

CHAPTER : 2

TRIBAL HISTORY OF GUJARAT

Generally, people living in the mountainous, hilly and forest regions are thought to be simpletons and have a very simple way of life. Such people are known as “Vanvasis” that is forest-dwellers. They are the original inhabitants of these areas. In Sanskrit, the term for them: “Adivasi” derived from “Adi” means original and Vasi, means inhabitants. They living under different environmental conditions, they are fully dependent on nature. According to Dr. Haddon “the word tribe would connote a group of simple kind occupying a concentrated area, with common dialect, a common social organization but undeveloped and primitive in mental equipment and civilization¹” ¹ International Associations recognize them as aboriginals Rivers, a British anthropologist, used the word tribe with reference to a people of mental depression, living in scattered groups on hills and river sites.²

According to the Oxford Dictionary, a tribe is a group of people in a primitive or barbarous (uncultured) stage of development acknowledging the authority of a chief and usually regarding themselves as having a common ancestor.

1. Mukerjee Satya V., Census of India, 1931, Vol. XIX, Baroda Part I, The Times of India Press, Bombay, 1932, p. 390.
2. Kothari. K.L., Tribal Social Change in India, Himanshu Publication, Delhi.

G.W.E. Hunting Ford ³ defines a tribe as a group united under common name in which the members take pride, by a common language, by common territory and by a feeling that all who do not share this name are outsiders, 'enemies' in fact.

There is no evidence found from Gujarat regarding the origin of the various tribes. It is not known from where these people came to Gujarat. According to Dr. H.D. Sankalia⁴ the resemblance that the Indian tool types bear to the African type suggest that the early man in India might have come from Africa.

There is one reference in Mahabharat and also Bhagwat Purana regarding the tribal population in India. When Lord Rama, Sita and Laxman were going through forest, then, Sabari, a Bhill woman had offered wild fruit to Rama.

There are very few regions in the Indian sub-continent with the rich pre-historic cultural traditions of Gujarat. Almost all the major river valleys of Gujarat have been extensively and intensively investigated by several scholars. Pioneering work in this regard was carried out as early as 1898 by Robert Bruce Foote while he was the consultant state geologist for the Maharaja of Baroda. He discovered a few lower Paleolithic implements from some localities of the Sabarmati and Orsang rivers. He also recognized the aeolian origin of the fossil sand dunes of north Gujarat

3. Fuchs Stephen, Aboriginal Tribes of India.

4. Sankalia H.D., Pre-Historic and Historic Archaeology of Gujarat, Munshira

(Foote-1915:16). During the mid forties, studies of the Pleistocene stratigraphy and associated stone Age industries in Western Indian Context was prompted by Dr. Sankalia's investigation on the prehistoric archaeology of Gujarat (Sankalia 1946). Zeuner studied the soil and environment of the major rivers of Gujarat viz., the Sabarmati, the Mahi, the Narmada. His observations regarding the existence of a buried soil were highly significant and noteworthy (Zeuner 1950).

North east corner of Gujarat Ashoka had sent missionaries, one Dharmaraksika, Ayavana being sent in western coast. Thus, Budhism spread in Gujarat through him in the 3rd century B.C. The discovery of brick Stupa and Vihara in 1960 was done by the late Dr. B. Subarao at Devni Mori near Samlaji, Sabarkantha district in North Gujarat.

One of the most important sites excavated is Langhnaj, in north Gujarat, on the rail-route between Ambalisan and Vijapur in Mehsana district. There are hillocks and slopes. These hillocks were covered with wood and with scattered microliths. The river banks were the resorts of the microlithic people. H.D. Sankalia ⁵, writes that "a nomadic, hunting people lived on these mounds and along the river banks, heavy tools are very few" A discovery of unusual interest by F.E. Zeuner ⁶ examined

5. Sankalia, H.D., Pre-History and Propto History in India and Pakistan,

Bombay University, Bombay, 1962.

6. Ibid.

the huge rhinoceros shoulder-blade. He notes that as anvil for manufacturing microliths a large number of bones and negligible quantities of pottery and thirteen human skeletons had been found along with microliths. These were fairly tall, thin dolico cephalic people with slight pragmatism. According to Dr. (Mrs) Karve⁷, certain physical structures suggest Negroid features and Egyptian affinities. Dr. (Mrs) Erhardt⁸ of Tübingen University, studied these skeletons and came to the conclusion that they are characteristics of Mediterraneans and Veddis, but these could also include other races. The excavations at Langhnaj have shown promise in a field related to the nature of the population of the primitives of north Gujarat. The Langhnaj microlithic industry is dated earlier than 2500 BC⁹.

Another important archeological site is Tarsang¹⁰ in Shera taluka of the Panchmahals district. A number of late Stone Age settlements have been discovered. One rock shelter, situated on the northern fall of the Maheshvari Hill, was excavated. There are traces of painting in Terracotta colour on the ceiling. It consists of concentric circles joined by lines and filled triangles. This site was also filled with microlithic tools.

- 7. Ibid.
- 8. Ibid.
- 9. Ibid.
- 10 Ibid.

In the Post-Mauryan period, Gujarat seems to have been ruled by the Indo-Greek Kings (1st-2nd century BC.), whose coins were in circulation in Gujarat. In the 5th century, Gujarat was under the control of the Gupta Sovereigns of Magadha. ¹¹

In the discussion of Devnimori Stupa, H.D. Sankalia ¹² explains, Shamalaji has been a well known Hindu (Vaisnava) pilgrim centre for last several centuries. However, with the discovery of the Stupas and Viharas, we can confidently say that this place or even this region in the north-east corner of Gujarat. North east corner of Gujarat Ashoka had sent missionaries, one Dharmaraksika, Ayavana being sent in western coast. Thus, Buddhism had spread in Gujarat through him in the 3rd century BC. The discovery of brick Stupa and Vihara in 1960 by the late Dr. B. Subarao at Devni Mori near Samlaji Sabarkantha dist. (north Gujarat). He further writes that one might wonder why the then rulers-Western Ksatrapas and later on, their successors, the Abhiras chose this forested region, which even today is the home of "Adivasis" (principally Bhils, which the taluka named Bhiloda connotes). However, there are no means of knowing to the extent to which the Adivasi Bhils and others were converted and whether or not any traces are now left of such conversion which took place nearly

11. Dr. Patel G.D., Gazetteer of India, Gujarat State, Panchmahal District, p. 78, Ahmedabad, 1972.

12. Sankalia, H.D., Pre-History and Proto History in India and Pakistan, Bombay University, Bombay, 1962.

2000 years ago. The time span of the Buddhist settlement at Devnimori is about 500-600 years (i.e. ca 3rd - 7th century AD).

The earliest settled agricultural communities in Gujarat were associated with urban Harappan phase. However recent excavations carried out at Loteswar, Pardi and Dholavira and the reanalysis of archaeological data from previously excavated sites at Prabhas Patan, Lothal and Surkatada has suggested that prior to the incoming of the Harappans, Gujarat was already inhabited by the regional non-Harappan Chalcolithic communities. Calibrated radiocarbon dates of Prabhas Patan go back to the second half of fourth to the beginning of third millennium BC; making them more than half a millennium earlier than the Harappan emigrants. In this regard it is worth noting that the regions of Kutch, north Gujarat and Saurashtra has revealed sites of pre-urban phase establishing the existence of indigenous regional Chalcolithic traditions involving non Harappan pottery types. Equally important evidence has been brought forth recently from Nagwada, Santhali and Moti Pipli regarding the early penetration of Harappans up to North Gujarat.

The pottery from Rangpur and Prabhas Patan show Iranian or Western Asiatic influence. The Yadavas and other Kshatriya tribes were distant immigrants from Iran or Western Asia. Sankalia says that Ksatrapas, originally a Central Asian people, ruled over Gujarat.

Dr. A.F. Hornle¹³ expresses that the Gujars (in the 6th century) came from Central Asia to India. The other races who came to India were Huns, Chalukyas, Gujar-parihars, Parmars, Parihars, Kachhwas, Chapas etc. Gujar's came from Kashmir to the Punjab and settled in Gujarat and many other races also came from north (Sankalia 1962).¹⁴

Gujars came from Kashmir and the Punjab and settled in Gujarat and many other races also came from the north.

Before the partition of India, the undivided Punjab province had the towns of Gujarat and Gujaranwala and the district Gujarat. It used to form an important landmark's and such Kings of Gujarat form the subject of an important historic work of Urdu literature. The relics found at Bhinnamal and Shrimal near Jodhpur the important halting place of the Gujar tribes in their south-ward journey.

P.G. Shah¹⁵ writes that the nomadic tribes from Central Asia were transformed within three or four centuries into mightily cultured Rajput races, famous for their chivalry, patronage of learning and culture. During 13th century, a few Koli

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. Shah P.G., The Original Inhabitant of Gujarat, Journal of the Gujarat Research Society, 1939, Vol I (4).

and Warli Chiefs came to Gujarat from Deccan with a handful of Mahadeo Kolis and established a ruling family.

In India and Gujarat Bhil is a very ancient and original tribe. In ancient literature like Bhagwatapurana (Skanda-4, Chapter 4, Verses 45) and even in Ramayana mentions Bhils as Nishadas. The Bhils have at present spread themselves on the “Bhilwara” land situated on the hill bordering of Rajasthan Gujarat and Central India (Robert-Deliege 1985). All these areas contain Bhil population. These areas are more or less identical with the Kingdom of Nishadas.

Bhils are more ancient than Aryans or Dravidians for the name itself is derived from a Dravidians word ‘Bil’ for bow. The Bhils have therefore important claims to be regarded as one of the most ancient tribes of India (Robert-Deliege 1985). The earliest traditional rulers of Gujarat were Bhils or Kolis namely ‘Asha Bhil’ the founder of Ashaval, Ashapalli; the oldest site of the modern city of Ahmedabad (D.N. Mjamudar 1942)¹⁶.

The stone inscription unearthed near the bank of Chhab tank at Dohad belongs to the reign of the celebrated Chaulukya King Siddhraj Jayasinha of Anahil wad Patam (Anhilwad). The King’s conquered Malwa and imprisoned its

16. Majumundar D N., The Bhil of Gujarat, Journal of Gujarat Research Society 1942, 4 (4).

ruler in Vikramsamvat 1192 (1135 - 36 AD) are on record. He subjugated the Bhils on his way to Malwa. These Bhils are obviously the Bhils of the Panchmahals, for, even in those days, the road to Malwa ran through the Panchmahals. King Jayasimhadev is renowned as Barbarraka-Jisnu, that is the Victor of Barbarraka, evidently the chief of Barbarraka tribe. Presumably, he may be the chief of the Bhils of the Panchmahals. After his defeat, Barbarraka is said to have been faithful to Jayasimhadev. The reference of his having built a bridge over river Spira near Ujjain during the King's invasion of Malwa, corroborates the assumption about his identification. The Chaulukya King seems to have appointed the Senapati in charge of Dadhipadra Madala town (Dohad) after the subjugation of the Bhils in 1135-36 AD. (p. 81-82 Gazetteer of the Panchmahals)¹⁷.

It is said that the present forest tribes are the remnants of the original inhabitants of the Country, driven into wilderness by early invaders like the Aryans and the others, and invariably mixed with the latter refugees from latter invaders. They found safety in the elevated forest regions, and remained primitive until recent times. A general, common level mode of life is visible among all the forest dwellers.

The Maratha rulers had clashed with the British, and the Marathas therefore took the help of forest tribes of Panchmahals. The Marathas were defeated

17. Dr. Patel G.D., Gazetteer of India, Gujarat State, Panchmahal District, p.81-82, Ahmedbad.

by Captain Bates with help of the tribals. The Marathas assembled troops in the jungles of Gujarat, attacked again the police station of Godhra, harassing the Britishers. The tribal insurgents resorted to guerilla tactics, attacked government forces, and disappeared in the hills and forests. The British government, then, recruited Bhils of the Panchmahals into the army so that the Bhils would provide useful and correct information about the rebels in their area. The British government hoped that the Bhils, the Kolis, the Nayakdas of the Panchmahals would arrest some rebels in the hope of getting rewards, but the government was disappointed as nobody brought in a single rebel.

The tribal people were undisturbed during the Muslim period from 1297-1403. The Muslim rulers had no time to conquer the tribes. Some of these tribes harassed the other population and, therefore, the hill forts of Bagwada in Pardi, Parner in Valsad District and Dharampur were conquered by Mahamad Begda.

Their isolation in the thick forest and the difficult landscape could not save them from the enemy. They helped the King's soldiers who were defeated during the war or hid them in difficult passes. They were helpful, during the Muslim invasions, when Rajput rulers sought refuge in the mountains. Rana Pratap sought refuge in the mountains. He lost Chittore, escaped to the Aravalli Mountains and posted his men and some Bhils. These faithful tribals saved him and his family.

In 1661, Aurangzeb's army was defeated by the Rajputs and the Bhils¹⁸.

The tribes who came in contact with the Rajputs, adopted Rajput names, customs and institutions. Some of them lost their own dialects and claimed Rajput ancestry. The political fragmentation and their own geographical remoteness enabled the tribes to retain some power of their own.

Ramsingh of the Sesodia clan, the second son of Ramap Raja of Udaipur, defeated the local tribal chief in the 13th century and became the first ruler of Dharampur State in South Gujarat. The Rajputs and princely states frequently penetrated tribal areas for all such purposes until their search for conquest was arrested by strong neighboring Muslim Power.

The tribals, and especially the Bhils provided the princely states with archers during wars and when they were defeated or their economic condition worsened. This led some Bhils to take to robbery, and they robbed whoever passed through these mountain passes and made a living. Some Bhils were responsible for creating disturbances over a large area in Maharashtra in the 18th century. The Maratha Peshwa sent punitive expedition against the marauding Bhils in 1769. The Bhil area

18. Ibid.

was leveled to the ground by the Marathas to protect the villages against the incursions of the Bhils. The Bhils never settled completely and remained in a state of turbulence in order to preserve their independence.

The tribals in the other parts of the country were found to be different in nature and occupation. For example, Alirajpur in Madhya Pradesh was a peaceful kingdom in the 19th century. They practiced shifted cultivation and paid revenues to the kings. During festivals like Dashera all tribes went to the royal capital where their representatives Tadvı and Patel were given turbans by the king. In South Gujarat, the State of Dahrapur was quiet and tribal people were completely submissive. Many Bhils and Bhilalas Chiefs are described as 'Bhumias', or armed chiefs paying a small sum by way of revenue to the crown. Some tribes enjoyed full freedom, occupied entire long tracts of land and did not allow the rulers of that territory any entry to their areas. The mountain passes, the valley regions and nearby villages were fully under the control of these tribes.

According to anthropologists, there are three races of mankind in India namely Mongoloid, Proto-Autroloid and Negritoloid. The characteristics of these three races are found in Indian tribes. Some of them have the features of the Aryans in them. Some are pre-Dravidians. Some of them came in contact with the different rulers and observe a mode of living which is different in differing environments. The tribal races of Gujarat are believed to have inhabited the land earlier than the Aryan

and Dravidian races. The Bhil tribes belong to the great Munda race. They are a mixed breed of the Mundas of Chhota Nagpur.

There are some differences among tribals particularly in terms of their physical structure and taboos. The Kokanas, the Dodias, the Dhankas, the Choudhras and the Vasavas inhabited the areas to the South of the Narmada. They appear more allied and are found to be quite different from the tribes of northern Gujarat. The Panchmahal Bhils are taller, and their eyes, skin, noses, facial features etc. The Sabarkantha and the Banaskantha regions belonging to the forest dwellers has been the route of the constantly marching armies, and thus the primitive characteristics are scarcely noticeable. Illiteracy and poverty-rooted indifference existed and still exists.

The Bhils have been in occupation of Gujarat at least from the early Christian era. Enthoven mentions in his essay ¹⁹ "The Tribes and Castes of Bombay" that the word 'Bhil' occurs in "Katha Sarit Sagar", where it is said that the military advance of an Aryan King of Vindhya, was arrested by a Bhil Chief. The Chalukya King Karna cleared the Bhils from Ahmedabad and Kheda districts of Gujarat subsequently.

As the plains of Gujarat came to be increasingly occupied by more vigorous races, the Bhils returned to the northern and western foothills of the Aravallis, Satpura

19. Enthoven.R.E., The Tribes and castes of Bombay, II, Bombay, 1922.

and Vindhya mountains from where some of them moved up to the tableland of Mewad, Malwa, Khandesh and Nasik. The Bhills inhabited a large belt within and adjoining the Gujarat region right from the north to the south (Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra) with their population being highest among all provinces. With the development of transportation and communication, they are now no longer isolated.

According to the Census of India, taken in 1981 the total population was 6,85,18,500. The scheduled castes of India were 10,47,54,623 and the scheduled tribes were 5,16,28,330 or 15.3% and 7.5% respectively of the total population of the country. Together they formed 22.8% of our total population in 1981. The ratio comes to 5:1. The total population of Gujarat in 1981 was 3,50,85,799.

The total population of scheduled tribes was 48,48,586 in 1981. This increased to 61,61,775 in 1991. There was 24,53,566 (50.60%) males and 23,95,020 (49.40%) females in 1981. The male population in 1991 became 31,31,947 and females 30,29,828. In 1981 the ratio at the state level was almost equal to that at the national level. It was 21.4% with the scheduled castes at 7.2% and scheduled tribes at 14.2%. The figures for scheduled were double that of the scheduled castes. In India, the total population of scheduled tribes comes to 7.5% of the total population in 1981. The states of Nagaland and Meghalaya are considered total tribal population representing the 80% of the State population consists of the tribals. In the second category and the State like Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Bihar, Maharashtra and Gujarat,

which have a higher percentage of them. Among these States, Gujarat ranks fifth whereas the tribal population in the Country increased to 35.8% in 1971-81, it was 29.8% in Gujarat. One out of seven persons in Gujarat is a tribal, and one out of ten tribals in the Country lives in Gujarat.

There are twenty eight talukas in Gujarat where the population of scheduled tribes is more than 50%. Out of this twenty-eight talukas there are nine talukas are in Surat District. Out of these, nine are in Surat district. They are Uchhal, Vyara, Songadh, Mahuva, Mandvi, Nizar, Valod, Mangrol and Bardoli. The Bharuch and Valsad districts have five each. Dediapada, Sagbara, Valia, Nandod and Jhagadia are in Bharuch district whereas, Dharampur, Bansda, Chikhli, Pardi and Umbargoan in Valsad district. There are four talukas, namely; Dohad, Santrampur, Limkheda and Devgad Baria in the Panchmahal districts, three talukas of Vijayanagar, Khedbrahma and Bhiloda in Sabarkantha district, and Chhotaudepur and Naswadi talukas of Vadodara district. The other talukas of State such as Tilakwadas (Vadodara), Danta (Banaskantha), Megrej (Sabarkantha), Jhalod (Panchmahal) and Dangs have less than 50% of the tribal population of the State.

According to 1981 census, among the urban areas of Gujarat, there is a heavy concentration of the tribal population in Rajkot (75.77%), Gandhinagar (74.76%), Mehsana (74.40%) and Ahmedabad (69.15%).

According to 1981 Census, there are some twenty-eight main tribes in Gujarat. Among them, there are ten Bhil tribes who accounts for a population of more than one lakh. They are the Dublas, Dhodias, Gamits, Nayaks (Nayakdas) Rathwas, Chodhris, Konkanas, Kunbis, Dhankas and Warlis. The other tribes like the Patelis, Kolis (Kutch), Kolidhars, Vitolias and Pathars range in population between 7,500 and 15,000 and the other tribes are at ten thousand in population. They are the Rabaris, Vaghris (Kutch), Siddis, Khthodias, Parghis (Kutch), Bamnyas, Charnis, Katchi Bhils, Bharwads, Gonds - Rajgond and Barda. The other two tribes namely the Pardhis and Pomlas are less than five hundred in population. Some of these tribes are still most economically backward. They are considered as the most primitive. They are, for instance, the Kotwalias, Kathodis, Kolthas, Padhars, Siddis, etc. Some clans of Bhils such as the Dubla Bhils, Dungri Bhils, Varlis etc. are equally backward. These primitive tribes have been discussed.

The Kotwalia tribes live in Surat, Bharuch, Valsad and Dangs district. They are largely engaged in labour work. A few of them are engaged in cultivation. The forest dwellers prepare article from bamboo. The Department of Forest supplies them bamboo. They sell articles of bamboo to the Government Cooperatives and also in the open market. Some of them depend on hunting. They eat rabbits, birds, squirrels, etc. Largely backward economically due to no land, they are labours and illiteracy; they are indeed very fond of liquor.

Robert Hiene-Golden ²⁰ has listed the Kathodias among the primitives tribes of India. Stephen Fuchs calls ²¹ the Kathodis a sub-section of Bhils. Haddon and Kene ²² calls them Dravidians. Kathodias are said to have been brought to Gujarat from Maharashtra by Moslem-Bohra contractors and traders for employment as forest labourers engaged in making 'Katha' (catechu) from the Khair tree (*Accacia Catechi*) available in the forests of the Dangs, Gandevi, Chhotaudepur etc. The seasonal migration takes place for many years, but some of them settled in Gujarat.

The Kathodias mainly inhabit the Vijayanagar taluka (Sabarkantha), Dangs and Uchhal talukas of Surat district at present. The Kathodias are also found in Kota district of Rajasthan and Thana and Colaba districts of Maharashtra.

The Catechu juice, when it dries, is locally known as 'Katho' or 'Kath', which they use to collect from Catechu or Khair tree. They make small cakes after the juice has dried up. They are, therefore, known as 'Kathodia' by their occupation. They are also known as Katkarina. No scientific plantation of Khair tree was undertaken and, therefore, the trees were being destroyed day by day. Late, it was impossible for them to depend on this occupation. Some of them, then, took up jobs as laborers in the

20 Robert Hiene – Golden, Bulletin of International Committee on Urgent Anthropological Research, No. 3, viena, 1960.

21. Fuchs stephen, Aboriginal Tribes of India

22. Ibid.

forest department and agricultural field. They also engage in other occupations like hunting, fishing, coal-making and in gathering and selling forest products.

They eat coarse grains, onion, wild leaves etc. The Kathodias are of slight build and medium height, brown to very dark in their complexion, with deep-sunk eyes, a shallow nasal bridge and full lips. Men and women have curly hair. Women are generally stout-looking but appear to be slim built. The women are strong and sturdy in physique. The percentage of literacy among the Kathodias is very low. Their children have now begun to go in for schooling. Vijayanagar taluka has a tribal school.

The Kathodias use a dialect that seems to bear some similarity with the dialect of the Bhils. Their customs are equally similar to the Bhils, and it is said that their origin may be from Bhils. There is a mixture of Marathi with Gujarati words in their language.

They choose their settlements in the forest so that they can go hunting, or for tillage and other occupations. Their dwellings are low-thatched huts square or rectangular in shape and made of mud.

The Kathodias are sub-divided into five groups, namely; Athavar, Dhed or Dhor, Siddi or Maratha and Varap. Their women work hard and help them in their work.

The Kolthas or Koldhas are most economically backward among these primitive tribes. They are chiefly found in Dharampur and Bansda of Valsad district and Mahuva taluka of Surat district. Their literacy rate stands slightly higher than that of the other primitive tribes. They eat *Kodra*, *Nagli*, rice and maize. They also eat rabbits, birds, squirrels, etc. They are generally engaged in agricultural labor in the fields, with some collecting frogs and some tying cotton bales. Their children graze the cattle-herds and have only recently started going to school.

The Padhar tribes generally live in Surendranagar district (Saurashtra), the Bhal area of Nal Lake of Ahmedabad. They engage in fishing, agriculture, agricultural labor, and also with clay with brick makers and potters, moving from place to place in the State for such work. The Padhars eat roots of trees like 'Janela' and 'Bidi', onions and coarse grains. They generally live on the outskirts of the town, and, therefore a lot of improvement is found among them. They are very fond of folklore. Educationally they are still backward.

It is said that the Siddi tribes came to India during the latter half of the 15th century from Abyssinia as merchants or as free-boots. After settling down in India, they ruled over a small place known as Sachin which is 16 km away from Surat. Some other group migrated to Gujarat in the Middle of the 17th century, through Middle East and Somalian coast of Africa. Some were brought as slaves. They became Indian nationals and ruled over a small state called Jaffrabad in Saurashtra.

These migrants are African Negroes, known as the Siddis in Gujarat. Some rulers employed them as guards and watchmen at their places and to defend their borders.

The royal Siddis of Janjira and Sachin consider themselves superior to the other Siddis to some extent because both differ in their culture, manner and customs. They follow Islam as a religion and do not drink liquor. There are many sub-castes among them, namely; Naubis, Miyavas, Majgulas, Saibis, Badrans, Parmars and Makwanas. The royal Siddis are divided into Melams, Ambadas, Shaikhs, etc. Some of them adopted Gujarati as their mother tongue, but they speak a Somali or African dialect among themselves. They know Hindi too.

The Siddis are non-vegetarians. They have adopted Indian dressing habits. The women wear nose ornaments, known as Chuni, bangles known as Chudis, earrings and necklaces. Men wear rings and youngsters wear earrings.

Having come in contact with their Hindu compatriots, some of them worship Hindu god and goddesses. The royal Siddis are educated but others are mostly illiterate. Their children have started going to schools in recent times. They were agricultural land-holders. However, due to poverty, they disposed off their lands, and have taken up employment, now labor work. Some of them live in the forest and, therefore, these are the ones engaged in wood-cutting.

The Siddis inhabit the Talala taluka of Junagadh district, Ahmedabad, Bhavnagar, Surendranagar, Janjira, Jaffrabad and Sachin.

They are very fond of music and dance and have great talent for imitation; they know the African folk dances. While dancing, they sing songs in their former African language and now in Gujarati. They sing to a rhythm and create ferocious rhythmic patterns. They play drum and other instruments. Their dances are called Dhamal and Hamachi wherein they use all the vigor, verve and ferocity for which the African tribal dances are well-known. The theme of the song except on religious occasions is generally restricted to the hunting of small game, whose cries and movements they imitate with great skill.

The Gujarat government has several plans for uplifting of Gujarat tribes. Financial help is also provided by government for their economic progress.

Among the main tribes, are the Bhils who constitute 41.89% of the total tribal population. Their total population stand at 20,30,438 in 1981.

According to P.G. Shah²³ the Bhils are members of an aboriginal tribe. He explains that the Bhils are the representatives of a type predominant among the

23. Shah P.G., "The Original Inhabitant of Gujarat," Journal of the Gujarat Research Society, 1939, Vol. I (4).

aboriginal tribes of central and southern India which is more or less allied to the Veddas of Sri Lanka, the Toalas of Celebes (S.E. Asia), the Salkais of the Malaya Peninsula and a primitive form which is seen among the aborigines of Australia.

The Bhils are generally very dark in colour and very wild in appearance though the Bhils of Chhotaudepur are not as dark as those in other areas. They are fair in complexion. The men are muscular, sturdy in build and of a medium height. The women are well-built, but have coarse irregular features. The men keep slight long hair whereas women fasten their hair in braids or plaits. There are complaints in earlier times of daring robberies involving the Bhils, but most of them are gradually becoming quiet, law-abiding cultivators. They generally work as laborers and watchmen. The Bhil women, besides attending to the daily chores at home, help their folk men in the fields.

The word 'Bhil'²⁴ is derived from 'Bille' which means bow and arrow in Dravidian language. They are, therefore, known as the 'Bil' tribe. However, with the passage of time, the word 'Bil' changed to 'Bhil'. 'Bhil' is a Sanskrit word, which means to cut. So, those who lived in forest and cut trees may have been called the Bhils.

24. Ibid.

It is mentioned in the 'Katha Sarit Sagar' that the Bhils are known as good warriors. They did not allow invaders to enter areas in the Vindhya hills. They were known as 'Dasyu' which means robber. They have lived in India since ancient times. P.G Shah make a reference to the Katha Sarit Sagar of Gunadhya which says that in the 6th century, a powerful Bhil Chief had fought back successfully an attempt by an Aryan King to overrun areas beyond the Vindhya mountain. There is reference in the Ramayana regarding Sabari. It is believed that Sabari belonged to Bhil community. There is also the legend of Mahadev (Lord Shiva) marrying a Bhil woman Parvati, the consort of Mahadev, treated five Bhils as per her brothers to whom the sacred bull. Nandi, is given as a part of bridal dower (Dahej). Ptolemy describes Bhil as the philistines, or leaf-clad. According to local legends, the Bhils are descendants of Goho, the Son of Anjunbahu, who was the king of Abu.

The Bhil tribes live in Navsari, Dabhoi, Vaghodia, Sinor, Chhotaidepur, Sankheda, Savli, Tilakwada of Baroda district today. There are about 150 clans among the Bhils. Chief of them are the Damors, Vasaiyas, Parmars, Hathilas, Rathods, Solankis, Mahidas, Vasavas, etc. These clans are exogamous and people are prohibited from marrying within the same clan. They lead a semi-nomadic life of hunting, gathering of wild fruits and forest produce, shifting cultivation etc.

Vasava Bhils are also known as the Vasavadas. It is said that the Thakor of Nandod (Bharuch district) invited the Bhils with a view to rehabilitating them. They cut the forest, improved forest land and settled in the area. They are, therefore, called

“Vasava”. Their population spread with the passage of time to other parts of Gujarat such as Sinor, Karjan, Vaghodia, Bharuch district etc. Their main occupation is cultivation and agricultural labour.

According to P.G. Shah²⁵ the name Dubla is supposed to be a correct form of ‘Durbala’ (weak). It is said that this name was given to tribe by Aryan invaders. They are also called ‘Durvala’, which means one who is difficult to bend, that is strong-willed or obstinate. The interpretation fits the qualities of the Dublas.

The Dublas are found in Surat and Bharuch districts of Gujarat and Thana district of Maharashtra. They are classed among dark people called ‘Kali Paraj’ locally. The term is applied to the aboriginal tribes of Gujarat. They claim a strain of Rajput blood in themselves. People from higher castes such as the Rajput, the Kanbis, etc. had the Dubla women as their kept. The Dublas continued to retain such women without any fine in their community. The other tribes like the Kokanas, the Naikdas and the Chodhras admitted them on payment of the cost of food and liquor served to those who assembled at the admission ceremony. The Dublas have many sub-divisions based on the vocation they practiced and the geographical names of the places. They were tenants and dependents on landlords, and have adopted many

25. Shah P.G., Tribal life in Gujarat, Gujarat Research Society, Sansodan sadan, Bombay, 1964.

Hindu customs. They are hunters and eat meat, and drink liquor. The Dublas erect memorial pillars of stone and wood.

The Kukanas are concentrated in Dharampur, Valsad and Dang districts of Gujarat. They are the migrants from the Konkan region and are, therefore, known as such. They have settled on the hilly forests areas between Maharashtra and Gujarat.

They speak a Creole (dialect) made up of Gujarati and Marathi. They are backward, primitive and live isolated lives. They are shy; do not mix easily with others. Their main occupations are hunting, collecting edible forest produce and fruits, and work as laborers in forest as well as in agriculture. Due to poverty, some are unable even to buy bullocks, with the result that men known as 'Hathodia' are used to pull the plough.

They worship 'Brahm' and 'Vagh Dev'. Brahm is a stone placed near the tree called 'Samdi'. They offer clay horses, lamp stands and flags. The figurine of tiger is carved on a wooden pillar and is generally covered with 'Sindur' (vermilion). The Konkanas show no respect to Brahmins, and never use their services as priests. The age of marriage is between 16 to 20 for boys and 15 to 18 for girls. Polygamy is allowed. Widow marriage is practiced. A woman may leave her husband and go to live with another man if the latter agrees to pay her husband the amount he spent as dowry. If Konakana suspects his wife of adultery, he calls a meeting of the tribe. The Panchayat hears the case and if a case is made against the woman they fine the

adulterers. Part of the fine is spent in liquor and rest is made over to the complainant as compensation.

It is said that the Warlis are originally from Varalat, the northern part of Konkan was called Varalat. The Waralis lived there in the past and some of them continue to live there. They have migrated there from the Satpura and Vindhya mountains during the reign of Nizam Shah (1487-1637). Some claim their original home was Ramnagar (Dharampur) or Dadra Nagar and Haveli in Daman. At present, they inhabit areas in Valsad, Dangs and Surat districts. A sub-division of the Bhils, they are also found in Khandesh in Maharashtra.

The main occupation of the Warlis is agriculture and agricultural labor. Some are engaged in fishing, hunting, rearing fowls and gathering various forest products. Some migrate to nearby towns or go as far as Bombay in order to earn their livelihood. They are backward from the points of view of economy and literacy. They do not eat the bees or the flesh of dead animals. They are fond of smoking and drinking. The Warli men shave their head, but do not grow beards. The women plait their hair.

The Mavchis are migrants from Maharashtra. They are from west Pimpalner and Balgan talukas of Nawanagar in Khandesh. In Gujarat, they are found in Dang, Songadh, Amreli and Mehsana.

The Mavchis are generally timid, quiet and inoffensive people. They change their huts constantly move, from place to place. They have Khandadio system of marriage. In this type of marriage, the boy has to enter into a contract, with the girl's father for instance, say for a period of five years to cultivate his land and give his father-in-law whatever harvest he manages to reap out of it. During this contract period, the girl is allowed to live with the husband and have children. In case the couple is not satisfied with each other, they can divorce and remarry. Such cases are arbitered upon by the 'Panch' (Committee) of their community is also empowered to be an arbiter and impose fines.

The Mavchis are mostly illiterate and superstitious, tracing all evils to the influence of witches. They worship Astamba, Gavalimata, Vaghdev and Parmeshwar. They bury the bodies of their dead and at times even bury the property of the deceased with his body. They are mainly cultivators and use carts. They eat bees and a variety of animal food.

The Gamits or Gamata tribes are concentrated in Vyara, Songadh, Navsari, Dang, Uchchhal and Nizar talukas of Surat district. Their chief source of livelihood is agriculture. Most of the Gamits have agricultural land. Some hire land and share crops. Some are labourers and wood-cutters. Their economic condition is better than that of the other tribes.

The Gamits are simple, honest, hardworking, humble and law-abiding by nature. They are largely illiterate and superstitious. They eat lamb, mutton, rabbit and fowls, but do not eat bees or the flesh of dead animals. Gamit marriage takes place when a boy can climb a palm tree, that is, after the boy is 12 years of age. 'Khandhdia' marriage system is prevalent among them. Polygamy, remarriage and divorce are allowed, but both a widow and widower can marry a widower and a widow respectively. The dead body is cremated and cross-cousin marriages are allowed.

The Gamits worship Vaghdev, Samladev and Davimata. They never avail of a Brahmin's services nor pay him any respect. The Priest belongs to their own tribe.

The Dhankas, formerly had two divisions namely; the 'Vadvis' and 'Tadvis'. Those who settled on the bank of the River Narmada were called the 'Vadvis' and rest were known as the 'Tadvis'. Originally, the Tadvis belong to Pavagadh. They were Chauhan Rajputs. After King Mahommad Begda defeated the Rajput Chief, the city lost its prosperity and the inhabitants fled to different places in Gujarat. Those who fled and took shelter in the fields and fed themselves on 'Dhan' or uncooked rice were called the 'Dhankas'. It is said that the word 'Dhanka' is derived from Sanskrit word 'Dhanushyaka', meaning an archer or the holder of bows. The Dhanushyaka, as a fighting clan, has been mentioned in the Mahabharat as these having gone to Kurukshetra from Western India. At present they are found in Sankheda, Jabugam, Dabhoi, Chhotaudepur, Nasvadi and Western Khandesh (Maharashtra). The Dhankas show an intelligent outlook. Their main item of food is rice, Jower and Bajri. Wheat

is used only on festivals. They are used to living in joint families. Marriages are generally arranged by parents, but marriage by elopement is not rare.

The Tadvīs worship Hindu god and goddess. Their main festivals are Sitla Satam (to propitiate the goddess associated with small-pox), the Janmashtami (Lord Krishna's birth anniversary). They observe fasts on such occasions. They allow divorce and widow marriage. No money has to be paid to the bridegroom, but the Panch (Committee) on the tribe charges a fee. The remarriage ceremony is simple; the couple throws rice at each other in the presence of the headman of the tribe. The dead body is either cremated or buried as per the circumstances. If cremation is followed, then a Brahmin priest is called to offer 'Pindan' so that the soul of the deceased is set free from worldly worries and remains in peace. The Brahmin priest is paid about Rs. 25 to Rs. 30. Where burial is practiced, the ritual is less expensive. The dead bodies are buried on the bank of the river. Kasumbo (opium juice diluted with water) is consumed on the occasion. While burying the dead body, the head is placed towards the north. If the corpse is male, it is wrapped in white cloth and a female in red cloth. The cloth is known as Shelu. The tribe 'Panch' usually settles social disputes.

It is said that a group of Bhils joined the army and became known as Tadvī, for the word 'Tad' means an army. They consider themselves as Kshatriyas. During the regime of the Rajputs, they were employed as guards for ensuring the security of



villages or forts. The well-to-do Tadvīs have good property. Their sub-groups are known as Chauhans, Parmars and Chavdas.

There is legend prevalent among the Tadvīs that when there remained no person to offer sacrifice, God made a man from the dirt collected from his own feet and palms while taking bath. Since this is known as 'Tadīyu' the new man so created came to be known as 'Tadvī'.

The Khandesh Tadvīs adopted Islam as their religion during the reign of king Alauddin. According to Enthoven, they are the descendants of a crossbreed from Bhil women and Muslim men.

The word Naika is origin Sanskrit 'May' means to lead or to protect and one who leads is locally called 'Nayak'. It usually means a leader or Protector and represents the quality of leadership. According to P.G. Shah²⁶ Naikda with the diminutive suffix 'da' used as term of contempt for those members of the tribes who while living a nomadic life in hilly or forest areas. The Naikas are found in the Panchamahāl district and Vadodara Dist - Chhotaudepur, Sankheda, Naswadi and Vaghodia Talukas.

26. Ibid.

There are two stories prevalent about the origin of the Nayakas. It is said that their ancestors were grooms to Muslim nobles and merchants of Champaner who retreated to the forests and hills on the decay of that city towards the close of the 16th Century. The other story is that they have descended from the escort sent by the King of Baglan to the King of Champaner. In 1818, when they came under British authority, the Naikas had won notoriety for savage cruelty. In 1826, they were said to have exceeded the Bhils in their predatory behavior and lawlessness, cruelty, thirst for blood and love of independence in total disregard of all the customs and usages of social life. They are wood-cutters and tillers. They also gather the flowers and fruits of Mahuda tree, roots of medicinal plants, bark, gum, lac(lacquer), honey and wax from the forest.

The Naika women occupy a position of superiority in several aspects of the social life of the community. In almost every part of their work, the Naika women help their men. They leave their native place in search of employment when they become free from their toil in agriculture. Some of them are drummers and are invited by other tribes for festivals and marriages.

RATHWA

In India, the ethnic Rathwa tribes is generally found between the border of Gujarat - Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and very few of them in Mysore region. In Gujarat, the core of their habitation is in Chhotaudepur in Vadodara district and the

Panchmahal district. The border villages of Gujarat such as Jambua, Khadwani and Rajpur have a lot of Rathwa population. In Madhya Pradesh, they are found in Kathiwada, Alirajpur, Zabua and Jobar. Between Madhya Pradesh and Orissa, they are available in Raygadh and Sarguja districts, where they are known as the 'Rathias'. The whole of this region is a hilly terrain with forests with rivers like Mahi, Narmada, Men and Haran etc. flowing through it. A larger part of the area is covered by Satpura, Vindhya and Pavagadh hills.

Alirajpur of Madhya Pradesh is divided into sub-divisions namely; Rath, Bhabara, Nanpura, Chaktala and Chandpur. The Rath region has some 134 villages. The River Narmada flows from Rath area and the Vindhya hills of this region are occupied by aboriginal groups. It is said that the people living in Rath area were known as the 'Rathwas'. In the seventeenth century, some of them migrated from the hilly areas, to plains and changed their way of life from hunting and food gathering in the forest to primitive forms of cultivation. Since they considered themselves better than the others of their ilk, they called themselves 'Rathwa-Koli' to differentiate themselves from the other Rathwas. It is also believed that some of them marry in the Koli-tribe and hence this group is known as 'Rathwa-Koli'. They are comparatively economically better placed. In ancient times, they were powerful and occupied small territories. Their power was responsible for the fact that the other tribes kept in contact with them. Therefore, they consider themselves superior to others.

G.A. Grierson refers to the Rathwas and the Rathwa-Koli in his book²⁷ saying that both of them are mixed breed Rajputs and the Bhils. For the first time, it was he who had referred to the Rathwas as a tribal community. There is no discussion about them from 1871 to 1921 in the Census of India. The Rathwa tribe was subsequently added in the Census of 1931. In earlier times, the Rathwas were probably recognized by some other name or as the Bhilalas. This shows that the information on the Rathwas was available very late. The migrant Rathwas from Rath roamed for a longer period of time in remote areas and this may be one of the reasons why they came to very late.

According to Prof. Heddle²⁸ of Vienna University in Austria, an ethnic group called the 'Bhilala', found in the Vindhya Hills of Madhya Pradesh, is a sub-division of the Rathwas. They also migrated to Gujarat. They are also called the 'Rathwa-Bhilalas' or 'Bhilalas'. They are at present found inhabiting Chhotaudepur of Vadodara district. The Rathwas and the Bhilalas of Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh inter-marry and dine among themselves. They call this relation 'Roti and Beti' or Beri. In short, both are but a single tribal community. In many respects, they enjoy similarity in status, culture, belief, festivals, religion, ceremonies etc. They have many clans. The other ethnic groups live along with them.

27. Grierson.G.A., Linguistic Survey of India, Vol IX, Indo-Arian Family, Central Group Part III. The Bhil Language, 1907, p.4,51,95.

28. Ibid.

According to the Gazetteer of Alirajpur of 1908, it is believed that the word Rathwa is also derived from 'Rathod'. The ruler of Kanoj was known as Rathod. In 1370, the Rathod King Amand Sing went for hunting in Alirajpur. He then built a fort some 21 kilometers away from Alirajpur. The Rathod family settled in this place. The whole area was then under the possession of the Rathod King. He then captured Alirajpur. The Rathod allowed the people originally from Alirajpur to collect revenue from forty-two villages. The area of these villages was then known as 'Rath'.

Another pocket of the Rathwas inhabited an area called 'Paal'. This region is in Vadodara district. The Paal area is divided into two - one is Nani-Paal (Small-Paal) and Moti Paal (Big-Paal). Sankheda and Pavi-jetpur talukas of Vadodara district are known as Nani-Paal and the region from Pavi-Jetpur to Chhota Udepur is called Moti-Paal.

Geographically, this whole region is bushy and hilly. The word 'Paal' possibly derives from 'Pallav' or 'Palo' meaning leafy or bushy. In other words, it is a forest area. The outer limit of Paal extends from River Panam of Godhra to the River Orsang of Chhotaudepur, 22° - 45" N. latitude and 73° - 30" to 74° E. longitude. The Rathwas of Paal also migrated from Madhya Pradesh, and are known as Bhilalas.

The Bhilalas are divided into Bara-Bhilala (Big Bhilala) and Chhota Bhilala (Small Bhilala). Many of the Big-Bhilalas have accepted much from Hinduism while the second group retains its tribal identity.

Population of Rathwa :

According to the 1931 Census ²⁹, the Rathwa tribes were represented only in west Khandesh, Maharastra and 1941 census they also found them in Thane. Then, their population was 133 in Maharastra. In Gujarat they also found in Bharuch and Panchmahals district. In 1941 census their population in Gujarat was 35 %. The reason is not known. It might be possible that they had migrated to Gujarat. There is no reference to them available in the Census of 1951. In 1961 Census, the population of the Rathwas was found in three States of India, namely; Gujarat, Maharashtra and Mysore(i.e. Karnataka). In Gujarat, the Rathwa population is roughly found at 97.9% (135, 730), Maharashtra had 2.1% (2,874) whereas Karnataka had only four persons. From this, one can make out that their highest population is found in Gujarat. The Government of India thereafter ordered a detailed survey of scheduled castes and tribes in the 1971 census. The Government of India got a list of scheduled castes and tribes prepared in 1970. The Rathwa tribe is mentioned in this list. They are found living in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Rajasthan. In Gujarat, their population

29. Mukerjee. Satya. V., Census of India, 1931, Vol XIX, Baroda part I, The Times of India Press, Bombay, 1932.

(21.56%) and in 1971 was 40,605 (21.08%). Larger settlements are found in Devgadhi Baria. Sabarkantha ranks third. In 1961, the Rathwas population was only 150 (0.53%) and in 1971, it decreased to 58 (0.04%). This decrease may be due to migration. Sabarkantha is a dry region. Rathwa did not get sufficient income from agriculture and, therefore, they migrated from Sabarkantha in search of livelihood. Surat, Bharuch and Valsad districts had no Rathwa population in 1961. However, according to the Census of 1971 their population was found in these districts. Surat shows the Rathwa population some of 338 (0.18%) people, Bharuch 115 (0.06%) people and Valsad 42 (0.02%) people. In other places, their number comes to 154 (0.06%). They might have found some work in Bharuch, Surat and Valsad and, therefore, their population increased. They are engaged in labour work in urban areas. In agricultural season, some engage themselves in cultivation and agricultural labor. In slack season, they come to urban areas for work.

In Gujarat, a large number of the Rathwas live in rural areas. In 1961, some 1,35,713 people lived in rural areas and only 17 were in the urban area. In 1971, the urban population increased from 17 to 1,380 and rural population from 1,35,713 to 1,91,268.