to settle them in such places where land is available for cultivation. Loan in form of seeds, bullocks, fertilizer etc. should be given to them on liberal terms.

**2. Indebtedness:**

The indebtedness of the Saharias is proverbial and at least 82% of the families are in debt. If the vast majority of the people

remain in debt, developmental schemes will not hold any meaning and any amount of money poured on them will fail to bring about the desired results. This is really a very grave problem and has been responsible for the institution of Bonded Labour (Hali). But to find a solution to it is all the more difficult. Unless the indigenous money lenders are eliminated by providing better and more effective credit agency, it will not be possible to free the tribe from the clutches of the money lenders for many years to come. Paradoxically enough the suggestion of introducing an alternative agency for providing credit is more of a suggestion than a practical solution because any alternative agency of credit to be successful will have to be as elastic as that of money lender who advances loans to these people at any time without any mortgage and security. The introduction of such an agency of credit will go a long way to meet the needs of the people.

Hali system and its various other equivalents in different parts of the state are synonymous to Bonded Service or Agrestic serfdom. At one time, this system was very common all over India. Under this system a man borrowed some money and executed some sort of work bond to repay it. He was to receive almost nominal wages and food during the working period of his creditor, and occasionally a bit of cloth. The account was so manipulated by the creditor that usually the debtor was hardly free even at the end of his life. By custom, if the debtor died without clearing his debts, his son or any other nearest relative was liable to give similar service. Thus a whole class of hereditary agrestic serfs had come into being.

This type of farm-labour is not restricted to the tribals only. The system of advancing money for purpose of marriage or some such social ceremony to a domestic or farm servant on the undertaking that he will pay it off by serving his creditor is fairly widespread.

Majority of the Saharias do not possess enough land to earn their livelihood for the whole year. Besides deficit economy they have to borrow at the time of marriage or when a community feast is to be thrown. Since they are not in a position to repay their debts, they work on the fields of their creditors till the whole



amount of debt is adjusted which never happens and a man after his death leaves to his son some sort of a legacy in form of a debt. Such cases are not wanting from the Saharias where debt could not be repaid and adjusted with the services tendered by the family concerned. To give an example :— Ramla's father had borrowed some money from his Bohra (a person who advances loans) and he worked for about ten years at his place when Ramla was just young. When his father died he had to work in lieu of the debt left by his father. Ramla was given very bad treatment and very often beaten and abused. He tried to get rid of him a number of times but there was nobody to take his side and for years together he was forced to work in sub-human conditions. Later on he had to take loan to pay off the debts of his father and ultimately he left the village. It may be pointed out here that Ramla's father had no land and most of the time he was dependent on agriculture labour to earn his livelihood.

The reasons for the existence of this type of system are not far too seek. It is only because of the extremely poor economic conditions of the farmers that they are caught in the trap. Usually a loan is taken at the time of marriage at exorbitant rates of interest generally varying between 25% to 50%. Since they find it difficult to repay it they work as farm servants in lieu of the interest to be paid on the capital.

Women have also been found to work as 'Halis'. Usually they clean the cattle shed, remove cow-dung and put it in the manure heap, do odd jobs like sweeping and plastering. The remuneration given to her ranges between 0.37 P. to 0.50 P. At the end of the year she is given a piece of cloth. Children of young age look after the cattle.

But the traditional form of this system is undergoing change these days. General awakening to various factors and chances of better wage earning have broken its backbone.

The practice of serving as 'Halis' among the Saharias has been responsible for ruining a number of families who failed to pay a small amount of debt for years together and the evil needs to be eradicated soon. The following suggestions are made which might be useful in removing this evil.

1. Most of the money-lenders operating among the Saharia belong to Brahmin caste and have no licence to carry on their business with the result they dictate their own terms to the clients and charge exorbitant rate of interest. Therefore it is necessary that special licence be prescribed for money-lending transactions in this area.

2. Defaulters should be given stern punishment and no mercy should be shown to them. Unlicensed money-lending should be an offence punishable with imprisonment as well as heavy fine.

3. Economic condition of the Saharias should be improved and government agency of advancing loans should be made more elastic. Loans should be advanced both for productive and non-productive purposes.

4. Another important step should be to provide land to the landless so that they are in a position to earn their bread and butter. Moreover it will be an emotional satisfaction to them for reasons of their deep attachment to land.

In the present circumstances the balance of wisdom lies with the view that it is better to regulate than to abolish otherwise the break with past would be sudden and violent and understood neither by the employer nor the labourer, and it is difficult to see how he (labourer) would otherwise finance his marriages or meet his other financial obligations.

#### Water Scarcity:

Another important problem which invites immediate attention is the problem of water scarcity. In most of the villages adequate water supply is a problem and the problem becomes more acute in summer season when both men and animals have to cover long distances to get water. Some of the villages inhabited by the Saharias where water is a problem are:

- |                |             |
|----------------|-------------|
| 1. Richhi      | 2. Pehla    |
| 3. Badh        | 4. Semra    |
| 5. Nimaniam    | 6. Morai    |
| 7. Nonpura     | 8. Goras    |
| 9. Ranipura    | 10. Danti   |
| 11. Bhensrawan | 12. Barguar |



- |               |             |
|---------------|-------------|
| 13. Budhera   | 14. Jakhda  |
| 15. Paratwada | 16. Lehroni |
| 17. Jharer    | 18. Suswada |
| 19. Morawan   | 20. Marwani |
| 21. Tiktoli   |             |

On an average people have to cover a distance of 3 to 4 miles to fetch drinking water. Digging of wells has not been successful. Therefore a proper survey of the area by the geologists is very necessary.

A scheme of tube wells or bunding of Nallas, Tanks and Ponds should be undertaken to ensure adequate water supply.

#### **Minor Forest Produce:**

The area is very rich so far as forest produce is concerned. Resin, Gum, Tendu leaves, Harra, Mahua and other such things are available in abundance.

A Federating Institution called Saharia Adivasi Sahkari Sangh at Sheopur, a sub-division of Morena district, is collecting minor forest produce through its various small societies situated in a number of villages. The forest produce is collected by the Saharias who bring it to these societies and exchange it with jowar, gur, bidi and other such necessities of life. The exchange rate differs from item to item. The number of Saharias engaged in forest produce collection is between five to ten thousands.

In the beginning these societies worked well but later on by the interference of politicians and vested interests, the societies failed to serve their purpose. The position in present time is that the federating institution has no funds to finance these societies and to equip them with all the items required by the Saharias. The stock of forest produce of the Sangh is piling up in the absence of proper market and it is short of finances.

This has resulted in the general dissatisfaction of the tribals and they are not getting their requirements. Naturally they have started selling honey, gum and other such produce to outsiders and to shop-keepers of the village who advance them money and give cloth, oil etc. on credit.

It may be pointed out here that some vested interests deliberately manipulate the affairs of the Sangh and the profit which

should legitimately go to the tribals is going to them. Study of a few traders at Sheopur revealed that a few years back they were paupers and only in a period of 5 to 10 years they have earned lakhs of rupees by way of illicit trade in the forest produce.

What is needed today is that better markets for forest produce particularly resin should be explored and government should keep proper vigilance on the activities of some of the members of the Sangh.

The exchange rate of various forest produce should be approved and revised by the government from time to time.

Financially the Sangh is not in a good position. Naturally the financial position of the Sangh should be strengthened in order to carry out its work more effectively.

#### **Education :**

In the field of education the Saharias have not been able to take advantage of various government schemes. This has been partly due to ignorance, lack of information and the reluctance on the part of the development workers. The percentage of literacy is very low and those who are educated have either gone to other places in search of work or working as chaprasis and chowkidars. But there has been a general reluctance on the part of the Saharias to educate their children. In some cases proper publicity of the government schemes and the benefits which such schemes are likely to give have not been properly explained to them and in others development workers are not taking keen interest as they should. Since this is a dacoit-infested area very few are willing to go to the interior areas to know the conditions of the people living in sub-human conditions.

#### **Dacoits and the Saharias:**

Morena district as a whole is notorious for dacoits and forests of this area provide them suitable hide-outs. In the past, the Saharias themselves never indulged in dacoity and they only used to transport the luggage of the gangs when asked to do so.

But the virtues of the old days are gone and a few cases have come in light where the Saharias themselves organised a gang and committed dacoity. This is not a very healthy bind and needs



careful tackling before the situation goes out of control. What is needed today is to raise the economic standard of these simple folk living in sub-human conditions and to make proper publicity instructing them not to give protection to the dacoits and to give them knowledge of various hide-outs existing in this area.

All this requires sincere and sustained efforts and will take a long time to achieve the desired results. Therefore, the government will have to achieve this by a double device: a strict watch on its own officers and an awakening in the Saharias themselves of a consciousness that to demand the due is the right of all. It is only then that their exploitation can entirely end.

#### Problems of the Village:

Saharias are extrovert people when it comes to deal with their own problems. They have enumerated the following problems which they are confronted with.

1. Food grain and cloth are very dear and the living has become pretty expensive.
2. Wages are not properly paid by the forest contractors and road thakidars.
3. As "hali" or mahindiar they get only Rs. 250 per annum.
4. Loan in grain is repaid at the rate of 100% interest.
5. Their animal husbandry is lifted away.
6. Though patwari requires show the entry in one person's favour they are under the position of different person.
7. Mahua flower is collected by the contractors. Previously it was not so.
8. Dehyia cultivation has been stopped for the last 15 years.

According to them in dahyia they used to fell the trees in dang (forest) with the help of axes and then burn it between the months of kumar and karthi. The logs were left for drying. In jaith baisakh they use to burn it and spread the axes. With the help of Khanitha they use to dig 1" deep furrows and sow Juwar, Bajara etc.

After the rains when the seeds sprouted and saplings developed weeding was done. Individual families had held their separated

lands. One patch was sown for three years and then they will sow some different patch. Thus with the help of rotation one patch was sowed for three years after a lapse of six years and by the time enough plantation used to grow on it. In the field they used to have an erect platform murwa for looking after the fields. Tree of mahua, char and sagon were spared.

According to them the present system of cultivation is more expensive and troublesome. The dahiya system needed no manure and no loans for purchasing bulls, seed, manure and equipments for cultivation. They feel that now per plough they have to spend Rs. 200-300 in advance.



## 9. FOLK SONGS

There are several varieties:

Saharia folk-song, for example, the songs with agriculture, to marriage songs, songs sung at the time of various festivals tasia songs, philosophical songs of Bhakti, and so on. Of all these tasia songs are commonly sung and there are no hard and fast rules for their recital. Some of the songs are full of satire. For example

Agrey ke gel mere Parvati ke than

Thanedar gadiya Pakre

Munshi pakre kan

Agra is the place of my beloved

The Thanedar (incharge of police station)  
the jackess

and the Munshi (his assistant) its ears

A number of film songs have also found place in Saharia culture and such songs are commonly sung by the younger generation.

**While Working in the fields:**

Me to dhan kariae dhan kare to

Gaiya leyo dudhar

Me to laiyo patri lank ke re, Palang pe labh labh jaye

In song a farmer expresses his view regarding the purchase of a cow that forms a part of their wealth.

He says the cow should be capable of producing enough milk and a cow having agile limbs is capable of producing enough milk like a woman having thin waist is very much suitable for intercourse.

2. Larka Jin kariyo banjar kheti

Ko kahego jhar

Gori to chale bake maikey

te tu kudar kudar mar jaye

While working in the fields a woman advises a boy not to select barren land for cultivation as who would cut trees. Your wife would desert you and you would die of hard labour.

This song clearly indicates that barren land is not fit for cultivation according to the Saharias and it involves a lot of labour and continuous efforts.

The boy says:

Re dhundi pipaiya bin panan ke

bin maiyan ke bahin panwar de

re galiyan me bisootat jaye

I shall bring a girl having no brothers and relatives whatsoever. In such a case she would not dare to desert me and will go on crying on the roads.

**At the time of Festivals:**

Songs sung on festive occasions like fairs and festivals are known as Rasia ( ) and to some extent they express the desire of a Saharia youth towards another woman. On such occasions men and women freely indulge in jokes and try to win each other's favour.

A boy says:

Chori tere mathe pe gagaria

chiria pani pe gai rasia

man me bhawe mund hilava

O girl, there is a water pitcher on your head the bird drank water my beloved. You want me yet you nod your head.

The Girl:

Ghar ke khand kirkiri

Par ghar ko gur metho lage rasia

Jaggery of somebody else's place is more sweet my beloved and sugar of own home is not tasteful.

This simply means that somebody else's woman looks more attractive to a man than his own wife, how so even attractive she may be.

2. In a festival a Saharia woman develops intimacy with somebody and she talks to him in a very familiar way. Her husband objects to that and asks her not to show her inclination towards that person. She objects to this and says:



Hasne se mat rok beiman milapi mere  
 Hansko ray kilakboray je se jayega  
 Do not me to stop laughing my beloved  
 Laughing and jest enlighten the soul

The Husband gets annoyed and says:

Kot firaun adi kotari  
 to jiyara ke kaje

I shall erect a fortress for you and put you behind the doors.

wife:

Re un kere fadasoon bajar kibar milapi mere  
 to se dato nahi tere bap se  
 Ye fadasoon bajar kibar milapi mere  
 I shall break open the doors. I am neither afraid of you nor your father. I shall break open the strongest door my beloved.

3. Husband does not behave properly with his wife.  
 He calls her bad names, she gets annoyed and says:

Mat deve kasoorey bol  
 Balam ju mere  
 Ye lage re khunas pad jayege ye balam ju mere  
 Main ban ke kugalia ud jaungi  
 Anna bakhey angna nahi lage  
 Neer piye to dhar jaye milapi mere  
 To balma se main to randi bhali  
 Re kar jaungi tujgar milapi mere  
 Ye mat deve kasoaray bol milapi mere

Do not call me by bad names my beloved

It will have permanent effect on me

And I shall fly away like a cuckoo

I eat but it goes as waste

Water also does not enter my body

I would prefer to remain as a prostitute than to have a husband like you.

I shall do some work to support my self

My beloved do not call me by bad names

*Note:-* In this song wife complaints to her husband of his bad behaviour towards her. She threatens of deserting him and says that it is better to lead the life of a widow than to have a husband like you.

#### In labour pains:

Daughter-in-law is having labour pains. She becomes nervous and feels that she won't remain alive. In this she is reminded of her father-in-law, mother-in-law and husband's sister. Her feeling towards these relatives is depicted in the following song.

Jo lo sasura jee tumare hate  
 Jane maregey ke bachengay  
 Uthi uthi pasaiya fore peer  
 Bachte hain jani marte hain  
 Jo lo sasujee tumri rahi mathania  
 Uthi uthi pasaiya fore peer  
 Jani bachengey ya marenge  
 Jo lo Nandbai tumri chakia chulhey  
 Jani bachenge ya marenge  
 Up till now I was yours my sasur  
 Now I do not know whether I shall die or remain alive  
 Labour pains are breaking ribs  
 Who knows I remain alive or die  
 Up till now I was yours sasujee  
 like an attendant  
 Labour pains are breaking ribs  
 Who knows I shall remain alive or die  
 Up till now Nandjee I was yours  
 grinding stone and hearth (Doing all the domestic work  
 grinding and cooking)  
 Who knows I shall remain alive or die

#### Marriage Songs:

Banaaje ne pahiro ke nain re  
 Jo to lai panch rupya ka choora  
 Banaaje ne pahiro ke nain re  
 Jhanga topi lai banaaje ko  
 Banaaje ne pahiro ke nain re



Banaaje ne pahire kaun nain re  
Lai das bhar sankri  
Je to dhoti sat aath ke  
Banajee ne pahire kaun nain re

Choorā (a silver ornament) worth five rupees has been brought  
Whether the groom has worn it or not  
Shirt and cap have been brought  
Whether the groom has put on them or not  
Why the groom has not worn Sankri (Necklace) weighing ten tola  
Dhoti is worth rupees seven eight  
Whether the groom has put it on or not

**Other Songs:**

1. Payan chuv gai re kankaria  
Kondha godi lay lay re devaria  
long ke har masoori ke tiki  
chal ke chilbili  
boli ke meethi  
payan chuv gai re kankaria

The small stone has pierced the foot. O my devar (husband's younger brother) lift me up. The necklace is made of and the mark on the forehead is that of masoor. She is coquettish and has sweet tongue. The stone has pierced the foot.

2. Ghar me ghus gav re nandoi  
Karab se torey rasia

Nandoi (husband's sister's husband) entered the house.  
He is crushing me like dry sowar

3. Hanswey ko dant milabe ko naina  
man me bhavay to aa jaun rasia

The teeth are to laugh and the eyes for communicating  
the desire. If you are willing then I come my beloved.

**Rasia**

By for Rasia songs are the most popular. They are sung on all the occasions and throughout the year. Rasia songs are of two varieties:

1. Rasia songs of Bhakti ras
2. Rasia songs of Kshangar ras

**Rasia of Bhakti Ras:**

Jhado Jhado Kadamb ka ped milapi mere  
Kadamb ke unchey dalon men gal kho hindora  
Radheyshaym ke

The Kadamb tree is standing. On the Kadamb tree the swing  
of Radheyshyam be suspended my dear.

Kapar ka palna bano kapar ke lagadi joti char milapi mere  
Of what we should make a swing of what we to make four  
ropes to suspend it on the top of the tree.

Hate bans ka palna karo resham ke laga de joti char  
milapi mere

Unche dalon me galkhoo hindora Radheyshyam ke

The swing be made of green bamboo and four ropes of silk and  
the swing of Radheyshyam be suspended on the tall branches.

**Rasia of Kshangar Ras**

Husband returns to his home in the evening after day's labour  
and finding his wife sleeping on the cot, he loses his temper and  
pushes his wife down on the ground. His wife complains of her  
husband's behaviour to her friend. Then her Sakhi (friend) compl-  
ains to him on her behalf.

Palangiya kesey patak dai ris khai milapi mere

"In anger you pushed your wife down on the ground my dear"

Palangiya pichade ke sudh nanhi

Ghagra phado resham pat ke nade ke kar diyey no took

"You pushed her down but you do not remember this. You tore  
her under skirt (Ghagra) and you tore the string tying her ghagra  
into nine pieces."

baile mere palangiya pichade ke sudh nanhi  
angiya phadi resham ke

"My dear you do not remember you pushed her down. In anger  
you tore her silken bodice."

Baile mere palangiya pichade ke sudh nanhi

Tamna today gor kand ko

"My dear do not remember. You pushed her down and broke her  
Tamna (ornament worn on neck)



## 126 : The Saharia

The folk songs of the Saharias are mixed expression of tradition and neighbouring influence. Very secenry cinema and songs have increased the taste for modern songs (particularly of younger generation) and thus some lines in their festive occasions like marriage they sing cinema songs.

### RIDDLES:

Like other tribals of the State the Saharias also enjoy riddles. A few examples are given below:

Bap thada beta koodey (Mahua tree)

Naini se haddi killey se baddi

A small bone bigger than the fort (White ant)

Indherey ghar men unt narraye

In the dark house camel cries (grinding stone)

Chotoo so balka thoon mathoon

Kandha dhoti mathey phool (cock)

Ek tookh ke chirbiri chanh (cot)

Foolan ke dher mahal suparan ke dher

upar pan nahi ek (Kareel tree)

Beley ke dar bameetha ke aut

Dekho kaka bhatijan ke chot (Fighting between Laxman and Lavkush)



