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**TRIBAL CUSTOMARY LAWS
THE GARASIAS**



TRIBAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING INSTITUTE

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TRIBAL CUSTOMARY LAWS THE GARASIAS

INTRODUCTION

The Garasias also known as Dungry Garasias, is a scheduled tribe community of Gujarat State, found in Sabarkantha and Banaskantha Districts of Gujarat State and contiguous Sirohi and Udaipur Districts of Rajasthan. Its total population is 82,156 according to 1961 Census.

The present report on the customary laws of the Garasias is based on the two months' field work by two Garasia youths from Sabarkantha, one of them a Law Graduate, after undergoing training on tribal customary laws, at the Tribal Research & Training Institute, Gujarat Vidyapith. The Faculty consisted of the senior research personnel of the Institute alongwith two teachers from the Department of Social Anthropology. A field guide of an 100 odd pages, was provided to the field workers covering various aspects of tribal customary laws, when they visited the field. The investigators stayed in the selected tribal villages of the areas for two months, though at a stretch, they spent three weeks only. In between they were required to remain present at the Centre, for further instructions, guidance etc. On the whole, they collected valuable information on many aspects of traditional tribal customary laws.

Social Organisation

The Garasias of Shamlaji are divided among some two dozen exogamous clans. The ancestor of each clan is real or mythological individual. Each one has its God or Goddess and a traditional shrine, somewhere in Mewad or Chittod from where their ancestors migrated to this part of the Aravallia hills.

Each clan has certain exogamous 'Adakh' ranging from three to about a dozen and a half. Each 'Adakh' consist of many lineages, which are exogamous and known as 'kaka

baba katam'. It consists of many nuclear or joint households of a real ancestor. As the Garasias are patrilineal, patrilocal and patriarchal, this ancestor must always be male, whose 'Adakh' is adopted by a person after the birth of an ego.

The whole Garasia area of Shamlaji has been divided among seven sub-areas, traditionally known in Garasias' languages as 'Pata' i.e. Palpata, Pala Pata, Shamlaji Pato etc.

As Garasias are patriarchal, patrilineal, patrilocal people, the system has deference for the agnates. All sons of an ego get equal rights in all immovable as well as movable property.

The property of a Garasia household includes immovable items like, land, water well, trees, house and movable items like, ornaments, utensils, clothes, cattle, agricultural implements etc., which form the items of distribution at the time of division in the household property theoretically, however, in actual practice, many practical adjustments are made, while dividing the property of a household.

In landed property, generally, the land is divided into two categories : (1) the Vada land, and (2) the Bhathod land.

Vada land is the land around the house, where agriculture manure is put in a greater quantity and where generally the well of an ego is situated. While Bhathod land is the land, which is brought under cultivation, few years back, after clearing the forest, or cutting the trees, in an ego's life time, and where generally, the manure of the household cattle has not been put. Besides these two categories, sometimes, 'parat' and fertility of the land also is taken into consideration, while dividing/distributing the land.

Among trees, nowadays, two types of trees are taken into account : (1) Mahua trees and (2) other fruit trees like mangoes, etc. Formerly the Mahua trees were distributed

among different claimant of the shares in equal proportion / number. Nowadays, the general rule of "Jami Tenu Zad". "that who possesses the land is the owner of the land" is applied, but for fruit trees like, mango tree, all sons of an ego gets almost equal share in fruits of the trees, which is less common an item, in comparison to Mahua tree, which is considered by the Garasias as natural tree.

Collection of Mahuwa Flowers

In the whole Garasia area of Shamlaji, Mahua trees were found in abundance. These trees served the multi-purpose interests of the Garasias. It provided pillars and horizontal beams for the Garasia houses. Its branches and other dry leftovers were used as fuel. Each year from mid-March to mid-April or end of April, throughout the Garasia area, Mahua flowers are collected almost by all members of the Garasia household, though children and women play a major role in the collection.

Mahua flower collection has a set of rules. In the beginning of the season, there is a different set of rule, then at its peak period and in the later part of the season. In the beginning of Mahua collection season, any villager or his relative, can collect Mahua flowers from any Mahua tree. Most of the Mahua flowers start falling down around 4-00 a.m. and majority of them fall down before sunrise. If it is a cold morning by around 9-00 a.m. almost all Mahua flowers will fall down. In the season, white or yellow-white carpet, depending upon the colour of the flowers, is spread under each and every Mahua tree, and the air is filled with typical fragrance of Mahua flower. Around eleven, there is hardly any flower left on the Mahua tree.

In the beginning of the season, whoever first reach the Mahua tree and lit/put fire in dry Mahua leages, or put one's basket under the tree, or who sleeps under or around the tree, or sits or stays arond the tree, is entitled to collect the Mahua flowers for the day, or at

least for the first major round. The rights of the collector in this regard are so clear and exclusive that even the owner of the house also cannot, by way of right, share the portion of the fall, which is called 'red' in the Gerasia language. This right continues till the first collection of the fall only. On the second day, any other individual can get that right.

When the Mahua flower fall gets momentum, and when full flowering season opens, the villagers decide to reserve it (lit, to keep, rakhvu), and then only the owner of that particular Mahua tree has the right to collect the flowers, till almost end of the season.

The collector can collect either the entire fall only once in the season by letting it fall under the tree for the entire season and get accumulated or collect on each and every day, in the early day or atleast by noon, depending upon the local situations i.e. if the herd of the village is free (trdashtareva), by these days, one cannot keep the Mahua flower get collected for the entire season, unless one keeps its own watchman for the entire season.

If the village herd is free in the season, each and every owner is compelled to complete one's Mahua flower produce collection on each and every day.

Beside these regular collection of the Mahua flower, there are certain other set of rules for some special mahua flowers. According to the taste of Mahua flowers, they can be divided in two types : (1) sweet, (2) bitter, though among bitter flowers also, there are number of tastes. It varies so much that an experienced collector can discern from the taste, and shape and size of the flower that these flowers are of a particular Mahua tree.

Mahua flowers which are sweet can be sucked, either by collecting them from the handle of the tree and getting them collected when they fall on the ground. In either case, any one from the village or outside can collect them for chewing or getting them boiled. These sort of chewing is known in Garasia language as "Duda Chusva" and, when it gets boiled it is known as "Duda randhava". As half a dozen different delicious dishes are made

out of Mahua flowers, including liquor and as preparations from the flowers of a particular tree are liked by the local Garasias better than any other tree, for that particular preparation, at least for once in the season, one can get collection of the flowers of that tree, by requesting the owner of the tree.

Collection of Mahua fruits

The rules of collection of Mahua fruits differ quite clearly from those of collection of Mahua flowers. Mahua fruits can be collected by any individual of the village, or the guest of the villager, when it gets ripe and fall down on its own. Generally, the Mahua fruit gets riped from mid-May to early June. As it gets lesser in the quantity, and as owner's right on the collection of Mahua fruit has not been granted on any individual wholly and exclusively; the right of not only each and every collector of the village, but also their kinsman have been provided by the customary Garasis laws. It is an equalitarian character of the customary Garasia laws, which have prevailed upon the ownership instinct of the traditional Garasia laws as well as their neighbouring Hindu and non-Hindu neighbouring castes.

Oil is extracted from the fruits of Mahua. The fruit of the Mahua is known as 'doli' in Garasia language. Garasia collects them for selling them in local market as well as for getting the oil extracted by local muslim oil extractor, Ghanchi, through his bullock-run Ghani, (an indiginous miniature oil mill) for which best fruits are specially selected by some interesting and knowledgeable collector of the household.

As the ripe doli only would fetch higher price and from that only the best amount of oil can get extracted, it is always banned to fell unripened doli. According to traditional Garasia custom, no adult would dare to fell unripe dol, even though the tree is of one's own. They always would wait till it gets ripe. In case of children, if someone fell, they are always explained, and if need arise, will be scolded. It is said that it is the gift of mother earth and it

cannot be wasted in an arbitrary or unuseful manner. It must be used with due care. This belief is wisely put into practice for many articles which are a rare commodity.

In collection of doli, certain rules are framed by the elders of the village. Generally they are of this nature-only doli, which have fallen naturally would be collected. This is the ideal and is at least followed by senior ladies and gents collectors. Often youngsters or youths are seen breaking this rule, by throwing stones or small sticks on the Mahua tree or climbing on the Mahua trees.

Some time, for protecting the doli get fell unripe by the youngsters or youths of the village, a watchman of the village is appointed, who will get his share in the form of doli, fruits, from each and every household of the village at the end of the season, in lieu of his service of protection of the doli. This watchman who is known as 'rakhwala' has right to snatch away the doli collected by the youngsters unauthorisedly from tree by felling them down. He can scold the offenders, and in some cases, allowed to beat them also, but of courses not so harshly. Formarly, it is said that the dolis were kept for weeks together, without collecting them, but at least nowadays, at least in this generation that practice is quite unknown.

Garasia tribal council

Garasia traditional tribal council works at three different levels - (1) at village level, (2) at sub-regional level and (3) at Garasia tribe level. At the moment, the traditional tribal councils at all these levels are informal or semiformal in nature. There is a written constitution, the office-bearers of the council are known as President, Secretary or Executive members of the Garasia Tribal Council, of the area and sub-area level. When some quarrel or dispute arises at village level, the aggrieved party decides to call all the villagers, in order to get justice. For this, first of all, he contacts mukhi. Looking to the convenience of

the main leaders, the approximate time and place is fixed. When the council meets, the mukhi, or in his absence the matadar, or any of the village elders, explains the purpose of the meeting. Then complainant is asked to present his case before the council. After hearing him, if they have to see any 'Muddamal or evidences' it is seen. The defendant is summoned, if he is not present, at that moment. If he is already there, he is asked to explain his stand on the matter. Cross-questions can be asked by the elders. If they feel that further probe is needed in certain matters, that work is assigned to a sub-committee in which male elders of various lineages or adalkhs of the village are included. Both the parties are heard at length by the village council, and at the end verdict is given by the Mukhi, Matadar or any other elder, who is working as judge on the occasion. If the punishment is made, or fine imposed on the defendant, is felt too harsh or high, the defendant can argue against the verdict, and pray the Council to take some lenient view of the matter. Hearing his request, the Council may reconsider the amount of fine or punishment, and if it feels appropriate, it can reduce it also. The fine is given on the spot by the defendant in cash or/and kind, or is to be paid at fixed time and place, in presence of some committee members.

Barring a few, almost all the the disputes are settled by the village council.

If the above decision of the jury is unacceptable to any of the party, it may approach the area council or to other influential leaders of the area. When the dispute is regarding two individual of different villages, the sub-area council patta is approached. The method adopted by the area council is the same.

If the dispute is between two villages of different sub-areas - pattas - the General Council or General Panch is called which deals with the matters of general nature, and where broad principles are laid down. Specific cases of some really important nature are only taken up by the Panch due to lack of time, and as from far away places the represen-

tative of the Council get together to get guidance on some important matters of social relevance. Some cases are directly referred back to Patta Panch or to the Village Panch of the concerned villages to settle them out, in consultation with the representative of the General Council or sub-area Council of that particular region.

Life cycle

The Garasia life cycle constitute of the birth, thema, marriage and death.

On the birth of a child in a Garasia household, all the members, get polluted for a month and quarter, and especially among bhagats only after inviting bhagats and after performing puja and bhajan kirtan, the household gets oneself free from pollution.

In former times, most of the names were given on the day on which the child is born. i.e. for boys Ditto, humo, Maglo, Baddo, Besarjjo, Hakro, Thavro and for girls Ditli, Lumli, Magli, Badi, Besi, Besri, Lakri, Thavri for all the weak days from Sunday to Saturday respectively.

Thama :

In former days, there was the practice of thama, which was marked by putting a live charcoal on a teenager's left hand, by his elder friends. Some thirty years ago, throughout Garasia area, one would find hardly any Garasia youth who might not have got marked with 'thama', while today it is very very difficult to get any Garasia youth to have this mark of 'thama'.

Marriage

Garasia marriage takes place when an individual attains youth. According to Garasia belief, before one gets maturity one cannot marry. Though according to Garasia traditions, marriageable age is sixteen to seventeen for girls and seventeen to eighteen for boys. As

many marriages take place at this standard Garasia marriage age, according to law, many child marriages do occur, but the Garasia tradition does not accept them as such.

As Garasias believe that all marriages occur at a mature age, they have given very high prominence to the consent of both the parties concerned, i.e. the bride and the bridegroom.

The bride price was the essential part of Garasia marriage. In each Garasia marriage it was customarily fixed, passing through various stages and ceremonies. Under the high caste Hindu influence and Bhagat movement influence, many Garasias have abandoned this practice, though in majority of the cases, it is still order of the day,

The third important feature of the Garasia marriage is, it is performed by the sister-in-law of the bride and the bridegroom instead of brahmin. "She has come from the outside (the adakh) and she will give one out side (Adakh)" (Parke hi aiji ne parke alhe). This is the traditional famous doctrine which is incorporated in a proverb, which governs the practice.

The former practice of amla or the practice of "accompanying bride, the relatives of the bride go to the bridegroom's village" has been abandoned by the villagers since two decades, under the influence of process of sanskritization by the villagers, but many other core customs of Garasia marriage, such as Ganesh, Phuleku, Mandava and Phera are strictly adhered to by the Garasias of the area.

Vayti the traditional drummer and the bard of Garasias still accompany the Garasia marriage procession, though in some instances its place has been taken by the Garasia village band, a phenomenon which has developed in last one half decade only in the area under study.

Once the marriage by capture was the accepted practice of the Garasia which is

totally abandoned since three decades under the influence of Sanskritization, but marriage by escape is still in vogue and atleast in the marriage in the village itself, it is the only socially accepted practice.

Death :

Traditionally, Garasias were cremating the dead, but as forests have become barren, and it is difficult to get enough wood for pyre easily near the cremation ground, this practice has been abandoned in many Garasia village, following the example of burial of one's nearest kin made by a Garasia leader of an influence some two decades back, now majority of the villagers get buried their dead kins.

Traditional sharing after the dead on the eleventh day of the death, is observed by all and lineage members, do share on that day along with some clan men. The rites of barma are still performed by majority of the Garasias, though the traditional death rite performer - the jogi is no longer invited by any of the Garasia since three decades at least in five of the seven traditional Garasia patas, i.e. from Pala Pattas to Megharaj Patta. The movement to discountinue the barma rite was taken up by a Garasia leader, three decades back, and by now there are many followers of the movement in many villages, who have abandoned this practice in majority of the tribal villages, throughout the Garasia area.

Measurement

Among the Garasias the traditional measurements for the Mahua flower, grain as well as any liquid were adaul, nautak, paher, adher, her, panser, manu (5 kg) adman, man, which has now-a-days converted into metric measurements and the adult male Garasias are now-a-days quite conversent with kilos, half kilos or twenty kgs. which they understand by converting them into their old measurements roughly.

The old measurements for the time were as follows :

- | | | | |
|-----|---------------------------|---|---|
| 1. | Pelo kukdo bolle | - | around 4-00 a.m. |
| 2. | Bijo kukdo bolle | - | around 4-30 a.m. |
| 3. | Tijo kukdo bolle | - | around 5-00 to 5-15 a.m. |
| 4. | Ajbagajju | - | The time before sun rise |
| 5. | Dan uge | - | The sun rise time |
| 6. | Lakdi dan sadjje | - | When the sun rises, equal to a stick |
| 7. | Vahdo dan sadjje | - | When the sun goes up in the sky about a bamboo |
| 8. | Kula baphor | - | The time before noon |
| 9. | Baphor | - | Noon |
| 10. | Namte dan | - | afternoon |
| 11. | Vahde dan | - | When the sun is about a bamboo's distance from the horizon in the west. |
| 12. | Lakdi dau | - | When the sun is about a stick in the west. |
| 13. | Dubte dan | - | When the sun sets |
| 14. | | - | Twilight |
| 15. | Rat padjje | - | the setting of night |
| 16. | A thamnnan rota vakhat | - | At dinner time of night around 8-30 p.m. |
| 17. | Huvan tems at Luva vakhat | - | At dinner time of night around 9-30 p.m., |
| 18. | Marad | - | Midnight |

Besides the sun the noon and the various stars in various seasons are taken into account for timing.

Divorce

Divorce is known as 'fargati' among Garasia. For continuous quarrel, severe beating, infidelity, divorce can be taken after trying out all other avenues to resolve the case.

Alongwith the village elders and other villagers, both the parties meet at the house of the husband or at the wife's parents' house to thrash out the case. After hearing both the parties, if the Panch come to the conclusion of granting divorce, a New Saree is brought before the Panch, and is given to the woman, by the man, and along with the saree, the amount of Rs. 150 to Rs.200, as fixed by the Panch is given to the woman, provided the demand for the divorce is made by the man's side. If the case is otherwise, no amount is given to her, only a saree is presented to her. After divorce, both the parties can remarry wherever they like, but if they have their children, they generally stay with father, with the exception of infant, which goes with one's mother, till it comes of age.

Theft

Garasia word for the theft is 'suri'. Among Garasias the person who gets involved in theft is seen with contempt by the villagers nowadays. The following type of theft cases have been reported :

1. Theft of standing crop
2. Theft of standing grass
3. Goat, bullocks and calf
4. Melon, Guava
5. Clothes
6. Utensils

7. Costly ornaments
8. Timber

The reasons cited for the theft are as under :

1. dire need
2. poverty
3. quarrel
4. to take revenge
5. out of envy
6. just for fun or to have a drink

These cases are generally dealt with by village elders and hardly any case goes to the statutory court or to the Police. The verdict of the village panch is honoured by the villagers.

Decoity

Decoity is no longer known throughout the Garasia area, though, quite a few decades back it was a widely prevalent practice among Garasia, in some of which they themselves took part. Such cases are generally reported to the Police.

Assault

Especially when they are drunk, assault is very common among Garasia. The reasons for the same are as follows :

1. for a dispute of land
2. for the illicit grazing of animals in somebody's farm
3. for cutting tree
4. for eve teasing
5. for Mahua flowers, mangoes and other fruit bearing trees

6. for witchcraft or sorcery
7. for reported misbehaviour of an individual or group
8. for abusing some one in drunken state (paylu)

Maintenance

The minor children, the deserted wife, and aged and old parents have got the right of maintenance from their father, husband and son respectively. If the one is not observing this rule, on the request of the a grieved party, village elders can summon the person concerned, and ask him to look after the kin properly. Similarly the orphan minor brother and sister can claim their right of maintenance, from elder brother, if he has got the property of the father and is not looking after them properly.

Adoption

The person having no child can adopt a son from his lineage members. Generally the real nephew from the same lineage is taken as son by the Garasias. The adoption takes place in presence of some members of the lineage. The adopter should be senior in age and adoptee should be from the descending generation and should be a minor. The adoptee has also the rights which normally a son gets and has to perform all the duties which a son would. No person having a son can adopt any body. The consent of the spouse is a must for adoption.

Custodian

The concept of custodian is there in Garasia society. The person who has to go on travel or due to some peculiar circumstances, one who has to remain away from the house for longer duration, may keep one's wealth in cash or kind including one's cattle wealth, with some person of trust.

The custodian cannot sell or mortgage the thing given to him to keep in custody, though he is permitted to use its by-product, i.e. milk and dung in the case of animals. There is no prevalent practice at the moment in the area to take rent for keeping the things.

Vataru - Road Rights

While going from one place to another, Garasias may have to pass across many fields. Travellers have always a tendency to have short cuts and so there might be small roads cross-cutting the fields. Many of these roads remain open even in monsoon. For these roads there are certain unwritten traditions which each passerby will follow. These rules are as under :

- (1) every traveller would walk on the same foot road so that no more crop than bare minimum get damaged.
- (2) If there are more than one person who will have to pass on that road, they will form a row and go one by one, following one after the other.
- (3) While passing on road no damage would be done to standing crop or at least by the 'Vataru' (The passersby on the road), no theft would be done.
- (4) Each villager has a right to have road for one's cattle to reach the grazing ground.

Debt

According to Garasia tradition, debts may be in cash, kind or through deeds, or some acts of benevolence. It should be repaid to its owner, in cash or kind or in whatever form the creditor desires to have it. Nowadays the Garasias are aware of the concept of 'Interest'.

Interest

The concept of interest was not there in traditional Garasia society, especially when

the monetary transaction is between Garasia and Garasia. In last four decades, they have become quite conversant with the term 'Interest' and its nature, due to various govt. loans, they have to repay, especially through co-operative society. Some Garasias have direct 'give and take' economic relations with local business men, pretty traders, banks or money lender (Shahukar), where interest on any kind of loan is of prime importance. Of course, it was taken from the older times, but the word and concept has become little bit clearer in Garasia mind and nowadays, especially in last half decade or so, in some important in-between Garasia transactions also, it has been made applicable.

Dress and Ornaments

The Garasia women had distinct dress formerly but now-a-days, they wear sarees, brought from the market, in pure Guajrati style. Nowadays their ornaments also are of Gujarati style.

Garasia male elders wear Khamis and Dhoti, with a feta or white cap on their head, but among youth bush-shirts and shorts or pants are order of the day.

Bhagat Garasias put a bunch of sacred threads in their body.

Tada Odva (Customary laws regarding cattle)

The Garasias are traditional cattle breeders. As a matter of fact, in their traditional folklore, the community is described as cattle-breeders. They raise cows, buffaloes and goats.

The Garasia customary laws regarding cattle grazing are as follows :

- (1) Each village family has right to graze one's cattle in the village common grazing ground called 'Gauchar'.
- (2) One can collect cowdung from this grazing ground. Non-a-days this right has been narrowed to the villagers only.

- (3) Only thirty years back, if some one from the village plough the Gauchar land, it was considered a great sin. This belief no longer exists among Garasias now-a-days. In fact, at many places gauchar land has been brought under cultivation by the Garasia land holders.
- (4) If there are some trees in the Gauchar land, it can be used as a resting place - Behran for the cattle in the afternoon hours.
- (5) If there is a water in the village pond or rivulet, not only the cattle of the village, but of neighbouring villages also can make use of it free of cost. If somebody who denies this right of the cattle, would get curse of the cattle and will have to reply in the court of God. This belief is widely prevalent throughout the Garasia country even today, and nobody denies the right of cattle of even neighbouring villages as long as water is there.
- (6) If there is not enough water in the pond, a villager has a right to prevent any one's cattle from getting bath in the pond.

Declaration

While walking on the road when one gets fall down, by virtue of habit, there would come the name of one's clan deity, on every Garasias lip and one would always utter the padto (Kannalo) the name of the traditional Garasia clan daity.

They believe that when ill-will comes in one's mind, he will get punishment from the God. The traditional deity is remembered as Saviour here. Next to the deity are remembered Mother and Father by the word oai and oata (on mother on on father)

Adoption

Any Garasia couple, who does not have a male child can adopt one nephew as son, after getting concurrence from the real parents of the boy. In adoption generally following rules are observed :

- (1) Adoption can be taken only from ones decending generation.
- (2) Adoptee should be lineage member only.
- (3) There should be gap of at least a generation, that is sixteen to twenty years between adopter and adoptee.
- (4) Nowadays adoption is valid only if it is in written form, alongwith testimonial and attestation of the persons in whose presence formal ceremony of adoption has occurred, which includes, putting up an adoptee into the lap of the adopter parents, after making a tika and bowing in the feet of adopter by the adoptee.

Heraoak (Road rights)

The Garasia's subsidiary occupation is animal husbandry. They rear goats, cows and buffaloes. Each household has to take out the herd to the nearby forest or gauchar for grazing. While going to gazing ground, the heard has to pass through fields, where a hedge is erected by the farmers to protect their fields from grazing. This road for passing the cattle is called 'hara' in, Garasia. The Garasia customary laws regarding the 'hara' are as follows :

- (1) Every Garasia should keep a road for the herds to pass by. If one breaches this rule, he commitsasin, and will have to answer in the Durbar of God.
- (2) One should not raise such crop near or around the 'hara', which is poisonous or harmful to cattle.
- (3) One would keep his hedge in order so that cattle may not enter easily while passing through that 'hara'.

Religious beliefs

The Garasias are under the heavy influence of Hindu religion and worship many of

the Hindu Gods and Goddesses of the area. They regard the temple of Shamlaji as their supreme traditional God and its name in their language is Kaloji Bavsi. In great reverence this God is worshipped and there is a folk love about the idol of the 'God Kalaji', which was according to Garasia Tradition found by a Garasia farmer in the lake of Karns, which is situated on the northern side of Shamlaji and from there it was installed at the present site centuries ago. Garasia folk love traditions, are full of legends, stories regarding the places in and around Shamlaji. Number of fairs where Garasia participate enthusiastically are held in and around Shamlaji. Besides this, supreme God of Garasias, many clan Gods are also worshipped by the Garasias. A Jain temple of Keshariaji which is known as 'Kehor Bavsi' in Garasia legends is also worshipped by the Garasia. Alongwith Shamlaji and clan deity, formerly, the oaths of Kesariaji also were taken. Nowadays these oaths are seldom taken.

The Garasias omen and ill-omen system includes chirping of many birds and voices of many animals. It has so deep-rooted in the traditional Garasia belief system that hardly any individual is ready to disbelieve them. The Garasia belief system believes that they are based upon situation, which is more prominent among animals than mankind.

Omen - ill-omen

Garasias consider following events as good omen.

When one goes out for some important work and while going out one comes across (a) an unmarried girl, fetching water (b) if two pieces of 'tooth brush' (Datan) fall straight (c) if cow passes on one's way (d) if some person sneezes, they are considered good omen, and it is believed that the work would yield good results.

Following events are considered ill-omen :

- (1) While going out if some person asks about the place where one is going

- (2) If some person with empty pots passes through one's way.
- (3) If donkey brays.
- (4) If one gets wood, or fire-wood while going out, these are considered ill-omen in Garasia society, and either they postpone the visit for that particular work or decide not to go at all.

The omens and ill-omens are valid upto the village boundary only. When one passes through one's village, on the way, similar events are not taken into account/consideration, as omen or ill-omen.

Sun and Moon

According to Garasia mythology, Sun and Moon are two brothers, Sun is elder while the Moon is younger. Originally the Moon was allotted the duty of lighting during the day time but as he rejected this offer, he was assigned the duty of shining during the night time and since then, it performs its duty during the night time. For eclipse there is an interesting explanation in Sokla Garasia belief system. According to it, when the money lender gets hold of its debtor, Sun or the Moon, it gets eclipse, and as such, it cannot shed light in its entirety, as it should have. When the debt is paid back, it gets free and can shed its light and so as soon as the eclipse takes place, the Sokla Garasia make a loud voice and tall that "please, live the Sun of Moon by the words" (Mel re mel kana vaik).

Festivals

Among Garasias following festivals are observed : (1) Diwali, (2) Utran, (3) Unalo pat amli gujara (4) Holi, (5) Akhatrj, (6) Balev (7) Dahero

Though some of the festivals are similar in name with neighbouring Hindus, but the mode of its celebration is quite different, i.e. the Utran, among neighbouring Hindus is

celebrate it on the first Friday of Gujarati Pausha month and their method of celebration is also quite different.

Early in the morning troupes of Garasia youths go in the forest or neighbouring field in search of a small sparrow like bird called Deo Chakli. They catch it by chasing it, some time for miles together. On Sun rise it is brought to the house of village headman, who keeping its mouth on eastern side, gives it a prasad of ghee and lets it free by chanting the slogan of Devi God. After getting free, and flying, where it seats decides the fate of the coming years. If it seats on a green tree, it is welcome by great cheers, but if it seats on stone of dead tree, it is considered ill-omen and they try to avoid such places at least in the vicinity to avoid this catastrophe.

In the afternoon the game of Gedi dada is played by the youth of the village by forming two parties and having its boundaries at long distance, some time a kilometre away for the goal. Exactly at sun set, with the slogan of gedjjana vargeddja hata (the vengeance of the sticks go with the stick). All the sticks used in the games are thrown along with about two kg. ball, specially prepared from a goat's skin by the local specially for the occasion.

At night the visit is made to the village deity, where traditional thakru dance is made and traditional utaran songs are sung. The prasad of specially prepared holiday (totha from maize and gram is offered to all of them.

In the same way, the celebration of Diwali and Holi are also different from neighbouring Hindus in many respects. In neighbouring Hindus, the Diwali lights are lit in the evening, among Garasias, it is only in the early morning of new year day. The Morajjy also lit in the early morning. The Garasia villagers, young and old, go from house to house, visiting each and every house, in traditional attires and singing the gujar git, in praise of the great hero of the traditional Garasia songs - Navlo Gujar.

Garasias consider Diwali as one of the most sacred and important festivals. As among other neighbouring Hindu castes, it falls on the last date of Ashwin month. On that day the Garasia sing a long song, describing a long story of Bhoja Gujar and Valu Kueran, the two characters of great social importance. This song is sung in accompaniment of a musical instrument called Duaku. Early in the morning, an earthen lamp called mirraju is lit, and boys, alongwith the newly wedded bridegroom visit each house of the village. During the whole day, all the male villagers visit each and every household of the village singing, Hadake song. The owner of the house offers them, boiled rice and wine. It continues till the fall of night on the new year day.

Unalo Pat is the day when the villagers go for community hunting. It is an event of past now, as no games are available in the area.

Akhatrij is the festival which is an important event for all the agriculturist, including neighbouring agriculturists Hindu castes, and on that day the plough is taken out, bullocks are given some special food or fodder and as a beginning on an auspicious day, two or three round along with the plough is taken in the field.

On Raksabandhan day, nowadays, a brahmin from the neighbouring village comes and tie the raksha to some farmers of his acquaintance, from whom he gets some present in cash or kind.

On Dashera formerly the male buffalo was offered to the Goddess, the practice, which is totally abandoned in the whole area.

Holi is the most colourful festival of the Garasias which falls on the full moon day of the Falgun month. Playing with a drum and kudi, the Garasia keeping a stick in their hands, dance in a circular form, outside the drummers circle. The Holi is lit in the early morning of the full moon day and after offering it a coconut and putting inside the holi a full pot of water,

and four rounded of earth, which represent the four months of the monsoon. The dance continues till morning. In the afternoon all the villagers again assemble on the place of Holi. All the new married couples take three rounds around the Holi and offer coconuts. Goods and coconuts are brought by each and every household of the village. These coconuts can be taken away by the boys of the village to some other place, to eat them away. Each and every household brings 500 gms. of jeggary or a coconut. These are mixed up and distributed among the villagers gathered on the occasion.

Conclusion

As Garasia is a tribe which follows its customary laws in many aspects of its daily life even today, it should be left to follow it in its contemporary form.