

THE GHASI

(A Scheduled Caste Community of Orissa)

TRIBAL AND HARJAN RESEARCH-CUM-TRAINING INSTITUTE
BHUBANESWAR

CONTENTS

Foreword	..	I
Editor's Prologue	..	III
I. INTRODUCTION	..	1
II. DEMOGRAPHIC COMPOSITION	..	5
III. HABITAT AND SETTLEMENT	..	11
IV. ECONOMIC LIFE	..	17
V. SOCIAL ORGANISATION	..	27
VI. LIFE-CYCLE RITUALS	..	39
VII. CASTE COUNCIL	..	47
VIII. RELIGIOUS LIFE	..	57
IX. STRATEGY FOR DEVELOPMENT	..	63
Bibliography	..	68
Map	..	69

FOREWORD

The Scheduled Caste Communities which are considered the most exploited group in Indian society traditionally suffered from the stigma of untouchability, social injustice and economic exploitation. As a national policy, Government of India adopted protective legislation to safeguard the interests of the Scheduled Castes and this has been enshrined in the Constitution of India (Article-46). It was envisaged to make special provision for the Scheduled Castes in particular to integrate them in the national mainstream of culture by transforming their low social status and thereby promoting self-reliance, dignity and freedom from servitude. While formulating and implementing programmes for their socio-economic development comprehensive knowledge about such communities was considered indispensable.

In the Tribal and Harijan Research-cum-Training Institute, the present monograph based on empirical study on the Ghasis, a denotified/ ex-criminal/ vulnerable community of Orissa State, has been brought out.

The principal objectives of the publication of such monographs were to acquaint the readers with the socio-economic and cultural life of the people studied; to document the way of life of the people in a changing canvas and to evolve appropriate strategies for development of the community. In the absence of any comprehensive published materials the monograph on the Ghasi, I hope, would certainly go a long way to help planned development intervention, besides its academic significance.

The author and the editor deserve special thanks for their painstaking efforts in bringing out this volume.

Bhubaneswar
Date 3-8-1991

(R. M. Senapati)
Commissioner
Harijan & Tribal Welfare,
Orissa.

EDITOR'S PROLOGUE :

The book titled, the Ghasi (A Scheduled Caste Community of Orissa) written by Shri Trilochan Sahoo, Research Assistant of T. H. R. T. I. and at present, Special Officer, Hill Kharia and Mankidia Development Agency, Jashipur, Mayurbhanj, is a monograph. Although currently problem-oriented studies enjoy precedence over monographic studies in the contextual frame work of the master social science discipline – Social Anthropology, the significance and relevance of monographs containing rich ethnographic details cannot be lost sight of. The monograph with nebulous aspects on socio-economic and cultural fabrics of a community is not only essential from academic point of view but also from the view point of its practical applicability. Besides being useful for the research scholars in the line, a standard monograph is an invaluable asset for the policy makers, planners, development administrators, social scientists, technical experts and the like, especially when we think of formulating and implementing various development programmes for uplifting the socio-economic conditions of group of people in an area.

In consonance with the decision of the T. H. R. T. I., Advisory Board, the present monograph on the Ghasi, an erstwhile denotified/specially vulnerable community in Koraput district was taken up by the Institute and the initial attempt for the study was made as early as in July 1986.

Caste in India is a complex social institution based on social differentiation and social inequality. The cardinal characteristic features of caste, such as endogamy, traditional occupational specialisation and mutual repulsion are unique and the caste system divides the society into five-fold (*Varna*) divisions – The first three (*Brahman*, *Kshatriya* and *Vaishya*) being known as the *dwija*, *the twice-born*, *the fourth (shudra)* and the fifth referred to as *avarna* (untouchables) on the basis of purity/pollution. In the orthodox and traditional sense, the caste hierarchy was based on ritual status and system was rigid and closed; but during the post-independence period due to the impact of modernization, industrialization and urbanization, the system tended to become less rigid and relatively open and the social hierarchy was a summation of statuses – both ritual and secular. Therefore, write-up on any caste-group-clean/touchable and/or unclean/untouchable is to be studied and analysed in the context of the changing canvas, as discussed above.

The scheme of chapterization of the present book shows that there are 8 chapters in addition to the introductory one and they are intended to highlight various aspects, such as the demographic composition, habitat and settlement, economic life, social organisation, life-cycle rituals, caste-council, religious life and the strategy for development.

The Ghasis with their traditional social stigma of untouchability were declared as one of the denotified communities of Koraput district in Orissa State. At present, their outlook, life-style, ethos, ideologies and world-view have undergone transformation. The author has meticulously described and analysed the Ghasis as a Caste-group enlisted in the Scheduled Castes list of the State, having 3 sub-castes with specific nomenclatures and pursuing distinct occupations. The demographic composition besides giving local pictures discusses their distribution in different districts, literacy position and educational levels. The chapter on habitation and settlement is lucid and shows the physical placement of the Ghasi houses in the multi-ethnic context, justifying the spatial segregation of their houses. The chapter on the economic life presents the occupational distribution in rural/urban contexts, possession of land holdings and landlessness, the sexual division of labour, etc.. The following chapter on social organisation not only discusses the social hierarchy at the local (village) level, but also the relative status among the sub-castes. They have not emulated the Brahmanical gotra system, but possess the *Killis* which are exogamous and totemistic bearing animate and inanimate symbols. Further, aspects of family, kinship and ritual kinship have been discussed thoroughly. The chapter on life-cycle rituals, although precise, is meaningful. The chapter on caste-council unravels the politico-jural nexus of the Ghasis and describes the role of the Naik, as the secular head and also includes some of the pertinent case - studies and causes leading to ostracization. The section of the inter-caste relationship expresses aspects of purity/pollution, transactions, rendering of services, commensality etc.. The Ghasis vis-a-vis other Harijan caste-groups and the interaction among the sub-castes focus important dimensions of the study. The chapter on the religious life of the Ghasis shows a complex religious behaviour with the prevalence of the Hinduism and animistic beliefs and practices. In the concluding chapter the author has made an attempt to evolve strategies for development of the community.

I record my special thanks to Shri T. Sahoo, the author of this book for undertaking strenuous field work, for submitting the report and for sparing time to revise the report amidst his busy schedule as the Special Officer of a Micro Project.

I express my gratitude to Shri R. M. Senapati, I.A.S., Commissioner-*cum*-Secretary to Government, Harijan & Tribal Welfare Department for his kind encouragements and advice in publishing this volume.

The monograph was prepared under the guidance of Dr. Ch. P. K. Mohapatra, Deputy Director. The report has been edited by me. While editing, I have received enormous help and cooperation of my colleagues, Dr. Ch. P. K. Mohapatra, Deputy Director, Shri B. Chowdhury, Deputy Director and Shri B. B. Mohanty, Research Officer and I express my sincere thanks to them.

K. K. Mohanti

INTRODUCTION

In British India the Criminal Tribes Act was passed in 1871 to control the behaviour of the criminal groups. The criminal groups were shown as a separate category for the first time in 1871 Census. However, some of them were listed as Scheduled Caste and in some States they were included as Scheduled Tribes.

D. N. Majumdar has mentioned that in Orissa Dandasi, Jayantira Pano, Telega, Dom, Ghasi and Paidis were listed as ex-criminal tribes (Majumdar, 1958). The report of the All-India Inquiry Committee in 1949 listed 136 besides the various mixed groups declared as such (Simadri, 1979:8). The total population of these ex-criminal tribes was estimated for all the States taken together at 3.5 million. Of this number Orissa province recorded 74,762 such persons. Under the C. T. Act 1871 the tribes who committed criminal activities were categorise as criminal tribes and organised criminality as a fact was recognised as criminality. According to the Act Ghasia of Koraput were indentified as criminals. This Act was in force until 1952. The so called criminal tribe was denotified and set free in 1952. Since then the legal stigma on the Ghasi has been removed although the social stigma in fact has been continuing update.

PREVIOUS ACCOUNTS OF GHASIS

According to R. V. Russell and Hira Lal, the Ghasis are a low Dravidian caste of Orissa and Central India who cut grass, tend horses and act as village musicians at festivals. The word Ghasia is derived from *ghas* (Grass) and means a grass-cutter (Russell & Hira Lal, 1975: 27). Sir H. Risley states that, "they are a fishing and cultivating caste of Chota Nagpur and Central India, who attend as musicians at weddings and festivals and also perform menial offices of all kinds" (Risley, 1891: 277). In Bastar they are described as an inferior castes who serve as horse keepers and also make and mend brass vessels. They dress like the Maria Gonds and subsist partly by cultivation and partly by labour. Colonel Dalton speaks of them as "An extraordinary tribe, foul parasites of the Central India hill tribes and submitting to be degraded even by them. If the Chandals of the purans, though descended from the union of a Brahmin and a Sudra, are the lowest or the low, the Ghasis are Chandals and the

people of further south who are called parians are no doubt from the same distinguished lineage" (Dalton, 1960: 325). Orissa District Gazetteers Koraput (1966) records that the Chitra-Ghasis are class of artisans, whose name meaning "Ghasis who make artistic things" bears reference to their occupation. They are employed in the manufacture of brass and bell-metal jewellery which is largely worn by the tribes inhabiting the district and are generally found attached to the Khond and Savar villages. They are a polluting class. These people are no longer regarded as untouchables and have no connection with the Ghasis by whom they are regarded as superior. They have been enumerated in the category of other Backward classes (Senapati, 1966: 91).

According to Patnaik five Scheduled Castes out of 93 in Orissa are identified as denotified communities and they are the Adhuria or Oriya Domb, Dandasi, Ganda, Ghasi and Jayantira Pano. They were formerly carrying on antisocial activities and their propensity towards such activities had made them different from other Scheduled Castes (Patnaik, 1984: 36).

The Ghasis of Koraput district are one of the denotified communities of Koraput district. Their population as per the census 1987 is 6668 in the district and their approximate number of households is 1334. They are usually drummers and bamboo workers and are also engaged as sweepers and scavengers.

Like the Hadis and the Ghasis who carry on unclean occupation are found in greater concentration in urban and industrial areas. These communities sweep the streets and clean the garbage boxes, drains and latrines. Some of them are employed in Municipality offices; as supervisors, peons and perform other types of low grade services. In general, they are poor and live together in crowded places and slums under insanitary conditions. *Dialect* : The Ghasis speak colloquial Oriya language which is akin to the Desia dialect spoken by the rural people of Koraput district. They use Oriya script. A few Ghasis who have received modern education have been able to read and write in English and Hindi.

The Caste and its division :

The Ghasis occupy a low position in the Hindu social structure. They are termed as a specially vulnerable group in Koraput district. The other two such groups in Koraput district are the Aduria Doms/Oriya Doms and Madaris, but unlike them the Ghasis are sweepers and scavengers.

The Ghasis of Koraput and the Hadis of other districts of Orissa are from the same social scale since both the communities do sweeping and scavenging. Here mention may be made that out of every four Ghasis of Nowrangpur town one is a sweeper.

The Ghasi caste is divided into 3 sub-castes. They are Ghoda ghasi, Chitra/ Ghadua Ghasi and Khapara/ Maitra Ghasi. The Ghoda Ghasis are grass cutters and agricultural workers. The Chitra Ghasis are rural artisans and petty traders of their indigenous products. The Maitra Ghasis are sweepers and scavengers.

The origin of the Caste is obscured. In the fringe of the Towns there are slums for the Ghasis and in villages they have separate hamlets. Most of the Ghasis living there are socially segregated, poor, illiterate and downtrodden. Their immediate need is food and education. Most of them keep themselves engaged throughout the day in manual labour. The prospect of obtaining labour for the next day is uncertain. In each sphere, like social position, economic status, housing conditions and educational standards the Ghasis are at the bottom. The Ghasis were said to be potential criminals which the present generation do admit. But currently they have given up the heinous act of criminality which brought forth defame to the whole community during the past days and continued to affect the present generation. The disabilities of these people are manifold of which the prime one is untouchability with its disadvantages.

CHAPTER II DEMOGRAPHIC COMPOSITION

In independent India the Ghasis are found in eight States as Scheduled Castes and in two States as Scheduled Tribes. According to 1971 Census, there are 1,52,561 Ghasi population in India out of which 74,629 are males and 77,932 are females. Among the States, Bihar records the highest number of Ghasi population. The State-wise Ghasi population in India with their constitutional status is furnished in the Table-1.

TABLE-1
Demographic composition of Ghasi in India (1971).

Sl. No.	Name of the State	Constitutional status	Population		
			Male	Female	Total
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
1.	Andhra Pradesh	Sch. Castes	658	798	1,456
2.	Bihar	Sch. Castes	36,083	37,528	73,611
3.	Madhya Pradesh	Sch. Castes	912	1,083	1,995
4.	Maharashtra	Sch. Castes	215	195	410
5.	Orissa	Sch. Castes	28,235	28,095	56,330
6.	Tripura	Sch. Castes	40	32	72
7.	Uttar Pradesh	Sch. Castes	1,144	1,049	2,193
8.	West Bengal	Sch. Castes	7,342	9,152	16,494
TOTAL		...	74,629	77,932	1,52,561

According to 1971 Census there are as many as 4,08,211 persons enumerated as specially vulnerable groups in Orissa. The districtwise and groupwise population figure of the people are presented in Table-2. The table explains specially vulnerable groups of people, like Sweepers, Scavengers, Adhuria Dombs or Oriya Doms, Ganda, Ghasi, Dandasi, Jayantira Pana, Kela/Bajikar/Sabakhia/Mundapota, Ghantra, Ghusuria and madari of Orissa. Koraput district which marks the highest number of such population (i.e. 1,65,836) represents the specially vulnerable groups, such as Sweepers, Scavengers, Adhuria/Oriya Dombs, Ghasi and Madari.

Koraput district, the homeland of the ex-criminal Ghasi, accommodates 5,361 souls of the Ghasi population who form a specially vulnerable group.

TABLE-2
Districtwise population of Specially Vulnerable groups in Orissa (1971 Census).

Sl. No.	Name of the District	Sweeper/ Scavenger	Adhuria Dom/ Oriya Dom	Ganda	Ghasi	Dandasi	Jayantira Pana	Kela/ Bajjkar/ Sabakhia/ Mundapota	Ghantra	Ghusunia	Madari	Total
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)
1.	Cuttack	17,906	...	...	...	...	1,000	8,937	...	2,090	...	29,933
2.	Puri	2,773	...	...	...	...	..	1,530	...	1,000	...	25,203
3.	Balasore	11,037	...	...	...	...	...	3,655	...	1,500	...	16,192
4.	Ganjam	21,269	...	...	...	45,245	...	527	913	...	1,044	68,998
5.	Koraput	384	1,59,441	...	5,361	...	...	...	...	...	650	1,65,836
6.	Sambalpur	18,519	...	...	...	...	...	...	1,352	...	...	19,878
7.	Sundargarh	7,369	...	12,569	...	...	...	102	...	...	...	20,067
8.	Mayurbhanj	9,958	...	...	...	...	...	140	...	...	...	10,198
9.	Konjhar	5,522	...	...	...	...	...	428	...	...	...	5,950
10.	Dhenkanal	23,024	...	...	...	...	...	628	1,093	...	...	24,745
11.	Bolangir	10,201	...	...	...	...	...	130	...	...	...	10,331
12.	Kalahandi	7,044	...	...	...	...	...	114	...	...	...	7,158
13.	Phulbani	4,670	...	...	...	...	...	59	...	...	...	4,729
ORISSA		1,57,661	1,59,441	12,596	5,361	45,245	1,000	16,250	3,358	4,590	1,644	4,08,211

The total population of the Ghasi in Orissa constitutes 1.99 per cent of the State's total Scheduled Caste population as per 1981 Census. Their demographic composition in the State according to 1981 Census is given in Table-3. The table shows that there are 77,132 Ghasi population in Orissa and of them 38,690 persons are females and 38,442 are males. Further, 29.62 per cent of the State's total Ghasi population is living in urban areas and 70.38 per cent in rural area. This indicates that the Ghasis are found in large number in rural areas. The population growth rate of the Ghasi in Orissa over the last decade is 36.93 per cent. The population trends of the Ghasi in Koraput district shows a dissimilar population phenomenon when compared with that in Orissa State as in both the cases the urban living Ghasi outnumber their rural counterparts. From Table-3 it is found that there are 6,668 persons in Koraput district which constitute 8.64 per cent of the State's total Ghasi population. The male-female ratio of the Ghasi population in the district is 1000:1078. The number of ruralite and urbanite Ghasis in the district are 4,442 and 2,226 respectively.

TABLE-3
Demographic composition of Ghasi in Orissa (1981 Census)

Sl. No.	Name of the District		Total	Male	Female
(1)	(2)		(3)	(4)	(5)
1.	Sambalpur	R	16,522	8,234	8,288
		U	7,706	3,735	3,971
		T	24,228	11,969	12,259
2.	Sundargarh	R	4,144	2,112	2,032
		U	4,036	2,051	1,985
		T	8,180	4,163	4,017
3.	Keonjhar	R	2,834	1,439	1,395
		U	1,621	813	808
		T	4,455	2,252	2,203
4.	Mayurbhanj	R	4,134	2,123	2,011
		U	1,069	537	532
		T	5,203	2,660	2,543

(1)	(2)		(3)	(4)	(5)
5.	Balasore	R	155	82	73
		U	40	18	22
		T	195	100	95
6.	Cuttack	R	443	221	222
		U	49	26	23
		T	492	247	245
7.	Dhenkanal	R	3,241	1,656	1,585
		U	301	163	138
		T	3,542	1,819	1,723
8.	Phulbani	R	7,280	3,630	3,650
		U	1,143	557	586
		T	8,423	4,187	4,236
9.	Bolangir	R	7,204	3,595	3,609
		U	2,429	1,180	1,249
		T	9,633	4,775	4,858
10.	Kalahandi	R	3,388	1,693	1,695
		U	1,781	909	872
		T	5,169	2,602	2,567
11.	Koraput	R	4,442	2,173	2,269
		U	2,226	1,036	1,190
		T	6,668	3,209	3,459
12.	Ganjam	R	269	128	141
		U	429	199	230
		T	698	327	371
13.	Puri	R	262	121	113
		U	14	13	1
		T	248	134	114
ORISSA		R	22,844 (29.62)	11,237	11,607
		U	54,288 (70.38)	27,205	27,083
		T	77,132 (100.00)	38,442	38,690

The demographic composition of the Ghasi in the study areas shows a similar trend with that in Orissa State. Table-4 reflects that there are 160 Ghasi households with 625 persons in the study areas. As per their domicile 32 households with 107 persons are living in villages and 128 households with 518 population are inhabiting in urban areas. On the other hand, the Ghasis are highly concentrated in the study town and they have a sparee figure in the study village. The survey in the study area records the family size of the Ghasis, as 3.91. The same is 3.34 in the study village and 4.05 in the town under study.

TABLE-4
Demographic composition of Ghasi in study area.

Sl. No.	Area	No. of surveyed households	No. of Population	No. of literates	Family size
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
1.	Rural	32	107	43	3.34
2.	Urban	128	518	197	4.05
TOTAL		160	625 (100.00)	240 (38.04)	3.91

According to 1981 Census 19.13 per cent of the Orissa's total Ghasi population are literates. The literacy among the Ghasi females is 7.67 per cent and among the males 30.98 per cent. In comparison with literacy rate among the Ghasi in Orissa the corresponding literacy rate in the district level of Koraput is estimated at 15.21 per cent. Table-5 given below shows the educational level among the Ghasi in Orissa as well as in Koraput district as per 1981 Census.

TABLE-5
Educational level of the Ghasi (1981 Census).

Sl. No.	Level of education	ORISSA			KORAPUT		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
1.	Literates without educational level.	6,979	1,991	3,970 (60.81)	431	117	548 (54.04)

The demographic composition of the Ghasi in the study areas shows a similar trend with that in Orissa State. Table-4 reflects that there are 160 Ghasi households with 625 persons in the study areas. As per their domicile 32 households with 107 persons are living in villages and 128 households with 518 population are inhabiting in urban areas. On the other hand, the Ghasis are highly concentrated in the study town and they have a sparee figure in the study village. The survey in the study area records the family size of the Ghasis, as 3.91. The same is 3.34 in the study village and 4.05 in the town under study.

TABLE-4
Demographic composition of Ghasi in study area.

Sl. No.	Area	No. of surveyed households	Population	No. of literates	Family size
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
1.	Rural	32	107	43	3.34
2.	Urban	128	518	197	4.05
TOTAL		160	625 (100.00)	240 (38.04)	3.91

According to 1981 Census 19.13 per cent of the Orissa's total Ghasi population are literates. The literacy among the Ghasi females is 7.67 per cent and among the males 30.98 per cent. In comparison with literacy rate among the Ghasi in Orissa the corresponding literacy rate in the district level of Koraput is estimated at 15.21 per cent. Table-5 given below shows the educational level among the Ghasi in Orissa as well as in Koraput district as per 1981 Census.

TABLE-5
Educational level of the Ghasi (1981 Census).

Sl. No.	Level of education	ORISSA			KORAPUT		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
1.	Literates without educational level.	6,979	1,991	3,970 (60.81)	431	117	548 (54.04)

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
2.	Primary level	2,688	517	3,205 (21.72)	249	56	305 (30.09)
3.	Middle standard	1,913	303	2,216 (15.02)	110	24	134 (13.21)
4.	Matric/ Secondary.	218	22	240 (1.63)	17	4	21 (2.07)
5.	Higher Secondary.	51	4	55 (0.37)	2	...	2 (0.20)
6.	Other higher education	62	3	65 (0.44)	3	1	4 (0.39)
TOTAL		11,911	2,968	14,752 (100%)	812	202	1,014 (100%)

Regarding the levels of educational standard among the Ghasis of Orissa 60.81 per cent are literates without any educational level, 21.73 per cent upto primary level, 15.02 per cent upto middle standard, 1.63 per cent upto matric or secondary standard, 0.37 per cent upto higher secondary level and 0.44 per cent upto other higher and technical educational level. The corresponding figure of levels of education standards among the Ghasis in Koraput district are 54.04 per cent, 30.9 per cent, 13.21 per cent, 2.07 per cent, 0.20 per cent and 0.39 per cent respectively.

The survey in the study area records 38.04 per cent of literacy among the Ghasis.

CHAPTER—III

HABITAT AND SETTLEMENT

No where in the districts of Orissa except in Koraput, the Ghasis are identified as denotified (ex-criminal) community. As such, the area of Koraput district is to be viewed here as coterminous with the area of habitation of the Ghasis in question. Koraput, the homeland of the Ghasis is enriched with various plants, animals and mankind which provide ample scope for studies for the Biologist and Social Scientist.

Orissa history records that Koraput was formed into a district under the province of Orissa on the 1st April, 1936. The district adopted its nomenclature after the name of its headquarters, Koraput.

Koraput district lies between 70°48'N and 20°7'N latitude and between 81°24'E and 84°2'E longitude. Its boundaries extend in the North upto Raipur district of Madhya Pradesh and Kalahandi district of Orissa, in the South upto Vishakhapatnam and East Godavari districts of Andhra Pradesh, in the West upto Bastar district of Madhya Pradesh and in the East to Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh and Ganjam district of Orissa. According to the Surveyor-General of India it has an area of 9,864 square miles.

The district has an irregular shape roughly resembling the letter 'Y'. The vast country with its geographical diversities can be divided into four distinct divisions each of which are separated by natural barriers. The Tahasils of Bissam Cuttack, Gunupur, Rayagada and Kashipur form the first natural division. It consists of two fertile valleys of the rivers Nagavali and 'vamsadhara' running over levels varying from 300ft. to 1,200ft. and with large tracts of forests, a tangle of green hills and a few patches of arable land. This is the country of the most fertile lands and good forests with better communication facilities. The second natural division which is a 3,000ft. plateau extends from Kashipur Tahasil to the border of East Godavari district in Andhra Pradesh is 110 miles long with an average width of 40 miles. The main features of the plateau are the line of high hills. The plateau consists of an undulating tableland profusely scattered with hundreds of little hills which are either covered with low shrubs or disfigured with patches bared by shifting cultivation. The plateau drains westward into the basin of Godavari through the tributaries, Indravati, Kolab and Machkund.

The third natural division, which has the largest concentration of the Ghasi population, covers almost the entire Nawarangpur Subdivision having an elevation of 2,000ft. The plateau extends far to the west into Bastar and in the north into the district of Raipur of Madhya Pradesh. In the south it falls away by stiff Ghats into the Malkangiri Tahasil. In the northern part of its eastern boundary it slopes down to the Kalahandi district lying 1,000ft. below it, and in the extreme north-east of Nawarangpur sub-division there is a region known as the pannabeda Mutta lying some 500ft below the level of the rest of the plateau and separated from it by Ghats and thick-forests. The Nawarangpur sub-division is in the main flat country except for the forests in west of Jayapur Tahasil with its low hills. Elsewhere the plains are only broken by a few isolated hills. The plateau is draining westward through the rivers, Kolab and Indravati and northward through the river, Tel. Due to heavy rainfall fine growth of sal and other timbers are noticed throughout the whole plateau. The Nowarangpur and Umakot Tahasils became extremely dry in hot weather and men and beast have to go far miles in search of water. The plateau forms the principal granary of the country.

The fourth natural division of the country is Malkangiri Taluk which contains the valley of the Machkund river and is a flat plain declining from north to south with heights varying from 800 to 400ft. The entire area is covered with jungle inhabited by primitive tribes. The soil is poor in quality.

Soil type :

The soil type of the district is mostly red soil except for a small patch in the north-east which is laterite soil and another patch in the north-east is laterite and black cotton soil. The rocks by and large contain deposits of manganese, mica and graphite.

Hill system & rivers :

The hill system of the country lies on a section of the great line of the Eastern Ghats. A number of mountain ranges and isolated hills rise out of these table-lands. Some of the outstanding ones are as follows. The highest peak, Deomali (5486ft.) occurs in the 3000ft. plateau. Some others are, Turia Konda (5244 ft.) Polamakani Parbat (5201 ft.), Meyamali Parbat (4,921 ft.), Karnapadi Konda (4,879 ft.) etc. The country has five large rivers, such as the Vamsadhara, Nagavali, Indrabati, Kolab and Machkund out of which the Machkund is famous

now on account of the location of the Hydroelectric Project. Next in importance comes the name of Tel river. The forest of the country covers an area of 5,521 square miles and is of the northern tropical semi-evergreen type. Teak and sal are predominantly found in these forests. Forests of bamboos and coarse grass are commonly seen in Malkangiri area.

Wild animals & birds :

Wild animals, such as deer, black sloth bear, tiger, panther, Leopard, buffalo, bison, elephant, wild dog, hyena and Jackal etc. are found in the forest areas of the country. The varieties of birds commonly found in the country in different seasons are given below :

Jungle fowl	Round the year
Green pigeon	
Doves	
Peacocks	Particularly during
Parrots	Winter/ Summer.
Hornbill (<i>Kochila Khai</i>)	
Wood pecker	
Vulture	
Skylark	
Swallow	
Bhrungaraj	During Rains/ Summer
Khagalday	

Climate and Rainfall :

The climate of the major parts of the area which lies in the plateau region to the west of eastern Ghats is more like that of the Deccan plateau than that of the eastern region. But due to elevation and its situation in the north-east corner of the deccan plateau, the climate is milder.

December is the coldest month of the year with a mean temperature of 11.2°C (52.2°F). May is the hottest month during which the temperature sometimes reaches 38°C (100°F). During the monsoon the weather is cool and pleasant with day temperature being nearly the same as during early cold season.

The average annual rainfall is 1552 mm. (59.92"). During the monsoon season, 79 per cent of the annual rainfall is revived. July and

August are the wettest months for the country. On an average there are 82 rainy days in the country in a year.

In this country, humidity of the air is high especially in the monsoon and post monsoon months. In other months, afternoons are comparatively drier. During summer, winds are generally light and blow from direction mainly between the south and the west. During the monsoon winds strengthen and blow from south-westerly directions. The country is affected by depressions from the Bay of Bengal, particularly in September and October causing high winds and wide spread rain. A few thunder storms occur in the pre-monsoon months. Fogs occur occasionally in the months of November and December.

Mines :

The district is rich in mineral deposits. They are iron, limestone and manganese etc. Besides, graphite in small quantity is found near Rayagada. deposits of china-clay in Koraput plateau. Kaolin in Nowarangpur, Rayagada, Gunupur Subdivisions and pottery-clay deposits in the vicinity of Jeypore.

The study area :

The study area comprises Nawarangpur township and Bikrampur village and its adjacent villages of Nawarangpur Police Station and Subdivision. The study town of Nawarangpur is situated at a distance of 567 km. and 68 km. away from the State Capital of Orissa, Bhubaneswar and the district headquarters at Koraput, respectively. It is bounded on the east by Kalahandi district of Orissa and a portion of Koraput district, on the west by bastar district of Madhya Pradesh on the South by Koraput Subdivision. Bikrampur, the main study village is about 15 km. away from the Nawarangpur town. It comes under Nawarangpur Police Station, Nawarangpur Block and under the Nawarangpur ITDA. The Turi river and Guntat river streams which are flowing on the south east and south west directions of the village are the tributaries of the river Indrabati. On the north, the village is bounded by Nilagiri Reserve Forest and on the South by Siuni village near which the rivers Turi and Guntat join to form the river "Indrabati".

Ghasi Settlement :

The Ghasi community form a part of the conglomerations of multi-ethnic groups of people who usually reside in basties with their own group identification. In the Ghasi country due to inaccessibility the

settlements are isolated from the settlements of the neighbouring high caste Hindus and Tribals.

The Ghasi settlements in Nawarangpur township are found in ward No. 1, 5 and 6 which come under the Notified Area Council. The sweeper colony adjacent to the N.A.C. office is included in the Ward No. 1 of the Nawarangpur N.A.C. In this colony rent-free accommodations are provided to 8 Ghasi sweepers serving under N.A.C. A portion of Bada Ghasi Sahi comes under Ward No. 5 and the rest under Ward No. 6. There both the Ghoda and Chitra Ghasis reside under the roofs of tiny huts. In Medri Sahi another section of the Caste, called Khapara Ghasi are found while Dasharapada Sahi has been the residence of the Chitra Ghasis. Almost all Ghasis are distributed in the periphery of the N.A.C. area. These basties (Hamlets) are physically isolated from the other basties of the town. Very recently under the influence of the urbanization process a few houses of clean caste people are noticed here and there around the Bada Ghasi Sahi. But unlike the Nawarangpur township the Ghasi basties and basties of the other Harijans are adjacent to each other and the basties of clean caste people are found lying separated from that of the Harijans. The Harijan basti of Bikrampur village is located at the outskirts of the village.

The Ghasi hutment is a group of mud-walled, straw thatched, short height windowless houses that cluster together in two rows or sometimes, scattered on the fringe area of the town or village. The surroundings are full of dirt and filthy stagnant water. The surrounding is unsuitable for healthy living. The public drains which pass through the Ghasi basties of the township are used as place for defecation. The pigs kept by the Ghasis are found browsing on these very spot which cause the place dirtier and unhygienic.

CHAPTER IV

ECONOMIC LIFE

As per earlier ethnographic accounts the traditional occupation of the Ghasis is cutting grass and tending horses. In the past, they were employed by the Kings, Zamindars and Landlords as care taker of their horses. They were cleaning stables, cutting grass for the horses and tending them. After the abolition of Zamindari system, end of kingship and achievement of independence and due to the processes of modernization and urbanization various changes in the traditional occupation of the Ghasis were noticed. In the past, they were professional criminals and now they have given up these untoward practice. The Ghasis have switched over to other allied occupations which are varied in nature. The new occupations of the Ghasis are scavenging, removal of carcasses and nightsoil, drum-beating, rickshaw pulling, wage earning and petty business. On the basis of the occupations, the Ghasis are subdivided into three broad social groups. They are Ghoda Ghasis, Khapara or Maitra Ghasis and Ghodua or Chitra Ghasis. Those who retain the traditional occupation of cutting grass and are now engaged in agricultural operations and wage earning along with drum beating are called Ghoda Ghasis. The Khapara or Maitra Ghasis are engaged in the menial acts of scavenging, removal of dead animals and night soil. The Ghoda or Chitra Ghasis are a sub-caste of artisans who are engaged in the manufacturing of brass and bell-metal jewellery and trading on these indigenous products. They deal with their articles in weekly markets. These articles have a good demand in the locality, especially by tribals.

According to 1981 Census in Orissa, 36.84 per cent of the total Ghasi population form the working force who are engaged in different occupations. Of these total workers 13.53 per cent are cultivators, 44.34 per cent are agricultural labourers, 17.70 per cent do scavenging, tanning and carrying of hides and skins, 21.43 per cent do other services and the remaining 2.99 per cent do allied occupations, like live stock rearing, fishing, hunting plantation, mining and quarrying, household

industry, construction works, trade and commerce, transport, storage and communication etc. Hence, it indicates that the Ghasi in Orissa depend on various occupations to eke out their living.

The findings of the study do agree with the above views. As per the survey in the study area, out of the total 160 surveyed Ghasi households, 41 are engaged in cultivation and agricultural labour, 32 in scavenging, 67 in business, 10 in playing music, 3 in rickshaw pulling, 2 in service, 1 in butchery and 4 in other works. Occupations, like cultivation and wage earning have been adopted by almost all the Ghasi households (i.e. 29 out of 32) in the village area. In the town area, occupations widely accepted by the Ghasis are 66 households in business, followed by 31 households in scavenging and 10 households in band party whereas allied occupations like rickshaw pulling is done by 3 households and butchery and service by one each only. Details of occupational distribution of Ghasi households are given in the Table-6.

TABLE-6

Occupational distribution of Ghasi households in the study area.

Sl.No.	Types of occupations	Nos. of surveyed households in study area		
		Rural %	Urban %	Total %
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1.	Cultivation and wage earning.	29 (90.7)	12 (9.4)	41 (25.6)
2.	Scavenging	1 (3.1)	31 (24.2)	32 (20.0)
3.	Rickshaw Pulling	...	3 (2.3)	3 (1.9)
4.	Business	1 (3.1)	66 (51.6)	67 (41.9)
5.	Butchery	...	1 (0.8)	1 (0.6)
6.	Service	1 (3.1)	1 (0.8)	2 (1.2)
7.	Musician	...	10 (1.8)	10 (6.3)
8.	Other activities	...	4 (3.1)	4 (2.5)
TOTAL		32 (100.0)	128 (100.0)	160 (100.0)

Regarding the possession of land by the households in the study area it has been noticed that 134 households are landless and only 26 are land

owning households. According to table-7 out of the 26 land owning households 10 have land within 1.00 Ac. 10 households have 1.00 Ac. and below 2.5 Ac. and 2 households have above 2.5 Acs.

TABLE-7

Possession of land by the Ghasi households

Sl.No.	Study area	No. of surveyed household	No. of landless household	Size of land holdings			
				within 1.00 Ac.	1.00 to 2.5 Ac.	2.5 & above	Total
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
1.	Rural	32	7	9	10	6	25
2.	Urban	128	127	1	...	...	1
Total		160	134	10	10	6	26

Since most of the land ownig families i.e. 25 out of total 26 are from Rural area they have taken up cultivation as their main occupation. In the urban area almost all, except one, families are landless and thus seek various occupations, like scavenging, music, rickshaw pulling, business and allied activities.

The Ghoda Ghasis are cultivators, agricultural labourers and petty traders. Some of them are still now cutting and selling grass to earn their bread. A man engaged throughout the day in cutting grass earns Rs.6 only. The cultivators and agricultural labourers are mostly found in village areas. The economic status of these people is very low. A few Ghasis who have small chunks of lands are doing cultivation in traditional method. Their poverty and ignorance do not allow them to follow scientific methods of cultivation. The income of peasant Ghasis is not substantial and sometimes they work as agricultural labourers.

Small business of different goods and commodities is the main source of income for 67 Ghasi households which feed 625 persons. The weekly markets in the locality play a pivotal role and provide wide scope to these petty readers from the Ghasi community. The market complex of the locality has been so fairly designed that the 7 weekly markets sit one after another round the week within a radius of about 30 kilometres from the Nowrangpur township. Besides the Nowrangpur town has its daily market which facilitated the transactions of the petty traders by

immediate disposing of goods purchased from weekly markets on the very day or day before. The statement below shows the name of the weekly markets, the day it sits, its type, distance in kilometer from Nowrangpur and the communication link.

STATEMENT-1

Sl. No.	Name of the market	Day of sitting	Nature	Distance in K.M. from Nowrangpur	Communication link
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
1.	Nowrangpur	Monday	Weekly	0 K.M.	...
2.	Dongarbhija	Tuesday	Weekly	16 Kms.	Fair weather road
3.	B. Malliguda	Saturday	Weekly	16 Kms.	Fair weather road
4.	Semla	Sunday	Weekly	18 Kms.	All weather road
5.	Maydalpur	Wednesday	Weekly	20 Kms.	All weather road
6.	Anchalguda	Friday	Weekly	22 Kms.	Fair weather road
7.	Dabugaon	Thursday	Weekly	30 Kms.	All weather road

The main occupation of both the Ghoda and Ghodua Ghasis is small business of buying and selling of vegetables, fowls, goats, pigs and other local produce. The petty traders visit interior villages and weekly markets to purchase commodities at a cheaper rate and sale them at a higher rate in the township. Some of them have capital which they invest for the transactions. The traders who have no capital, solely depend on the local money lenders for their working capital. The local money lenders charge Rs. 10 as *Kalantra* (Interest) for one week per Rs. 100. When asked about his economic trasactions, one informant of (age 30 years), Dasarapada Sahi of Nowrangpur town replied, "Sir, we are poor. We do not have any landed property, nor even any assets except few aluminium utensils. I do'nt have capital, so I have been borrowing Rs. 300 from a local money lender and for that I am paying Rs. 30 as interest in each week. Both my wife and myself utilise this amount in business. My wife is engaged in the business of vegetables, I am dealing with fowls, goats and pigs. We visit interior tribal villages and weekly markets at Dongarvega on Tuesday, Maidarpur on Wednesday, Dabugaon on Thursday, Anchalguda on Friday and Maliguda on Saturday to purchase vegetables, fowls, goats and pigs etc. We sell all these commodities in the daily markets of Nowrangpur and specially at weekly market at Nowrangpur which sits on Mondays.

During winter season we are getting profit which varies from Rs. 800 to Rs. 1,000 per month, but during rainy season our profit is reduced to a very insignificant amount. Even sometimes we sleep without taking food."

A significant number of Ghasi businessmen have got loan with subsidy amount through different Governmental schemes. But some of them have misutilised the loan amount and once again returned to the clutches of the unscrupulous money lenders. This situation prevails both in rural and urban settings.

In Nowrangpur township one Ghasi man is working with seven Domb men as butchers in the slaughter house. They get daily wage of Rs. 8 with a contract of no work no payment.

A few person of this economic group eke out their livelihood by rickshaw pulling in towns. Some of them have their own rickshaws while some others do not own. Those who do not have rickshaws of their own pull others rickshaws on hire basis. The study reveals that rickshaw pulling as a main vocation fetches a variable income of Rs 10 to Rs. 25 per day.

The Khapara or Maitra Ghasis are largely concentrated in the town area. They are salaried servants of the N. A. C. as Sweepers. Their salary varies from Rs. 500 to Rs. 1,000. There are Khapara Ghasi families from which a couple is working as Sweeper and getting Rs. 1,500 per month. No doubt Khapara Ghasis who are employed as Scavengers and Sweepers have assured income but this is not the case with the Ghoda or Ghodua Ghasis. From the economic point of view the Khapara Ghasis are sound but socially they are considered as to have a very low status. For their work even their own caste people (the Ghoda and Ghodua Ghasis) hate them.

Pig rearing has been secondary occupation for most of the Ghasis and it fetches an additional income to them. Though pig rearing is less expensive and they mostly live on human dung and roots of the grass. The rearing of pigs is a source of conflict with neighbours as the pigs make the surroundings dirty and occasionally destroy the crops in the field. A few Ghasis have kept poultry birds to supplement their income. The economic condition of the Ghasis is very low. The survey among the Ghasi of Nowrangpur reveals that 65.62 per cent of households are found below poverty line whereas among the Ghasis of Bikrampur village the

said figure comes to 70 per cent. In both the areas, the rest of the Ghasi households are marginally above the poverty line.

Most of the Ghasis are landless. As per the last survey made among them less than 5 per cent of their families possess land and that too not exceeding at the maximum 3 acres per family. Further, as many as 20 per cent of their families are lacking housing facilities. In the absence of such facilities these people have been accommodated in the houses of their relatives either affinal or consanguineal.

As mentioned earlier most of the Ghasis are small traders. The economic transactions of the Ghasi traders revolve round the weekly markets of Nowrangpur town and dally markets of the town. The weights and measures system used by the Ghasis in their business transactions is as follows. The metric system of weights and measures came into force from 1-4-1962 throughout Orissa. In spite of introduction of such a system, the traditional system of weights and measures are still in vogue among the Ghasis. The following statement indicates the traditional system of weights and measures with their corresponding conversion to metric weights and measures used by the Ghasis.

STATEMENT-2

Sl. No.	Units of customary measures	Its conversion to Kg./ Grams	Conversion to liters
1.	Ada	600—800 Grams	Roughly 800 ml.—900 ml.
2.	Buda ($\frac{1}{2}$ Ada)	300—400 Grams	400 ml.—450 ml.
3.	Sola ($\frac{1}{3}$ Ada)	150—200 Grams	200 ml.—225 ml.

The British measures of linear distances are in common use by Ghasis. But the cubit measures (Length from elbow to end of middle finger) and fathem were in very much use by the Ghasis in measuring small lengths. Now the people of the town areas and its nearby villages are gradually getting familiar with the metric system. In the interiors the traditional measures are still prevailing.

Division of Labour :

Life and work are inseparable. One must have to do works for sustaining life of self and society. As others do, the Ghasi society agree to this principle. According to the principle of division of labour in Ghasi society, women look after the rearing and caring of children and perform

household activities. Compared to males, females are entrusted with less strenuous activities in various economic pursuits. Of course, some activities are performed by both sexes and therefore, the sexual division of labour is not very rigid in such cases. As for example, a Ghasi male performs the works, like cooking, taking care of children and cleaning houses, utensils, etc. during delivery period of his wife and a female does chopping of wood during the absence of her husband. Statement below explains the types of works distributed and done among the males and females in Ghasi society.

STATEMENT-3
Division of Labour

Sl. No.	Nature and Types of works	Sex assigned works	Remarks
1.	Household chores :		
	. Construction/ repairing/ maintenance of house.	Men	Often assisted by women and children.
	. Mud wall making	Men/ Women	...
	. Roof thatching	Men	...
	. Plastering walls and floors	Women	...
	. Sweeping/ cleaning houses/ washing clothes	Women	Rarely done by men and children.
	. Cleaning cowshed/ goat pen/ pigstay	Women	...
	. Browsing and feeding domestic animals.	Women/ Men	Also done by children
	. Cooking and serving foods/ cleaning utensils.	Women	...
	. Fetching water	Women	Often done by girls
	. Marketing	Men/ Women	...
	. Collecting chopping of fire wood.	Men/ Women	...
	. Collection of leaves, cowdung and preparation of cowdung cakes for fuel.	Women/ Children	...
	. Care taking of children	Women	...
	. Paddy husking	Women	...

2. **Agricultural pursuits :**

. Ploughing	Men	Taboo for women
. Digging and levelling earth.	Men	Taboo for women
. Manuring	Men	...
. Sowing paddy	Men	...
. Transplantation	Men/ Women	Assisted by children
. Weeding	Men/ Women	...
. Watching corn fields	Men	...
. Harvesting	Men/ Women	Assisted by children
. Carrying food for the worker in the field.	Women/ Children	...
. Wage earning	Men/ Women	Hard works not done by women.

3. **Other economic pursuits (Previous)**

. Grass cutting	Men	...
. Tending/ care taking of horses	Men	...
. Manufacturing of brass ornaments.	Men	...
. Selling of ornaments	Men/ Women	...
. Stealing/ Criminal activities(Now).	Men	...
. Cutting and selling grass	Men	...
. Scavenging/ Sweeping	Men/ Women	...
. Removal of carcasses	Men	Women refrain to do
. Removal of night soil	Men/ Women	...
. Drum beating	Men	Taboo for women
. Rickshaw pulling	Men	Not done by women
. Butchery	Men	Women refrain to do
. Petty business	Men/ Women	...
. Midwifery	Women	Restricted for women
. Brick making	Men	...
. Masoning and stone cutting works.	Men	Rarely done
. Earth work	Men	Also women except digging.
. Construction of roads etc.	Men/ Women	...

4. Rites and Rituals :		
• Worshipping Hindu deities	Men/ Women	Observe principle of untouchability.
• Worshipping ancestor	Men	Taboo for women
• Sacrificing animals before ancestral gods.	Men	Taboo for women
• Cleaning village street during festive occasions/ communal rituals.	Men	...
• Cleaning/ plastering with cow dungs/ decorating religious places.	Women	Exclusively do
• Negotiation in the marriage	Men/ Women	...
• Arrangement and preparation for marriage.	Men/ Women	Cooperate each other
• Penting/ dressing the bride for marriage.	Women	...
• Officiating as priest in marriage	Men	Caste chief officiate
• Dancing and singing	Men/ Women	Sometimes children
• Care of the expectant mother/ helping in delivery.	Women	Specially midwife does
• Disposal of corpse	Men	Women refrain doing this.
• Mortuary rites	Men	Women refrain doing this.
5. Miscellaneous works :		
• Attending caste council	Men	Women refrain doing this.
• Attending village/ Panchayat meeting.	Men	Women often attend as party being called for.

CHAPTER V

Social Organisation

Caste Hierarchy :

The caste system is the anti-thesis of the principle that all men are equal, for there is hierarchy of castes, based on the principle that men neither are nor can be equal "*(India's Social Heritage, 1943, 1976 in India, by L. S. S. O. Malley)*". The structure of caste society is hierarchical in nature. All castes found in a region are not of the same status which invariably oppose equality in social, economic and religious spheres. The position of the Ghasis as a caste in the local hierarchy can be found through the study in Bikrampur (the main study village) village and the approximate hierarchy is given below.

Before describing and prior to dealing with the local hierarchy a look into the community-wise households, their occupations, positions and constitutional status of the people of Bikrampur village, are necessary and they are given in Table-8 and in corresponding figure-1.

TABLE-8

Sl. No.	Name of the Community with English equivalent	No. of house-holds	Occupation		Constitutional status	Traditional position in the local hierarchy
			Traditional	Current		
1.	Brahman bearing surnames, Mishra, Dash and Tripathy.	22	Priesthood	Priesthood	Other Castes	High
2.	Panda Brahman	2	Cultivation	Cultivation	Ditto	Do
3.	Vaishnab	8	Religious beggar	Sacred thread making & Religious. Cultivation	Ditto	Do
4.	Chasa/Paika (Cultivator/Warrior)	40	Warrior/Cultivator	Cultivation	Ditto	Middle
5.	Mali (Flourist)	30	Flourist	Cultivation	Ditto	Do
6.	Kumuti	1	Trade	Trade	Ditto	Do
7.	Gouda (Cowherder)	50	Caretaker of cows.	Cowherding	Ditto	Do
8.	Bhandari (Barber)	3	Hair dressing	Hair dressing	Ditto	Do
9.	Bhotada	130	Agriculture and Forest collection.	Agriculture and Forest collection.	Scheduled Tribes	Do
10.	Paraja	1	Ditto	Ditto	Ditto	Do
11.	Soura	6	Ditto	Ditto	Ditto	Do
12.	Dhoba (Washerman)	1	Cloth washing	Cloth washing	Scheduled Castes	Low
13.	Domb	60	Musician Agricultural labour.	Diversification of occupation.	Ditto	Do
14.	Converted (Christian Dombs)	3	Ditto	Ditto	Ditto	Do
15.	Ghasis	33	Grass cutters and caretaker of horses.	Musician	Ditto	Do
16.	Muslim (with Chasi wife)	1	Trade	Trade	Muslim	Do

FIGURE-1

Approximate Local hierarchy

Position in the hierarchy	Hindu Varna system	Tribals	Muslim	Christian
I. Brahman (Priest)				
	(a) Mishra, Dash & Tripathy.			
	(b) Panda			
	(c) Vaishnab			
II. Khatriya (Warrior)				
III. Chasa/Paik				
	Vaishya (Trader)			
	(a) Mali			
	(b) Kumuti			
IV. Shudra (Servant)		Bhotada		
	(a) Gauda	Soura		
	(b) Bhandari	Paraja		
V. Ex-Untouchables				
	(a) Dhoba		Muslim	Converted
	(b) Domba		(with	Christian
	(c) Ghasi		Ghasiani)	Domb.
	(d) Ghoda Ghasi and Chitra Ghasi			
	(e) Khapara Ghasi			

According to Table-8 and its corresponding figure-1 there are altogether 16 different communities found in the village. Of these 11 communities are Hindus, 3 tribals, one each belonging to Muslim and converted Christian Dombs. It shows that Bikrampur is a multi-ethnic village. The caste Hindus including the Ghasis are the largest group with 225 households in the village, followed by tribals with 157 households and 4 converted Christians and 1 Muslim. The Caste Hindus of the village may be broadly divided into two categories. They are : (I) the high caste Hindus comprising castes under four varnas, such as Brahman, Khatriya, Vaisya

and Shudra categories and (II) the *avarna* categories, the ex-untouchables comprising the Scheduled Castes, like the Dhoba, Domb and Ghasi.

The village is dominated by caste Hindu population. As such, the ritual status of each Hindu Caste in the village is ranked following the principle of purity and pollution associated with its norms, values, customs and sanctions relating to occupation, comensalities, marital ties and rituals. The villagers ascertained the position of the Brahman Caste at the apex of the village hierarchy. Whereas Dhoba, Domb and Ghasi are given a low order in the ranking. When asked the Scheduled Caste people admitted such fact of ranking. Other castes who are found in the intermediary position unanimously agreed about their position in the local hierarchy. The tribals share the same rank with the Shudra categories. The converted Christians share an equal social position with the Hindu Dombs and so also the Muslim who kept a Ghasi woman was enjoying similar status as the Ghasis.

Hierarchy among the Scheduled Castes :

The *avarnas* comprising all the Scheduled Castes of the study village maintain a hierarchical system among themselves. On the basis of their access to the higher caste Hindus the Doba caste is considered the highest caste among the Scheduled Castes of the village. Next to Dhoba comes Domb caste, followed by Ghasi caste. The Dhobas claim comparatively higher position than the Ghasi and Domb Castes because the latter are beef eaters. On the contrary, the Ghasi refute the claim of the Dhobas as the former consider the work of the latter as most defiling. As such the Ghasis observe strict commensal rules when interacting with the Dhobas. The status of the Domb caste is undoubtedly higher than the Ghasis since the latter never challenges the position of the former.

Another interesting and striking point in the findings of the study is the social inequalities among the Ghasis. There is prevalence of inequality over the caste status among the Scheduled Castes and also among the sub-castes of the Ghasi caste. The Ghasi is divided into three sub-castes, such as Ghoda Ghasi, Ghodua/Chitra Ghasi and the Khapara/Maitra Ghasi. On the basis of their occupations the three sub-castes also have no equal social status. The Ghoda Ghasi are grass cutters and agricultural workers. The Ghodua Chitra Ghasis are an artisan group who engage

themselves in making and selling of articles of brass, lead and rolled gold ornaments. The Khapara/ Maitra Ghasis are sweepers and scavengers and doing menial jobs in the N.A.C.

All these three sub-castes are known by outsiders in the generic term, viz. the Ghasi. But according to the Ghasis, the Ghoda Ghasi and Ghodua/ Chitra Ghasis share equal social status which is higher than that of the Khapara Ghasi who do more polluting works. The sub-castes like Ghoda Ghasi and Ghodua Ghasi observe strict principles of endogamy and commensal rules when interacting with the Khapara/ Maitra Ghasis. Breach of any such rules results in rendering themselves as outcaste.

The other area of social differentiation among the Ghasis is based on the fact of beef eating. All Ghasis are not beef eaters. Those who do not eat beef consider themselves as clean and claim a higher social position than that of those who eat beef. Some of the Ghasis have given up the habit of beef eating after a visit to Lord Jagannath at Puri and Tirupati temple. All these are observed to raise their social status.

Social Organization :

The social organization of the Ghasis consists of four significant institutions such as the caste, sub-castes, killi(lineage) and family. The caste as a wider social group covers its smaller social entities and all these are maintained through regulation of marriage. As such the main functions of the caste are to govern the principle of commensality, the principle of marriage and its regulation, to some extent of the means of livelihood. A member of the caste uses the caste name as his surname which is a suffix to his name. As for example a man, Dambaru by name, for official purposes is known as Dambaru Ghasi. But most of the Ghasis having been inspired by the Gandhian concept "Harijan" now preferred to the surname Harijan instead of Ghasi.

The division of the Ghasi caste into three sub-castes (Ghoda Ghasi, Chitra Ghasi and Maitra Ghasi) is due to the adoption of diversified occupations of pure and impure categories.

Identification of such division is based on the principle of commensality that exist among them.

Next to sub-caste the smaller social entity of the social organisation is the *killi* (lineage). During the study among the Ghasis it was found that

there are different killis. They are *Naga*(Cobra), *Kuldeep*(Lamp), *Shagada*(Cart), *Bagha*(Tiger), *Beshara*(Dove), *Semilli*(Flower), *Surya*(Sun), *Kachima*(Tortoise), *Khura*(Knife), *Suna*(Gold) and *Barah*(wild boar). It appears that each killi is named after animate and inanimate symbols. These totemic symbols have close connections with these killis since the latter consider the former as their Gods. These killis are exogamous. The members of each killi are descended on the male line from a common ancestor. Therefore, inter-marriage among them is considered as incest. A group of Ghasi families who can trace their relationship as the descendant of a common ancestor form a killi for all socio-religious purposes. Though all the family members of a killi are not necessarily from the same place they observe all the socio-religious rites and rituals, like birth rite, death rite. Members of the killi worship the killi-God together. The family under a killi on whose behalf the rituals are observed is given presentation in cash and kind by the other member families of the same killi.

The members of a killi gather atleast once a year to worship their killi God for their wellbeing. Each killi of the Ghasi caste has a specific day of annual worship of the killi God. Besides, the killi Gods are worshiped in the specific occasions of new rice eating and mango eating ceremonies. On those occasions new mango rice is first offered to the killi God and ancestors by the eldest males of the each member families of the killi and then eaten by other members. The following statement shows the name and symbol of the killis, their Gods, annual day of worship and nature of the worship with remarks.

STATEMENT

Name of the killi with symbol	Religious taboo	Annual day of worship	Nature of worship	Remarks
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1. <i>Naga</i> (Cobra)	Killi members do not kill cobra.	<i>Naga Chaturthi</i> of the Oriya month Kartika.	Male head of the killi offers coconut, ripe bananas, incense sticks to the killi God through a Telugu man	killi members promises to tell the truth while mentioning the name of the killi to which they

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
			who places these offerings near a hole where Naga resides.	actually belong.
2. Cart	When hear the sound of a running cart the killi members do not eat anything.	The day of <i>Gamha purnima</i> (fullmoon)	A picture of a cart is drawn and offerings are made before the picture by the male head of the killi.	Ditto
3. <i>Kuldeep</i>	When the light of the lamp goes out the members of the killi stop eating.	The day of new rice eating.	The Male head of the killi worships before a burning lamp.	Ditto
4. <i>Bagha</i> (Tiger)	Members do not kill tiger.	<i>Magha purnami</i>	Picture of a tiger is drawn and worshipped by the male head of the killi.	Ditto
5. <i>Beshra</i> (Dove)	Do not kill and eat dove.	In the month of Chaitra.	...	Ditto
6. <i>Khura</i> (Knife)	...	On the day of <i>Dasahara</i> .	Goat/ Cock sacrificed.	Ditto
7. <i>Semilli</i> (Flower)	Do not cut the <i>semilli</i> tree.	In the month of Chaitra.	Male head of the killi worships before a <i>semilli</i> tree.	Ditto
8. <i>Suna</i> (Image of God Shiva).	...	Each <i>Magha saptami</i> in a year.	Visit to the temple of Shiva. Cocks are sacrificed at the fringe	Coconut, banana, flower and incense sticks.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
			of the settle- ment villages.	
9. <i>Barah</i> (Wild boar)	Do not kill boar	<i>Decpabali</i> October. March and April.	...	Ditto

Family :

Family is the smallest and social unit of the caste organization of the Ghasis. Splitting of joint families and emergence of nuclear families in large number have been a common affair among them. The increasing number of nuclear families are noticed among the Ghasis.

The Ghasi family consists of members by consanguinity and often by adoption in case of no offsprings to perpetuate the family. A nuclear family among the Ghasis consists of spouses and their unmarried children, whereas joint families among the Ghasis, which are very rare, consist of parents, their married sons, unmarried sons and daughters and their grand sons and daughters. The average family size in the Ghasi community is 3.94. After marriage a daughter leaves her parental family and joins the family of her husband whereas a son establishes his own family with his wife and lives separately from his parents. The head of the family is the eldest male member. The property of the family is inherited through the male line. The issueless parents adopt a son for perpetuating the family. In this case the adopted son inherits the family properties. The Ghasi parents having no male issue bring a boy as *Gharjamain* (son-in-law in house) for succession of the family. The adopted son or the *Gharjamain* lives in his adopted father or father-in-law's families and enjoys all the rights and duties as a family member.

The family in the Ghasi society is patriarchal and patrilineal. Among the Ghasis both men and women are found to be earning members who contribute to their family income and resources.

Ghasi Kinship terminology :

Terms of relationship	Terms of reference	Terms of address
Father	Bua	Bua
Mother	Aya	Aya
Elder brother	Dada	Dada

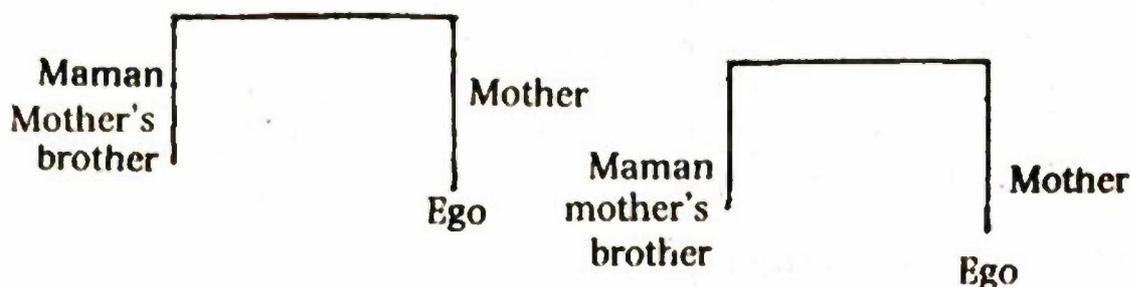
(1)	(2)	(3)
Younger brother	Sandada	By name
Wife's elder brother	Susura	Asa babu
Wife's younger brother	Sala	By name
Husband's elder brother	Susura	Through a mediator
Husband's younger brother	Deura	O Nina
Husband's elder sister	Sasu	Maa
Husband	Manus	HO
Wife	Maidi	GO
Elder sister	Bai	Bai
Younger sister	Vauni	Nani
Husband's elder brother's wife.	Bai	Bai
Wife's younger brother's wife.	Nani/ Bai	Nani
Father's elder brother	Badabua	Badabua
Father's younger brother	Kaka	Kaka
Father's elder brother's wife	Bada Aya	Bada Aya
Father's younger brother's wife.	Nani/ Maa	Nanimaa
Father's elder sister	Ata	Ata
Father's younger sister	Ata	Ata
Mother's brother's wife	Ata	Ata
Father's sister's husband	Maman	Maman
Mother's brother	Maman	Maman
Husband's father	Maman	Maman
Father's sister's Husband's son.	Mena Vai	Mena Vai
Father's sister's Husband's son's wife	Nani (younger) Bai (Elder)	Nani Bai
Mother's brother's daughter	Mena Nani	Mena Nani
Wife's younger sister	Sali	By name
Wife's elder sister	Shasu	Through mediator
Father's father	Dada	Dada
Mother's father	Aja	Aja
Father's mother	Aai	Aai
Mother's mother	Bai/ Nani	Bai/ Nani
Husband's mother	Ata	Ata
Wife's mother	Ata	Ata

(1)	(2)	(3)
Husband's elder sister	Shasu/ Bai	Bai
Husband's younger sister	Nani	Nani
Grand son	Pu Nati/ Jhi Nati	By name
Grand daughter	Pu Natni/ Jhi Natni	By name
Wife's elder sister's husband	Shadhu	Shadhu
Wife's younger sister's husband	Shadhu	Shadhu
Husband's younger brother's wife.	Nani	Nani
Daughter-in-law's father	Samadi	Samadi
Daughter-in-law's mother	Samadin	Samadin
Elder brother's wife	Bou	Bou
Younger brother's wife	Bauri	Bauri
Elder sister's husband	Bhata	Bhata
Younger sister's husband	Juain	Juain
Daughter-in-law	Buari	Buari
Son-in-law	Juain	Juain

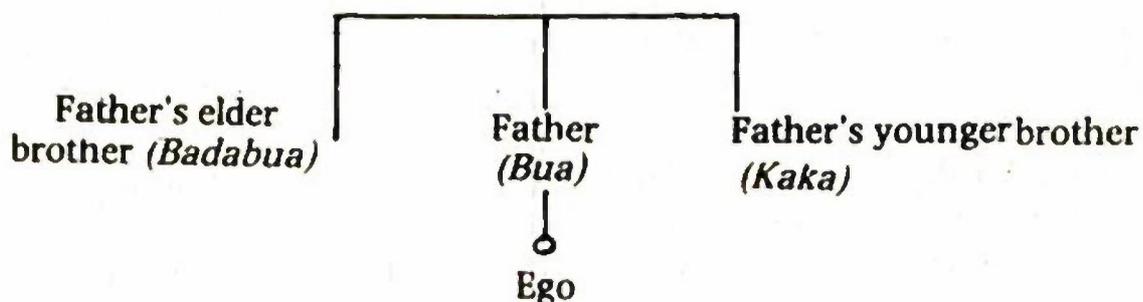
According to their kinship system a person has two sets of relations. the consanguineal relatives and the affinal relatives.

As mentioned in the above kinship terminology the Ghasis use both classificatory and descriptive kinship terminology as exemplified with the application of the same term "ata" in addressing wife's mother, husband's mother, Father's elder sister, Father's younger sister and Mother's brother's wife. The use of descriptive terminology is exemplified with the application of separate terms when addressing two relatives of the same sex but different age grades, viz., they address father's elder brother as *Badabua* and father's younger brother as *Kaka*. Further they use the classificatory terminology, "*Maman*" to refer mother's brother, husband's father and wife's father which also indicates the prevalence of

cross-cousin marriage among the Ghasis. The use of classificatory and descriptive terminologies are explained in the following diagrams.



1. Diagram showing use of classificatory terminology and cross-cousin marriage of ego.



2. Diagram showing the use of descriptive terminology.

Joking relationship :

Among the Ghasis joking relationship exists between a man and his wife's younger sister (*Sali*), wife's younger brother (*Sala*) grandson (*Pu-nati/Jhi-nati*), grand daughter (*Pu-natin/Jhi-natin*), mother's father (*Aja*) and father's mother (*Aai*). On the basis of this relationship sororate marriage is approved by their society. Likewise a woman jokes with her husband's younger brother (*Deura*) and younger sister (*Nani*).

Avoidance relationship :

Avoidance relationship exists between a man and his younger brother's wife. They shun each others physical touch, touching of dress and beds. Nor even they exchange any things from hand to hand and address each other and when necessity arises they take the help of a middleman to get the work done. So also is the relationship between a man and his daughter-in-law and mother-in-law.

Ritual kinship :

The Ghasis develop ritual kinship with people of castes lower and higher than themselves. In the beginning of such a relationship sweets, new dress and *Nirmalya (Mahaprashad of Lord Jagannath)* are exchanged among the relations. As stated by the Ghasis this *Mahaprashad* relations may be established between friends, father-son, mother-daughter etc. This relationship be made within the caste and outside it. The relations of this type share each others sorrows and joys within the limit of caste principles.

Relation through adoption :

Ghasi couple with no male issue adopts a son from their near relations. In case of adoption preference is given to the brother's or sister's son. If no such relation is available then a boy is invited to marry the daughter of the couple and stay in the later's house as son-in-law in house (*Gharjmai*). In both the cases a special rite is observed at the house of the person who adopts a son or son-in-law in which the caste approves the relationship. All concerned are given a feast with drinks. From the date of the approval the adopted relation continues to live as a family member. Thereafter, he inherits the family property after the death of the couple. The importance of an adopted son lies in the fact that the adopted relation is expected to worship the ancestral spirits after the death of his adopters.

names for the baby. On this day the maternal grand parents and other relatives of the baby are invited. The maternal grand parents come with rice and fowl and other relatives come with money to share and participate in the name giving ceremony. In the evening an elderly female person helps the baby to hold a piece of fried chicken and utters the suggested names before the baby. If the baby's palm touches chicken's mouth or shoulders at the time of uttering of a proper name that name is selected for the baby. This ceremony is performed with a feast and drink and then dance and song accompanied by music of the local drummers in which the male and female participate till late night.

Pre-puberty rite :

The pre-puberty rite is known as "*Baldharani*" among the Ghasis. The '*Baldharani*' rite is arranged by the parents when their girls attain the age of ten or so. On a suitable day the parents decide to observe the rite. On the eve of this occasion the maternal uncle of the girl is specially invited. The lineage members and other relatives are also invited. In the morning of the fixed day for the rite the services of a drum-beater is requisitioned. A group of women go to the nearby tank to fetch water in an earthen pitcher. The girl seats in wide faced large bamboo basket. The maternal uncle of the girl slits her two side buns with the help of a blade. Then she is anointed with oil and turmeric paste and given bath in the water brought from the tank.

After bath she puts on a new saree and seats in an altar. She is blessed by the relatives with the sprinkling of sun-dried rice mixed with coins of small denomination.

Puberty rite:

At the age of twelve plus, when a girl attains her menarche, she is kept secluded in a room and segregated from the touch of others till her menstrual period is over. The pollution continues for a period of seven days. On the seventh day she anoints oil and turmeric paste over her body and takes purificatory bath. In the evening friends and relatives are invited for a feast. The rite is observed with the entertainment of group dance and songs of men and women to the tune of music played by the local drummers. The celebration of a girl's puberty rite makes her fit to be a prospective bride in the society. With the sprouting of mustache and beard a boy gets recognition as a prospective groom.

CHAPTER-VI

Life Cycle Rituals

The life cycle rituals of the Ghasis are observed through the socio-cultural events, like conception, birth, adulthood, marriage and death within the span of one's life time. Pregnancy is socially approved and considered a blessing for married women in the Ghasi community. Conception is noticed through the physical changes, cessation of menstruation, vomiting and subsequently the swelling of the abdomen and the breasts of women. After being confirmed about pregnancy the expectant parents usually desire to have a male baby. After five months of conception, the couple stop sexual intercourse as they think that there is every possibility of miscarriage.

For them abortion is a crime. When an unmarried girl conceives her male partner is compelled to accept her as wife by regularising the marriage. Pregnancy of girls among the Ghasis may get social approval but sterility of women is universally condemned. Barren women are considered inauspicious and their presence is avoided in socio-religious, rituals and auspicious journey. It is believed that when a person in the family dies, he or she is reborn being conceived in the womb of another member of the family. The rebirth of ancestors is confirmed if the pregnant women of the family dreams of him or her.

As they follow the patrilocal rule of residence and the daughter leaves her family of orientation soon after marriage, they prefer a son or a male child for old age parental care.

During the later period of pregnancy women refrains from the hard work, fetching of water from the well, Visiting cremation ground, and taking of parched rice.

Elderly women usually help in the delivery process. Birth pollution continues for a period of 21 days. After birth the baby and the mother take purificatory bath.

On the 21st day the hair of the boby is cut. A Brahmin is consulted. After being informed about the time of the birth he suggests some good

Marriage:

The marriage in the Ghasi community is governed by the principle of endogamy. As such a person of Ghasi community is allowed to marry within his own sub-caste. For example, a Ghoda Ghasi boy marries a Ghoda or Ghodua Ghasi girl but never a girl from Khapara Ghasi. Thus, the sub-castes are also endogamous. They follow the principle which binds a person to marry outside his own gotra or lineage but within his own sub-caste. Monogamous and post pubescent marriage is a very common practice among the Ghasis. Girls at the age of 16 to 18 years and boys at the age of 18 to 20 years are considered fit for marriage. Educated youths marry at a later age. Generally marriages are held in the months of April and May.

Marriage and Concubinage :

The Ghasis practise endogamy. Marriage takes place between the sub-castes of Ghoda Ghasis and Chitra Ghasis. But such a relationship never exists between these two sub-castes and the sub-caste Khapara Ghasis. Still a few exceptional cases of deviation are noticed among the Ghasis. In cases of caste exogamy the Ghasi society does not permit any possibility of pratiloma union. In other words the Ghasi society never opposes anuloma marriages of its members. But there is a rule that the anuloma union of a Ghasi girl with a higher caste boy would be socially approved by paying Rs. 200 to caste council towards expenditure in a feast and drinks.

In the Nowrangpur township and at Bikrampur village pratiloma union of Ghasi with higher caste girl is a rare occurrence. During the field study only one such case was noticed and that is a Ghasi boy from Nowrangpur town married a Domb girl. The Domb girl was ex-communicated. But currently she is a member in the Ghasi caste. There are as many as 9 cases of Anuloma unions of Ghasi girls with other high caste boys. The whole process of the irregular union how it starts, develops and exists is exemplified in the following lines.

Types of marriage :

Marriage by Elopement : A boy falls in love with a girl. Both of them take the consent of each other and plan to slip away from their parental houses. Then they elope and stay in a house of a relative far away from their native place. After missing of the boy and the girl their parents start quarreling and the boy's parents take the responsibility to find out them. After tracing the missing would be couple, the parents return to their

village beg apology to the girl's parents and request to settle the matter on the advice of *nayak*. The marriage is regularised with a feast shared by caste members, friends and relatives. Marriage of this type is called as *Udulia bibha*.

Marriage by Negotiation :

Among the Ghasis the parents take the responsibility of selecting a bride for their son, though the choice of the son is never overlooked. However, currently the consent of both boys and girls are given weightage by their parents in selection of mates. After having confirmed about the consent of the girl's parents, the boy's parents propose to make a visit to the formers house. The boy's parents, accompanied by lineage members, *Nayak*, *Chalan*, and *Majhi*, proceed to the girls house with 5 to 10 liters of liquor, parched paddy(3 manas) rice 5 Kgs. one saree and ornaments like Bangles, necklace and rings. If the girls parents finally offer favourable consent, the mother of the boy puts a vermilion mark on the forehead of the prospective bride and with this marriage proposal gets confirmed. In the next step of the execution of the marriage both the parties consult a local Brahmin for fixing an auspicious day and time for the marriage. On the previous day of the marriage the bride's party arranges a feast for groom and his kins, friends and relatives. On the marriage day the bridal party starts its journey to the bride's house along with the bride price (*Jala*) already fixed in shape of cash and kinds. Usually the bride price consists of a cash payment varying from Rs. 50 to 200, 10 Kgs. of rice, a sheep, 15 Kgs. of molases, parched paddy 20 Kgs. a cow, a saree and vegetables. Though payment of bride-price is very much in practice, the payment of dowry is a recent occurrence among the well-to-do households. The poor Ghasis are gradually coming into the fold of the practice of payment of dowry. On the arrival, the bridal party is given a warm welcome. The brother-in-law carries the groom on his shoulder and escorts him to the house.

The parents help in binding of the right hands of the prospective couples. This action follows the putting of vermilion mark by the groom on the forehead of the girl which culminates in the solemnization of the marriage. The local Dombs play music and the men and women dance and sing to make the marriage ceremony colourful. The groom, who fails to pay the bride price, stay at his would be father-in-laws house for two consecutive months and then return to his own house with his wife.

Next morning the bridal party returns to the groom's house with the bride. On the arrival the groom and the bride are carried into the houses

being seated on the shoulders of the brother-in-law and mother-in-law respectively. The consummation is arranged with the fifth day of the marriage and prior to this groom and bride are never allowed to have contact with each other.

Preferential cross cousin marriage is in vogue among the Ghasis. For the Ghasis it is prescriptive for a man to marry his mother's brother's daughter or his father's sister's daughter. In other words, it governs the principle wherein a girl marries her mother's brother's son or her father's sister's son. In exceptional cases, when the above principle fails in execution of a marriage a man seeks to marry a woman elsewhere through negotiation. Other types of marriage, though not common, are found in the Ghasi society. They are, marriage by exchange, levirate and sororate marriages.

When a suitable match is not found for a Ghasi girl or a Ghasi boy, she or he is allowed to marry her brother's wife's younger brother or his sister's husband's younger sister. The society has no restriction for such arrangement in the marriage whereby brother and sister are exchanged in two families for marital purpose. This is marriage by exchange. Besides, the Ghasi society approves of widow remarriage. Regarding widow marriage the Ghasis give preference to levirate and sororate marriages over other types. In case of levirate type, a Ghasi widow marries her deceased husband's younger brother where as in case of sororate a Ghasi widower marries his deceased wife's younger sister. The practice of widow marriages among the Ghasis has socio-economic advantages over other types of marriages. These are: the young widow or widower is not involved in illegitimate sexual relation with others from within the caste and outside the caste. This keeps the social prestige of the man/woman, family and the caste in question intact. Since she/he is given scope to remarry their sex-union is legalised in the society, and chances of violation of the social norms and values are restricted. Payment of bride price is exempted and the marriage expenses are reduced as in widow marriages no regular rites are performed and the procedure of marriage involves simple and formal acceptance of the couple. This helps a poor Ghasi to marry without the payment of bride-price. Another argument is that the property is not divided and the family does not break up. When a Ghasi widow marries her deceased husband's younger brother, the family property is not divided since there is no brother to seek division of property and break up the family.

Despite all the above advantages of widow remarriage, the Ghasi society neither permits a widow to marry her deceased husband's elder brother nor permits a widower to marry his deceased wife's elder sister. Further, any marital alliance which violates the principle of incest taboo is severely condemned and the couple is ostracised from the Ghasi society.

Irregular Union

Taking advantage of their poverty and being enamoured by the beauty of the girls a few clean caste people and people of other ethnic groups develop several relationship with them. When these clandestine relationship is noticed by the caste people of the girl the boy is forced to marry the girl. The boy pays a nominal penalty (Rs.200) to the girls caste Panchayat and gets the relationship regularised. The girl stays at her parents house and is frequently visited by the husband. Since she is innocent and simple, she thinks herself as being the legal and faithful wife and dreams of a conjugal life. But because she bears the stigma of untouchability, she does not have the guts to come and stay with her husband who belongs to a higher caste. With the passing of some time the boy once again marries elsewhere befitting to his socio-economic status. The innocent girl is left to her miserable fate and leads the life of a concubine of her husband who pays a little amount towards her maintenance. There are instances of hypergamous unions in their caste.

Divorce:

In the Ghasi society divorce is easily approved as there are no restrictions in their caste council. Extramarital sexual affinity, heavy drinking habits, quarrelsome nature, physical and mental tortures are some of the causes of divorce. The consequence of the divorce is the breaking of the Ghasi family. The Ghasi society allows remarriage of the divorcees.

Death rite:

Dead bodies of the Ghasis are disposed of either by cremation or by burial. They observe death pollution for a period of 10 days. The corpse is dressed with new cloth and carried by male relatives to the cremation ground specially meant for the community. All the persons after returning from the cremation ground take bath in the nearby pond and river. For

two days from the death the lineage members of the deceased eat *Pita*, a special food prepared out of neem leaves, potato and rice gruel. After that till the end of pollution period they eat rice and boiled vegetables. During the mourning period the bereaved family and its lineage members do not take oil, turmeric, meet, fish, onion and garlic. On the third day of the mourning period the *raisitala* rite is observed. The eldest son of the deceased comes with rice and curry to the cremation ground. There he offers food to the spirit and collects ashes of the deceased and throws them into river. On 10th day '*Sudhikriya*' is observed and the Nayak, the caste head officiates as priest in the rites. The heads of the sons and grand-sons of the deceased are completely shaved. Other male lineage members are shaved. Then they take bath by anointing oil over bodies. Female members take bath by anointing oil and turmeric paste. Day after this day, a mortuary feast is arranged by the bereaved family for the caste people. For this lineage members, friends and relatives contribute cash and kinds (food stuff).

CHAPTER VII

CASTE COUNCIL

In the region of Nowrangpur Subdivison the caste headman of the Ghasis is known as the *Naik*. But for the sake of convenience the caste council of the region is divided into three units. Each unit of the caste council is formed taking a group of contiguous villages. One *Assistant Naik* is in charge of unit. To run the caste administration over the Ghasi members of the respective group of villages the *Assistant Naik* is assisted by a *Chalan* and *Dhanguda Majhi*. The *Assistant Naik* acts as per the advice of the caste headman of the region.

The office of *Naik* is hereditary and is succeeded by the eldest son of the late *Naik*. The selection of a new *Naik* gets a formal recognition of the court of the King of Nowrangpur. It was a custom of the caste that new *Naik* must pay Rs. 6 to the court and the king must order to tie a turban around the head of the new *Naik* to recognise his selection. The last *Naik* who was recognised by the king of Nowrangpur is the present *Naik*.

At present the *Naik* of the caste council of the region is not only the headman but also in charge of the first unit of it. The first unit of the caste council is consisting of members from a group of villages, such as Bikrampur town, Maliguda, Sindhiguda, Jagannathpur, Tentuli Khunti, Dengarveja, Bagalguda, Munja etc. This unit has no *Assistant Naik* and the *Naik* is assisted by a *Chalan* who also acts as messenger to run the caste administration.

The second unit of the caste council includes members from a group of villages like Mantriguda, Taragaon, Kumuti, Mokia, Papadahandi etc. This unit is under the control of an *Assistant Naik* who is selected by the *Naik*. He works according to the aid and advice of the *Naik* and assisted by a *Chalan*.

The third unit of the caste council includes members from a group of villages like Bikrampur, Kadenga, Belguti, Bajragarh, Maitrigaon, Junapasi etc. and one *Assistant Naik* with the help of a *Chalan* and on the advice of the *Naik* runs the caste administration of this unit.

The *Assistant Naiks* are selected and appointed by the *Naik*. Generally a judicious person with leadership qualities is selected as an *Assistant Naik* of a unit who must be a member of the villages of the unit. The *Assistant Naik* in consultation with the *Naik* selects the *Chalan*.

Breach of caste rules, dispute arising out of the issues of marriage, divorce, illegitimate child, concubinage, adultery, pre-marital sexual relation, cases of developing of magot in the sore in body of a member, out-caste, readmission of a person into the caste-fold and any such cases which goes against the principles and interests of the caste are decided by the *Naik* in the presence of the concerned *Assistant Naik* and *Chalan* and a few judicious elderly persons. The meeting is convened as and when required. The members of the Caste council sit in an open space and under tree. Concerned parties of the case and witnesses attend the meeting. *Naik* presides over the meeting. The meeting starts with a brief statement of the case history about which caste council is expected to deal with. The parties of the case and the witnesses are allowed to give their own statements. The *Naik* and the *Assistant Naik* cross-examine the opposing parties of the case and witnesses to find out the truth. By judging the merits and demerits of a case the *Naik* gives verdict according to the principle of the caste. The final decision of the caste-council is binding upon all members who are involved in the case. Violation of the decision leads to out-caste the culprit.

Small cases of lesser importance are mitigated by the *Assistant Naik* of the concerned unit of the caste council. Any violation of the *Assistant Naik's* decision or serious caste offences are forwarded to the *Naik* of the caste council and there the cases are decided by him.

Besides the functions of a caste head, the *Naik* also acts as a religious head. He presides and officiates as the priest in all rites of the member families of his caste. When he fails to discharge his functions he deposes the *Assistant Naik* of the unit in question. The *Naik* or *Assistant Naik* gets a cloth, food and fees of Rs. 2 when he officiates as key person in observation of ritual of a caste member. The *Assistant Naik* who does the work of the *Naik* in the latter's absence, pays him half of his due. Three case studies are given below to illuminate the functioning of the caste council.

Case Study No.1

In 1982, one Ghasi woman had magot in the sore in her body. The case was brought to the notice of *Naik* of the caste. Her family members

appealed to the caste council for atonement and to be free from the pollution caused by magot in the sore. The caste council decided and ordered her to go through a purificatory rite. She obeyed the decision of the caste council. She underwent a purificatory rite. Her tongue was branded with warm blades of Gold and Silver. Then she drank a mixture of water and cowdung. Lastly, she took leaf of *Tulsi* plant and *Mahaprashad* (*Nirmalya*, dried rice of Lord *Jagannath*, Puri). The headman of the caste presided over the purificatory rite. The caste members were given a feast. With these she was declared free of the pollution.

Case Study No. 2

A male Ghasi in 1986 in Nowrangpur town married a girl from Domb Caste. Due to pressure from the Domb Caste Panchayat the girl's father was bound to cut off all social relationships with his daughter because she married a Ghasi boy of the lower caste. One day, his wife was caught red-handed when she was taking food from the hand of a Khapara Ghasi. When this case came to the notice of Ghasi caste council the latter ostracised the former from the caste. After that he continued to live with his wife who had violated the caste rules. So he too was ostracised from his caste. The day when his old mother died no caste men came forward to remove the corpse for cremation as he was socially ostracised. Since he was a man of low caste nobody other than his own caste members could come to help in removing and cremating the corpse. On that critical juncture, he realised his mistake and begged apology before the caste council. The caste council ordered him to go through the expiation rite alone with his mother's death rite. He promised to obey the caste council order and get his mother's corpse cremated by the help of his caste members. Then he observed the death rite and the expiation rite with the following punishments :

- (1) The couple's head was shaved completely
- (2) Their tongues were branded with warm blades of thin gold and silver.
- (3) The couple drank the mixture of water and cowdung
- (4) The couple also took '*Nirmalya*'
- (5) Drank the feet-washed water of *Naik*
- (6) Arranged a feast for caste members
- (7) Paid Rs. 10 as penalty to caste council.

The *Naik* of their caste council presided over these rites and was paid his dues and with this he was re-admitted into the caste.

Caste Study No.3

All the cases of anuloma marriage and case of concubinage were approved by the caste council during the term of the present caste headman. In all these cases feasts were given to caste members for regularisation of marriages.

The following are various causes which lead to outcaste among the Ghasi.

- (1) Marriage in a lower caste
- (2) Maggot formation in the sore of body of a member.
- (3) Breach of the commensality rules of the caste
- (4) Sexual relationship with lower caste members and birth of illegitimate children.
- (5) A family member when killed by a tiger
- (6) Incest relationship
- (7) Persons found helping or cooperating with these who have been ostracised due to the infringement of the caste rules.

Inter-caste Relationship :

The Ghasi vis-a-vis the clean castes :

The Hindus of the the area where the Ghasis inhabit, are broadly divided into five groups. They are castes belonging to the varnas, like Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaisya, and Shudra and the avarna (untouchables). In the Hindu society the Status of a caste is ranked following the principle of purity and pollution associated with the norms, values, customs and sanctions relating to occupations, commensalities, marital ties and rituals. On the basis of these principles, the Ghasis are given a lower position. The Brahmins do not perform priestly work for the Ghasis. On the contrary, the Ghasis never hesitate to work for the Brahmins. Their entry into the house of the priestly castes is quite unthinkable. A man from the priestly caste if touched by a Ghasi takes a holy bath to restore his purity. Members of other high caste follow the same principle when come in physical touch of a Ghasi. But in the latter case the practice is not as rigorous as it is with the former. Such an avoidance relationship between the Ghasi and high caste Hindus is

supported by the following arguments. The high caste Hindus of the region accuse the Ghasis as the beef-eating Hindus, though all Ghasis do not eat beef. The Hindus worship cows. The Ghasis do believe in Hindu gods and goddesses. They also worship cows on the occasion of *Deepavali*. It was observed in the field that some Ghasis use to salute cows in the morning and evening when they return from grazing. Thus the Ghasis claim themselves as Hindus. On the contrary they also take beef. Probably most of them are poor and thus unable to consume animal proteins, like mutton and chicken, as these are costly. Thus these poor Ghasis largely depend on the flesh of the dead animals like cow and buffalo for which they do not have to pay much. Besides, beef purchased from the market are also available at a cheaper rate which the Ghasis can afford to purchase. However, in no circumstances they kill cows for feasting. Some of them only take flesh of dead animals or animals killed at the slaughter-house. Another reason is that the Ghasis are an ex-criminal community in Koraput district. Though the legal stigma is no more existing, the social stigma continues. The criminality among the Ghasis is no more in the form of a gang affair now. It is reduced to a personal affair of a few criminals. But the ideas that have taken root in the minds of other caste people about the Ghasis are unchanged till today. Thus they hate and avoid the proximity of the Ghasis. As a result the poor people not only face the social discriminations but also do not get any domestic activities in the clean caste Hindu households.

The other reasons which account for the state of pollution among the Ghasis are (1) defiling jobs, like pig-rearing, drum beating, butchery, scavenging and sweeping (2) birth in low caste; and (3) unclean habits and heavy addiction to drinking.

Untouchability though not rigidly practised now is observed in the following manners in the areas of social interaction of the Ghasis with other caste Hindus. In the rural settings the touch of a Ghasi is said to cause pollution to higher caste Hindus. This compels the higher caste Hindus and the neighbouring tribals, like Bhotodas to take holy bath to be free from the pollution. It is rigidly practised among the older people, The enlightened youth hardly experienced such a practice. The women folk of high caste Hindus sincerely observed the practice. In this regard they are found more rigid. Not only the high caste Hindus refused the proximity of a Ghasi but also the former never allowed entrance to their houses by the Ghasis. The priestly caste people never go into the houses of Ghasis. In the past the high caste Hindus were restricted to come to the Ghasi hamlet. So also the Ghasis were denied access to the Bastis of the high caste Hindus.

specially the Brahmins. At present, neither the higher caste Hindus nor the Ghasis observe such a taboo. At the time of need persons of both the communities visit each others bastis. But in no case the Ghasis are allowed to enter into the houses of higher castes. They have access up to the proximity of the gate of a higher caste house. Due to the forces of modernisation a few Ghasi people have been able to enjoy feast alongwith clean caste people in the capacity of invitees to mark the occasion of marriage ceremony, funeral rites and the like. Even as invitees the Ghasis sit separately to enjoy the dining and they throw their own leaf-cups and plates after finishing their meal. In an Urban setting the Ghasi invitees do not have to remove their plates after the dining is over. Besides the Ghasis do not venture an intercaste dining in normal situation. Likewise, some influential rich Ghasis invite higher caste Hindus on special occasions, like marriage ceremonies. For such occasion the venue is arranged in school premises, the food is prepared by Brahmin cooks. The host provides cash and kinds only for the dinner. Since all the arrangements of the dinner is of a special type, the clean caste Hindus and non-Hindus also come to enjoy it. But normally the clean caste people do not dine with the Ghasis. If any one is found dining with a Ghasi, he is ostracised from his own caste.

The Ghasi musicians play music at the marriage processions of other caste people. They are served feast at the end, after the clean caste people are served. Unlike other clean caste people they remove the leaf-plates in which the food is served to them. They clean their own dining place and sprinkle water there to keep the place free from pollution. Besides the feast they are paid according to the pre-fixed rate of remuneration.

The village communities do not allow the Ghasi caste people to have any right over the services of priest, barber and washerman. The violation of the principle causes serious consequences. Therefore, the Ghasis have no other way but to do all the jobs of priest, barber and washerman by themselves. They cut their own hair, wash their own clothes and act as their own priest. However, the process of urbanisation and forces of modernization have brought forth occasional chances for the ruralite Ghasis to avail the services of saloon and that too for limited Ghasis who visit the towns. Needless to say that the services of saloons and laundries are open for the Urbanite Ghasis. But the poor mass is unlucky to avail such facilities due to their inability to pay.

Generally the Ghasis keep themselves engaged during the agricultural operations in the field of the clean caste people. In return the

Ghasis are paid in cash and kinds. When payment is made, whether in cash or kind to the Ghasis the clean caste people avoid physical touch with them.

There is no discrimination relating to shopping in which the Ghasi and the clean castes are involved. They can buy any commodities they want. But the only restriction is that while shopping, the Ghasis stand in one side of the shop and ask for the commodities. They are not allowed to touch any article of the shop of the clean caste people. After payment is made the shop-keeper puts the commodities into the clothes of the Ghasi customers without touching him. In the tea stalls of the clean caste people there are separate seat arrangement for the Ghasis and other Harijans. The Ghasis, when want to have tea and snacks are served in the leaf plates whereas the clean caste people are served in the plates. After taking the snacks the Ghasis throw their leaf-plates. The Ghasis and the clean caste people are served with tea in glasses. But the difference is that after taking tea the Ghasis wash their own glasses whereas the clean caste people do not. Then the shopkeeper puts hot water into the tea glasses of the Ghasis to make these free from pollution, and ready for use by others.

Another area of meeting of the Ghasis and the clean caste people is bathing ghats where there is possibility of transmission of pollution. So the clean caste people and the Ghasis use the same tank but separate bathing 'ghats'. A Ghasi may take bath in the ghats of clean caste people when there is no one around. In the temple tank the Ghasis and other Harijans take their bath in the ghat specially meant for them.

The Ghasis generally do not get a chance to go inside the temples. They go to temple with coconuts and other offerings and pray god. They stand near one side of the gate of the temple and salute the god from there. The offerings of the Ghasis are placed in plate on the floor. The *Pujari* (Priest) performs the *puja* and receives *dakhina*. After offering is made the priest returns the '*Prashad*' to the Ghasis without touching the latter. The ex-Harijan sarpanch of the Bikrampur had entered up to the door-way of the temple. Some other Harijans also followed the ex-sarpanch but none of them ventured to come inside. 'the sanctum sanctorium of the *Shiva* temple where the image of the god is installed. When asked, the *pujari* of the *Shiva* Temple of Bikramput village told, "we are not denying the Harijans entry into temples, rather their own conscience bites them and as a result, they fear to enter into the temple". Unlike Bailey's report about the attempts made by the Board outcastes in Bisipara village of Orissa to

forcibly enter the caste Hindus temples, the Ghasis and the other Harijans of the village have never challenged the clean caste people for any entry into the temple.

The present author's interview with a groups of Ghasi people consisting of aged and educated youths about the temple entry reveals the following fact. The aged people opined, "We do not want to invite any trouble by entering into the temple. Our '*Puja*' articles are accepted, we are getting '*Prashad*' though from a little distance, we are allowed to visit and worship god. This has been a tradition for us. We do not want to break it. Breaking of it is a sin". The opinion of the educated Ghasi youths is of a different type. They said, we are Hindus we should be allowed to enter into the Hindu temple to pray god. Now we are entering up to the door-way of the temple. We desire to enter into the inner side of the temple. But we cannot materialise our desire due to fear of unhealthy situation that might arise in the village. The Ghasis continue to serve the village people, majority of whom belong to clean castes. The Ghasi keep the village streets and surroundings clean on festive occasions. They sweep the daily market and weekly markets. They act as village sweeper and scavenger during fairs and festivals and often when needed. The villagers and traders in the rural markets pay them. The Ghasis remain satisfied whatever amount or kinds they are paid for their labour.

The most important network of social relationship among the Ghasis and other higher caste people is marital relationship. The Ghasi society do not oppose its members marital relationship with any higher caste people. But such a relationship with outside the caste fold gets approval with a payment of fine Rs. 200 in order to arrange a feast to the caste council. A few examples of intercaste marriages in urban and rural areas of Ghasi women have been discussed in the subchapter marriage and concubinage. The author has not come across any incidence of Ghasi man's marriage with higher caste woman other than one Domb woman. Therefore, it appears that the Caste principle of the Ghasis is rigid in case of pratiloma union and the same is flexible in case of anuloma marriage. The anuloma union of the Ghasis with the higher castes produces more adverse effects than better ones. Most of the anuloma unions have shown that the Ghasi girls have been sexually exploited by the higher caste people and the Ghasi women assume the status of concubine. Since this relationship of both the communities starts with the art of love making by either partners of the union, it is difficult to conclude exactly who exploits whom. Sometimes the high caste people take the advantage of the poverty

and beauty and sometimes the Ghasi girls take the advantages of the higher caste man's property and status which results in producing adverse effects.

The Ghasis and Other Harijans :

The Ghasi society prohibits any marital relationship with the castes lower than themselves. They do not allow interdinning, drinking and smoking with the castes lower than them. According to the Ghasis of Nowrangpur the Castes-Sankhri, Dhoba and Tell and Khapara and Maitra Ghasis are lower than themselves. The Ghasis play music in the functions of the above-said lower castes on payment basis but never eat in the feasts given by them. They accept only *Kucha* foods from them and not the cooked ones. They work in the agricultural fields of the lower castes on wage basis. The castes, like Dom, Medri, etc., who enjoy a higher status do not intermarry with the Ghasis. Commensality is strictly restricted among these castes.

Interaction among the Sub-Castes:

The caste Ghasi is divided into three sub-castes. They are the Ghoda Ghasi, the Ghodua Ghasi and the Khapara/ Maitra Ghasis. On the basis of their works these three sub-castes are ranked high or low. Those who have retained their traditional occupation are Ghoda Ghasis. Those who engage in making articles of brass, lead and rolled gold are a artisan group, known as Ghoda Ghasi. And lastly those who engage themselves as sweepers and scavengers are known as Khapara Ghasi. The former two sub-castes enjoy a high social status over the latter. Since the Khapara Ghasis are engaged in sweeping and scavenging the other two sub-castes look down upon them. Intermarriage between the Ghoda and Ghodua Ghasis is permitted. Marriage among the members of sub-castes, Ghoda and Ghodua Ghasi with the Khapara Ghasis is not permitted. The other two sub-castes never interdine with the Khapara Ghasis. As regard the economic interactions the Ghoda Ghasis play music at the functions of the Khapara Ghasis, but usually do not eat in the feasts of the Khapara Ghasis.

CHAPTER VIII

RELIGIOUS LIFE

In the complex of religious beliefs and practices the Ghasis follow the Hinduism and also some elements of the neighbouring tribal religion. The Ghasis believe in polytheism. Their religious beliefs and practices include animism, totemism and worship of Hindu Gods and Goddesses.

Mostly the Ghasis are Hindus. As such they worship the following Hindu Gods and Goddesses through different religious festivals round the year.

Trinity :

The Ghasis believe in the Trinity of the three Gods of highest order in Hindu religious complex. The three Gods are, the *Brahma*, the *Vishnu* and the *Maheswar*. They are the creator, the Saviour and the Destroyer of all the creation in the Universe. The Ghasis of the Nowrangpur town and its nearby villages, specially in Bikrampur village go to the temple of the Lord *Shiva (Maheswar)*, who is worshipped in the symbol and image of *Lingaraja* when they face problems of ill health, loss of property and life and dreams of snake. Unfortunately the Ghasi devotees do not enter into the temple of *Shiva* since they are born in a low caste and in their belief their entrance may pollute the sanctity of the temple. However, the Ghasi go to the temple with *Puja* articles and *dakshina* which the priest accepts by not touching the Ghasis and make offering to the God on behalf of them and return the *prasad* to the Ghasi devotees. The Ghasis bow down before the God from a distance near the gate of the temple and offer their worship from there.

The other Hindu deities worshipped by the Ghasis are given as follows:

Laxmi :

The married women of Ghasi families observe *Laxmi Puja* on every Thursday in the month of 'Margasira' of the Oriya calendar. On the

previous night the Ghasi women keep the house surrounding clean and wash their rooms. Early in the morning of the day of *Laxmi Puja* the floor of the room is decorated with the *alpana* marks showing various designs and also the feet of the *Laxmi*, the Goddess of Wealth. An *udu* (measuring pot) is filled in with paddy and placed on a wooden stool and offerings are made before it. This *puja* is observed for enhancement of property and wealth by appeasing Goddess *Laxmi*.

Surya :

At sunrise and sun set some of the orthodox Ghasis salute the sun by bowing down their heads with folding hands. The same is also repeated after taking bath. The Sun god is also worshipped by the member of *Surya Killi* as their Killi God. In the morning of the *Mughha Purnami* the Killi members sacrifice goat & sheep and offer worship to the lineage deities. This is a practice similar to the tribal custom as Sun God is never worshipped by the Hindus by sacrificing goat or sheep.

If any body is put into difficulties or some injustice is done to him by others he utters the name of *Dharam Debata* (Sun God) to come to his rescue and to punish the miscreant. The Sun and Moon are venerated by the Ghasis. The moon is addressed and referred to the children as '*Janha mamu*' (Mean the maternal uncle of all children). There is no elaborate ritual of the moon among the Ghasis. The solar and lunar eclipses are marked as the period of pollution and crisis. During such period the Ghasis observe some taboos. After the completion of the eclipse, Ghasis proceed to prepare food for consumption.

Gomata(Cow) :

The Ghasis show respect to the cows in the morning when they go for work and return from it. This is done as a mark of respect for the services of cows to the mankind and therefore the worship is called '*gomata puja*'. On the eve of *Deepavali* festival which is observed on the last day of dark fortnight of the '*Kartika*' (October-November) month, the Ghasis perform a ritual. The feet of the cows are washed with water. Then turmeric paste are anointed on the forehead of the cows. Cows are worshipped and offered *Khiri* (a special gruel item made out of rice, milk and sugar) and cakes. The '*Prasad*' is served among the family members and invitees who participate. During this occasion daughters and their husbands are invited and are given new clothes and delicious food.

Lord Sri Jagannath :

The Ghasis show reverence to Lord *Jagannath*, the God of the Universe, who is worshipped in various names by the Hindus. The Ghasis come to the local *Jagannath* temple and get the worship done by the priest. The famous Car festival is held in the locality in the month of June-July. The Ghasis, who cannot enter into the temple of the Lord due to their caste disabilities, come to have a free darshan of Lord *Jagannath*, *Balaram* and *Subhadra* and participate in the festival by pulling the car where the deities are installed.

Further, a few well-to-do Ghasis visit Puri for *darshan* and *puja* of Lord *Jagannath*. During their visit to Puri they participate in car festival at Puri. They have tansured their heads and from that period they have refrained from taking beef and continued to read the religious books and hear their recitations in *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, *Nrushiga Puran*, *Haribansha*, *Laxmi Puran* and the like. Some of them have also gone to Tirupati Temple and have been tansured and after that they are not taking beef but reading and hearing Hindu religious scriptures.

Saraswati and Ganesh :

Lord *Ganesh* is venerated as the god of education, knowledge and wisdom. *Saraswati* is venerated as the Goddess of education, dance, music and arts. The students from the Ghasis community worship Shri *Ganesh* and Goddess *Saraswati* in their schools. Very recently the Harijan youth association of Nawarangpur town has started celebration of *Ganesh Puja* and *Saraswati Puja* at the premises of the Association House. A Brahmin was requested for performing the *puja* and he done it surreptiously and accepted '*dakshina*' and *prased* without touching the Ghasi devotees.

Thakurani (The village deity) :

The village deity at Nawarangpur is called as *Thakurani*, whereas at Bikrampur village she is called as '*Budhi Thakurani*'. *She is the deity of the local tribals. The priest's job is done by a tribal. At Bikrampur village it is done by a Bhotora man. At Nowarangpur it is done by priest from Omanatya community. The Ghasis worship the Thakurani. The Ghasi is free to visit the Shrine of the deity and worship her. The tribals impose no restrictions in such religious attributes. The celebration of annual worship of Thakurani is held on the Chaitra purnima (Full-moon day of Chaitra with all pomp and ceremony, like the Ghanta Jatra, a regional festival of Berhampur. The deity is worshipped once in a year on the said days for*

prevention of small pox, cholera and fatal diseases. For this *Thakurani* is offered parched rice, banana, incense sticks, coconut, incense (*jhuna*), curd and molases. Besides, cocks, sheep, goats, pigs, pigeons etc. are also sacrificed before her. When an epidemic breaks out a special worship is arranged by all the villagers where the Ghasis participate to save the life of people and to get cured from the diseases, if not appeased properly by the worship. *Thakurani* is believed to cause all hazards and diseases in the village.

Lineage gods :

Killi (Lineage) Gods are worshipped by the Ghasis for their wellbeing. The name of killi Gods, their symbols, annual day of worship, nature of worship and its associated religious labour have been dealt in social organization.

Ancestral Worship :

The ancestral spirits are worshipped by them on the occasions like *Uansparab*, *Dhonnua*, and *Amha*.

The ancestral spirits are worshipped for the family wellbeing. Further specifications in this regard are furnished in the statement showing the festival calendar of the Ghasis. Conversion to other religions is not found among the Ghasis of the study area. They claim themselves as Hindus inspite of their lower status in the Hindu caste hierarchy.

STATEMENT SHOWING THE FESTIVAL CALENDAR OF THE GHASIS

Sl No.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Name of the Oriya month and its English equivalent	Date of the Festival	Name of the Festival	God/Goddess worshipped	Purpose of worship	Nature of worship and remarks		
1.	Vaisakh (April-May).	3rd day of the 2nd fortnight.	Akhitritiya	Matimata	For a bumper harvest.	The male head of the land holding family conducts the ritual on the arach land by offering rice, flower and sacrificing a cock.	
2.	Ashadha (June-July).	14th day of dark fortnight.	Uansaparva	Anuces	For the family welfare.	Goat is sacrificed, and meat cigar and B h a n g are offered.	
3.	Ashadha (June-July).	From the 2nd day to the 8th day of the second fortnight.	Ratha Jatra.	Sri Jagannath Balaram Subhadra	To be free from all sins.	The Ghasis get the opportunity to see Lord Jagannath once in a year outside of the temple.	
4.	Bhadrab (August-September).	8th day of the dark fortnight.	Janmastami	Lord Krishna	To celebrate the birthday of God.	Devotees, both men and women alike, observe fasting till the end of the worship.	
5.	Bhadrab (August-September).	A day preferably wednesday.	Dhannua	Ancestor/ lineage God.	To observe the first eating ceremony of the crop from new year.	Rice, parched rice, molases, cow milk and curd are offered to the ancestral spirits and clan Gods, these are also distributed among the lineage members.	
6.	Aswina (September-October).	From 8th to 10th of the bright fortnight.	Dashara	Durga	Removal of the danger.	Put on new clothes, eat delicious cakes and food, enjoy the festival by dancing with music with the friends and relatives.	

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7.	Kartika (October-November).	The last day of the dark fortnight.	Diwali	Gomata	For her services.	Turmeric paste is marked on the forehead of the cow and her feet are washed with water, <i>khin</i> (porridge) offered to cow and is served among the family members as 'prashad'. Only women perform this ritual where <i>khiri</i> cakes and paddy are offered before the symbol of Goddess <i>Laxmi</i> . Unmarried women observe fasting. Men and women go to Shiva temple.
8.	Margasira (November-December).	All the Thursdays.	Manabasa Laxmipuja	Laxmi	For wealth	
9.	Faguna (February-March).	Last day of the dark fortnight.	Shivaratri	Shiva	To have a good husband.	
10.	Faguna (March-April).	The full-moon day.	Dola	Radha Krishna	Joy through the exchange of colour powders to mark the worship.	Mango, milk and molases are offered to <i>Thakurani</i> through the tribal priest to the ancestors by self.
11.	Chaitra (April-May)	1st day of dark fortnight.	Holi	Ditto	Ditto	
12.	Chaitra (April-May).	The fullmoon day.	Ghanta Jatra.	Thakurani (Village deity, ancestral spirits).	For good health, removal of epidemics and for well-being of the family.	<i>Thakurani</i> is worshipped by the tribal priest. The <i>Ghasis</i> sacrifice fowl, pigeon, boar and sheep. <i>Ghasis</i> are not restricted to enter into her shrine.

CHAPTER IX

STRATEGY FOR DEVELOPMENT

A majority of the Ghasis have low economic status coupled with social disabilities. The Post-independence period witnessed several attempts, inclusive of both legislative as well as ameliorative, for their development in pursuance of Constitutional Provisions. Despite various Governmental efforts, these people continue to be economically poor and educationally backward and suffer from the stigma of untouchability and the disabilities arising therefrom.

Therefore, recently the Working Group which was constituted for the Special Component Plan during the Seventh Five-Year Plan (1985-90) have recommended specific strategies for development of Scheduled Castes. They have suggested several programmes for socio economic development of Scheduled Castes. Broadly the approaches to their development are as follows :

- (1) Economic development through family-oriented beneficiary schemes for generating income and employment.
- (2) Basti-oriented schemes for infrastructural development.
- (3) Elimination of the duty of scavenging, and
- (4) Educational development.

Besides, it is recommended by the Working Group that the strategy is to provide supplementary assistance to those assisted during the Sixth Plan but have not crossed the poverty line and provide adequate assistance in form of short-term credit for sustaining the income by those who have crossed the poverty line while giving assistance in new cases.

The Working Group have also given emphasis on the survey and identification of the problems and felt needs of the Scheduled Castes on the basis of which developmental programmes will be formulated.

In response to the above recommendations, the following suggestions are given for the development of the Ghasis keeping their problems, felt-needs and aspirations in mind.

The Ghasis are divided into three sub-castes such as Ghoda Ghasi, Ghodua Ghasi and Khapara or Maitra Ghasis. The former two are engaged in petty business, wage earning, rickshaw pulling, cycle repairing etc. whereas the latter in unclean professions, like sweeping and scavenging. The Khapara Ghasis as such are looked down upon not only by the clean castes but also by their own castemen, like Ghoda and Ghodua Ghasi. However, in the eyes of the clean caste people these three sub-castes of Ghasis are placed in the lowest rank in the caste hierarchy because of their unclean professions and anti-social activities in the past and they are subject to social discrimination as described earlier. Heavy drinking habit along with beef eating and involvement in criminal activities like, stealing, pick-pocketing, dacoity etc. in the past are reasons for which the Ghasis are generally looked down upon. Various developmental programmes are implemented for the Ghasis which are not adequate enough for their improvement. As such they still face several socio economic problems. Nearly one-fourth of the Ghasi workers both men and women carry on unclean occupations, like scavenging, sweeping etc. to eke out their livelihood. No doubt this section of the people have assured income but at the cost of a set of social disabilities. To make these people free from social disabilities the planning for their development should include provision for the introduction of flush latrine system with water closets and main drainage to scavenging. Further the children of these workers should not be encouraged to follow their parent's caste occupations. Rather, they should be assisted, educated and trained so as to enable them to take up other occupations. This may help them to relieve of the burden of social disabilities.

Taking of beef, scavenging and chain drinking habits accounts for the low status of the Ghasis among the Hindus. Elimination of scavenging only may not bring an end to their sufferings. Therefore, the socially unhealthy habits of beef eating and heavy drinking habits should be stopped. Public awareness may be geared up through education and enlightenment. Efforts should be made to win the hearts of the people and to keep them away from these notorious practices. If these people will give up these habits over a period of one generation all activities relating to social disabilities will disappear.

Most of the Ghasis are wage earners and engage in agricultural operations and construction works. These poor labourers are unorganized. Their employment situation is seasonal and uncertain. Therefore, they are provided with less wages than the Government fixed rate. Sometimes in lean months they bring their wages in advance from the local cultivators prior to the agricultural operations, with a promise to do the work later on. In such cases the rate of wage is very low. Therefore, the economic interest of these people should be protected by effective implementation of the minimum wage policy along with the abolition of child labour and promotion of employment facilities to all through Economic Rehabilitation of the Rural Poor (E.R.R.P.) Programme. Food for work D.R.D.A. Programmes and I.R.D.P. should be carried out with much devotion and sincerity.

The economic group comprising of Ghasi traders depend on local money lenders who usually charge high rate of interest and exploit the people. Measures should be taken to stop exploitation. The petty traders should be assisted with short-term loan with subsidy amount for their economic betterment.

However, to fill the socio economic gap between the Ghasis and the better off neighbouring people and to bring them on par with others the strategies of development the Ghasis should be stepped up with the implementation of the economically viable family-oriented programmes and the infrastructural development of their basties alongwith social service support. Since both the programmes are complementary they should go side by side. The developmental programmes should be designed in a way so as to make it attractive to win the confidence of the Ghasis.

As per the Working Committee's recommendation the Ghasis who have been assisted by the Government and crossed the poverty line should be given further assistance to make them economically self-sufficient. The Ghasis who are below the poverty line should be identified and be covered under all Governmental assistance to increase their income. Keeping these recommendations in view and after making an assessment of aspirations and felt-needs of the Ghasis, the following developmental programmes may be suggested. They are :

- (i) Financial assistance for small business.
- (ii) Financial assistance for opening of new band set and reconditioning of old ones.

- (iii) Pig rearing.
- (iv) Housing for houseless Ghasis.
- (v) Supply of cycle rickshaw.
- (vi) Agricultural development, and
- (vii) Training on knitting, embroidery and tailoring for Ghasi women.

(B) Community Development Programmes :

- (i) Educational development,
- (ii) Promotion of games, sports, library facilities and social services among the Ghasis through the Voluntary Youth Associations, and
- (iii) Provision for the improvement of their hamlets.

All, except the training programmes of the above mentioned schemes under the heading(A), may be implemented with a provision of subsidy to the beneficiaries. Since there is every possibility of misutilization of money by the beneficiaries, they should be assisted in the shape of kinds rather than in cash. But in purchase of the required articles the choice should be open for the beneficiaries in the presence of the Welfare Extension Officers. The scheme in which supply of article will be of no use there monitoring of the expenditure for proper utilization of the financial assistance may be made. These may ensure the success of all schemes. The implementation of training programme should be based on full subsidy with an aim to produce skill trained personnel. The successful candidates of the training programme should be assisted in their field of activities to generate income. This programme will facilitate gainful employment to the Ghasis.

As regards the agricultural development the marginal and small farmers should be provided with irrigation facilities and supplied with agricultural inputs and extended all types of help. They need for the modern agricultural practices. In addition to these provision, efforts should be made for the distribution of ceiling surplus lands and Government waste lands. After making necessary development the lands be given to the landless poor, agricultural workers, marginal and small farmers.

Besides this, the landed properties of the Ghasis should be protected from alienation to gear up the development work. The old destitute and

physically handicapped persons among the Ghasis should be given welfare services through old age pension schemes. The Ghasi *basties* (hamlets) in urban and rural settings are characterised by absence of infrastructural facilities, like approach roads, electricity, ventilation and sanitation and drinking water. Mostly their *basties* are found in the fringe of the settlement marked by filthy, marshy and unhygienic surroundings. Unhealthy surroundings and the absence of infrastructural facilities in the Ghasi *basties* make the living conditions poor. Thus it is suggested to tag the community with the welfare measures along with individual benefit programmes of the Ghasis.

Education not only creates enlightenment and public awareness of the people's rights and duties but also helps the community to achieve progress and prosperity. The field survey reveals that among the Ghasis more than 60 per cent people are uneducated. Educational development is the primary need and without this all developmental programmes among these people will be meaningless. Therefore, the following measures are recommended for the educational development of the Ghasis.

1. All the children reading in schools belonging to Ghasi community may be supplied with reading and writing materials and school dress free of cost.
2. To attract large number of students already in the class and to attract other children to be newly enrolled in the school, it is suggested that arrangement be made for mid-day meal in the school.
3. Educational institution should be opened for the Ghasi children within accessible distance.
4. Regular payment of stipend may be ensured to the students reading in schools and colleges to check drop outs from the educational institutions.
5. The functional literacy programme should be made widespread among the adult Ghasis to enable them to understand, realise, co-operate with and adopt the programmes meant for their development.

As regards the infrastructural development of the Ghasi *basties* provisions should be made for such programmes like, construction of approach roads and culverts, supply of pure drinking water and electricity to the village.

Further to gear up the development process people of every Ghasi settlement should be encouraged to form Harijan Youth Associations with a motive to promote education, sports, general awareness and social services among them. Every association may be provided with house along with the following measures for its improvement and better functioning.

Immediate steps may be taken to get all the Harijan Youth Associations registered under the rules. All registered Ghasi Youth Associations may be provided with kendu leaf grant-in-aids for the construction of houses and purchase of furniture. Grant-in-aid may also be released in favour of associations from the State Social Welfare Board to organise a Holiday Home camp for the Ghasi school-going children. The members of the Ghasi Youth association should be associated in all developmental programmes of the community specially in social services, like cleaning of *basties*, Construction of village roads, organization of health camps, nutrition programmes and functional literacy programmes by proper utilization of different Grant-in-aid of Governmental agencies.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Dalton, E. T. 1960 Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal, Calcutta
- Ghosh, S. K. 1980 Protection of Minorities and Scheduled Castes
- Mazumdar, D. N. 1961 Race and Culture of India,
Asia Publishing House, Bombay
- Patnaik, N. 1984 Vulnerable groups among the Scheduled
Castes of Orissa and strategies for their
development, Souvenir, Adibasi Exhibition,
Bhubaneswar.
- Risley, H. 1981 Tribes and Castes of Bengal, Vol-I, Calcutta
- Sahoo, T. 1986 Action Plan for the Ghasis of Nowrangpur
town (unpublished), T. H. R. T. I.,
Bhubaneswar.
- Senapati, N. 1984 Orissa District Gazetteer, Koraput
- Simadri, Y. C. 1979 Ex-Criminal Tribes of India, National
Publishing House, New Delhi.
- Thurston, E. 1907 Castes and Tribes of Southern India,
Vol-II.

MAP SHOWING STUDY AREA
IN KORAPUT DISTRICT, ORISSA.

