CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF RELIGIOUS COMMON POOL RESOURCES: A STUDY OF THE SACRED GROVES OF JASPURNAGAR CHATTISGARH

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By

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Dedicated

to

Om   Sai   Ram
Sri Adya Nath Pandey (Father)
Late Mrs. Vibhuti Devi (Mother)
Mrs. Shweta (wife)
and
Ananya   (daughter)

CERTIFICATE

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      This is to certify that I, **Amitabh Pandey,** have earned out the research embodied in the present thesis entitled *Conservation And Management Of Religious Common Pool Resources: A Study Of The Sacred Groves Of Jaspurnagar, Chattisgarh,* tor the full period prescribed under Ph.D. Ordinances of the University of Hyderabad.
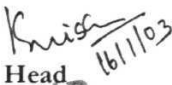
      I declare to the best of my knowledge that no part of this thesis was earlier submitted for the award of research degree in any other University.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

Human, for various needs, ranging from economic to belief system has utilized natural resources, which have been gradually integrated and incorporated in the social system of human beings by means of various institutional procedures. The economically developed world as well as some of the underdeveloped economies still depend on their own and the world's forest for survival, yet in different ways and meanings (Seeland, 1997). Conservation and sustainable management of natural resources has become central theme for almost all societies in order to meet shortages in timber or non-timber forest produce and over come the impact of environmental pollution. Economic development in times of increasing environmental hazards tend to create a dilemma in many societies which is bound to grow despite the often narrow limitations of declining resource base (Seeland and Schmithusen, 2000).

In this changing scenario of unabated exploitation of natural resources, there are communities who have devised mode of preservation of these natural resources (namely forest, may be by accident or experimental output, or by choice) by means of religious values system such as scared centres. These religious centres are referred as sacred groves. Sacred grove is a patch of natural vegetation in and around, indigenous habitation considered being an abode of ancestral deities or village deities. The presence of such groves has been reported continuously in the anthropological literature, from the exploratory stage of anthropological studies to till date. But the viewpoint, toward such centres was that of they are only religious centres. Anthropologists like Roy, (1915, 1928), Elwin (1947), Vidhyarthi and Rai (1976), Sahay (1976), BasuMullick (1992) concentrated on dealing with the belief system associated with such centres along with the rituals and rites and were not concerned of the ecological dimensions such as the vegetation and the richness of biodiversity existing in the groves.

In 1976, Madhav **Gadgil** and Vartak studied the sacred groves *of* Uttar Kannada (Karnataka), where they showed the significance of vegetation in it. Other ecologists and anthropologists influenced by this work joined in the fray of exploring such groves present in different tribal habitation all over India (Ramakrishnan & Bhooj: 1982, Malhotra: 1990, Chandran: 1993, **Kalam: 1996,** Roy **Burman: 1996,** Tiwari et **al: 1996** etc). Such studies were also going on, in the indigenous dominated areas of **Africa, Asia,** and South America **etc.,** to understand the management pattern developed to conserve such centres and prevent such centres from the damage.

Though it might not have been the motive **of** local population to be conservationist, but the belief system, which they practiced, did protect certain rare type of species, which were on the verge of the becoming extinct.

1.2 Definition of Sacred Grove

According to Dalton (1872:256-57) Sarna religion was of a composite order, which retained some portion of the belief, which the Oraon brought with them to Chota Nagpur. Later on the *Munda*, in due course of history, influenced them and acculturation took place by joining in their festivals and acts of public worship.

Roy (1928:3) describes sacred groves as the place where the old lady of the groves live and the village population propitiates her at the time of *Sarhul* festival in the month of **March-April.**

Sahay, (1976:2) *Sarna* in **Kurukh** term means a sacred grove, where old lady of the grove and several other indigenous deities and spirits are believed to reside and be propitiated during the *Sarhul* festival in the month of **March-April.**

Gadgil and Vartak (1976:152) defined "sacred groves as nature worship, where all forms of vegetation including shrubs and climbers are under the protection of the reigning deity of the grove and the removal of any material, even dead wood of twig is a taboo. This preservation of the entire vegetation in association with a deity is quite distinct phenomenon from the preservation of isolated specimens of sacred tree species such as Peepal *(Ficus religiosa)* or Umber *(Ficus **glomerata**),* which are often preserved and worshipped even with out any association with a deity.

Boojh and Ramakrishnan (1983:1) defined sacred grove as a small patch of vegetation, which has traditionally been protected by local communities and can range in size from less than one-hectare up to a few kilometres. These represent relic vegetation of the locally preserved in its original form with minimal disturbance. The preservation of these forests though on the pretext of religious belief is of importance for conserving germplasm that is otherwise under threat from human pressure.

The UNSECO Ghanaian "Co-operative Integrated Project on Savanna Ecosystems on Ghana" (UNSECO 1996) defined sacred groves as an area of "natural" vegetation preserved through local taboos and sanctions that entail spiritual and ecological values. The ecological values are found in the traditional association of the sacred groves with wildlife and physical landscape such as stream sources of hills. The groves is the focus for common religious and socio-cultural affinity for a number of surrounding village communities. The respective communities, together with their land, constitute the grove community area.

According to Hughes and Subhaschandran (1998:69) sacred groves as segments of landscape, containing trees and other form of life and geographical features that are delineated and protected by human societies because it is believed that to keep them in a relatively undisturbed state is an expression of important relationship to the divine or to nature. Diverse cultures perceive this relationship in different ways and establish various rules of behaviour in regard to sacred space and its denizen. But whenever they occur, sacred groves are of ecological and cultural interest. Ecologically sacred grove tend to be fragment of the original ecosystem in a given region although in some cases local people plant trees in groves, and there were, and are, consisting entirely of planted trees.

Hay-Edie and Hadley (1998:51) define sacred sites as made up of inorganic matter, stone or rock formations prominent in a landscape horizon. They offer powerful functional reference points and navigational aids for journey through a territory and may be visible to all visitors to an area. Yet while the shape and location of such markers give rise to innumerable legends and stories, which can be "grafted on" and interpreted by all those in contact with such sites, inert rock must be "brought alive by symbolism and the presence of divinities". Compositions of elements thus display varying levels of durability and symbolic continuity through time; rock as the hardest; water as the most unchanging yet flowing and trees and forest as symbolic of organic renewal yet vulnerable to ecological changes.

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Pandey and Patnaik (1999:369) defined sacred groves as culturally a living place of the deities and spirits of the village, which protects them from calamities and bring prosperity and a patch of pristine forest having well conserved biodiversity. In return the villagers regularly propitiate them by means of rituals, sacrifice on festivals or seasons designated for the same. These societies assign different degree of strength and attributes to these deities in the groves and the location of these groves within the village is done accordingly.

The definition of sacred groves given by different scientist above ranges from the description of anthropologists who explained sacred groves from the point religion where community is in relation with the deities and sacred groves is in their worldview. Where as the ecologist view sacred groves as a mechanism to conserve the needed species, and shaped by a rational man concerned about the sustainable management of the resource.

In general the sacred grove is a space within the village system of a community, demarcated for the deities of benevolent and malevolent nature and interaction with it patterned accordingly.

1.3 Distribution of Sacred Groves in the world and India

The presence of sacred groves in villages has been constantly reported in the earlier anthropological works on religion of small societies where they have been mentioning the meaning; the beliefs associated with the sacred grove in the form of nature worship and found in different parts of the world.

Brandis (1897), in his studies on Indian forest, mentions about existence of sacred groves in India. Roy (1915), while studying Oraon religion and custom states about the belief system associated with the worship of sacred groves in village system. Frazer (1935), in his work of "Golden Bough" has reported the existence of sacred groves in East African tribes of Kikuyu, who refer sacred grove as Mugumu. Similarly, the existence of sacred grove has been reported from West Africa (Bacchman, 1992). Dorm-Adzobu and Veit (1991), studied the community of Malshegu of Ghana have reported on existence of sacred grove and belief associated with it. Hughes and Chandran, (1998) have tried to compile an account on existence of sacred grove all over the world.

In Indian **context,** existence of sacred groves has been reported from Northeast region of country from the states of Meghalaya (where **Khasi** tribe referred it as *Law Lyngdoh*), **Sikkim,** and Manipur. In Chota Nagpur belt of sacred groves are found to exist in the states of Bihar and Jharkhand. In these states nearly every village of *Oraon,* **Munda, Lodha,** *Korwa,* **Gond,** *Baiga* has sacred groves referred as **Sarna,** *Jahjers, Mandar* etc. The tradition of *Munda* people of Bihar was that every village should have a grove, and that permission must be gained through sacrifice before cutting a tree or the tree gods would withhold rain (Ramakrishnan **1996:13).**

In Chattisgarh region, the sacred grove is reported among tribal groups of *Muria* **Gond,** *Maria Gond* and *Hill Maria* who call it as *Devkot* or **Mattikot.** In Madhya Pradesh the existence of sacred groves is reported in the villages of *Gond* tribe of Hoshangabad region referred as *Parhsa Pen.* **Bhil** tribe of Jhabua refers to sacred grove as **Devsthali.** In Maharastra, sacred groves have been reported from Ratnagiri districts and districts of Western Ghats and referred as *Deorais* or **Devrathis.** In Rajasthan, sacred groves are found to exist in the region of Udaipur district inhabited by Bisnoi community and are referred as *Orans* or *Kenris.*

In **Karnataka,** sacred groves are reported from Uttar Kannada district, Koorg district and are referred to as *Devrakadus* or *kans.* In Kerala, they are spread extensively and are referred as *Kavus* by the local communities and peasant groups. The sacred groves of north Kerala are mostly associated with goddess whereas the sacred groves of south Kerala are associated mostly with snake god worship. In Tamil Nadu the sacred groves referred as *Kuthuval kadu.*

The sacred groves are found to exist in the villages of homogeneous communities (tribe) as well as heterogeneous communities (caste groups). Sacred groves are found to exist in communities practicing different types economies ranging from hunting gathering communities *(Baiga)* to societies practices shifting agriculture *(Korwa)* and sedentary agriculture *(Oraon, Goand, Kholi).*

1.4 Sacred Grove as Common

Society interacts with the natural resources like forest, land, water and grassland for its economic as well as socio-cultural needs. For management and utilization of it, communities create different types of ownership regimes as well as institutions. Besides, it orients its cultural and social organization so that it is in accordance with management requirement. Generally four

types of regimes exist i.e., public, common, private and open access (Singh, 1994). In the case of indigenous societies all the four regimes seem to operate in fulfilling economic, social, cultural, and religious needs of the community. For example land is owned as private or common i.e,, agricultural land that is divided among the stakeholders by the prevailing mainstream (state) or indigenous distribution system, depending on the system operating within the community. The grazing land, cremation or Burial ground or sacred sites are mostly owned collectively but in some cases also privately.

Sacred grove is one such type of community owned regime in tribal areas of India, managed by institutions and social organization created by the local community for it. Presently these groves status is categorized as panchayat land, temple land and is owned by the state. Management of state controlled resources is a costly affair as excludability factors of "others" in common is not possible. This is due to lack of clear cut description by the state on use right and management norms of these commons, which results common becoming an open access. Secondly though in reality ownership is with the state but the usufruct right rests with the community. They continue to manage it through their traditional procedures.

A sacred grove is a religious common existing in traditional societies of the different countries and is managed by the traditional institutions. By studying the management practices of these groves one can see a similarity as well as variation existing in the procedure of the management of these groves. Generally it provides multiple functions to the society. Besides, providing religious function, it is used for social, cultural, economic and ecological purpose. To manage the existing sacred grove in the village ecosystem, the indigenous societies have developed intricate knowledge and belief system, worldview, selection mechanism of religious leader, procedure of control and effective management. Among the indigenous societies all activities are interwoven into one another, therefore the holistic perspective of anthropology would provide a clear outlook to understand the sacred grove from the perspective of religion, commons and indigenous knowledge system.

Sacred groves institution is created and culturally embedded in the social system. The institution affects human choice by influencing the availability of information and resources, by shaping incentives and by establishing of the basic rules of social interactions. Institutional innovation

contribute to development by providing more efficient ways of organizing economic activity, ways that often lead to fundamental restructuring of an economy (Nicholson, 1988). Institutional arrangement and procedures not only facilitates and enhances community-based management, but also complement to it, partnership and corporation are therefore to achieve community-based objectives (Betille, 1974).

1.5 Theoretical framework on CPR and Sacred groves management by Indigenous communities

The studies on the indigenous conservation and management system have been carried out for quite some time. The earlier studies did mention existence of sacred groves in the villages. Anthropological literatures on religion of tribal communities in India do refer to existence of sacred groves. Generally the beliefs associated with sacred groves were clubbed with the categories of theories of religion popular during early phase of study on the subject. Later on few scholars probed into the sacred grove belief system in the context of traditional religion and its situation in changing scenario under the impact of dominant religions like Christianity and Hinduism. These studies mainly concentrated on religious aspect of the sacred grove and studied them with the similar approaches of deities and rituals, taboo and prohibition associated with it. After 1976, ecological and conservation dimensions of biodiversity aspect was added into the study of these groves, which provided the knowledge on species in side the groves as well as the intricate management aspect developed by the societies. In this particular study the researcher has tried to look into the historical trend followed in the study of sacred groves till date. Different analytical arguments are put forth by the scientist on the various aspects of sacred groves.

A) Review of Literature on Sacred groves

The studies on sacred groves came into prominence in the decade of eighties, but the mention of sacred grove can be traced to late nineteenth century. The available literature on the sacred groves can be categorised into various themes like earlier work on referring about the existence of groves in the human landscape, origin of sacred grove institutions, ethnographic description, functions of sacred groves, and changes in the institution of sacred grove due to socio-political factors.

a) Early works referring the existence of Sacred Groves

The earlier studies on sacred groves reported of the existence of the groves found to be located in the different parts of the country. These were the works of British and Indian anthropologist, forest scientists.

Wingate (1888) noted that the *Kans* or sacred groves of district Uttar Kannada in Karnataka were of great economic **and** climate importance.

Brandis (1897) while studying Indian forest refers to the existence of sacred groves in the vicinity of human habitation. The network of groves that covered the subcontinent impressed him so much that he urged for a system of forest reserves and preserves modelled upon it.

Risley (1908:112) noted that, "everywhere we find sacred groves, the abode of equally indeterminate beings, which are represented by no symbols and of whose form and function no one can give an intelligent account, which have yet been clothed with individual attributes; they linger as survivals of the impersonal stage of early religion".

Roy (1928) in his work on religion and customs of Oraon community of Chota Nagpur belt ethnographically describes in detail the community beliefs and rituals associated with the sacred grove referred as Sarna in local dialect.

Griegson (1938), his study on communities of Bastar, reported that these communities do have sacred grove and belief system associated with it.

Elwin's (1947), study of *Muria* and *Maria* communities of Bastar mentions of belief system associated with sacred groves.

b) Studies on the origin of Sacred Grove

Some research works focused on the origin of the sacred groves. According to Kosambi (1962) a historian who consider that the institution of sacred groves in India is very ancient and date back to pre-agrarian hunting stage, before human had settled down to raise the livestock or till the land. Generally, his explanation followed the evolutionary trend of origin of sacred groves.

Gerden and Mtallo **(1990)** viewed on the existence of sacred groves as part of taboos evolved historically over several generations to provide a site for culturally crucial social interactions. For instance, circumcision of boys, discussions on village and tribal matters, creation of cultural conformity, restrictions on tree cutting but mature trees were allowed to be cut for building houses with collective sanctions etc.

Walope **(1991)** points out "invisibility" of natural sacred sites is both a literal concept referring to the material pressure of trees and regulation but also a metaphysical relationship to land which cannot be disassociated from such a perception of vital energies.

Sharma, et al., (1999) have studied sacred groves of Central Himalayas and state that community has indigenously evolved sacred grove as a mechanism to conserve bio-resources. But presently the protected resource does not enjoy the same status as enjoyed earlier outside the boundary of the temple or sacred site or point due to weakening of beliefs and external interferences.

Singh and Saxena **(1998)** gave a utilitarian viewpoint on evolution of sacred groves of Rajasthan. According to them with increasing pressure on land partly because of encroachment in common of grazing land by the powerful individuals, carrying capacity of grazing land started deteriorating. Under these conditions, isolating an area in the name of deity or warrior evolved as a mechanism of arresting unsustainable ways of human exploitation.

Singh et al (1998) considers that the causes of conservation is linked to natural disaster management like protection from earthquakes and abnormally high or low **precipitation/temperature** and are the major concerns fostering protection of sacred sites. People believe that protection from catastrophic events is provided by the supernatural power residing in the sacred sites. They have linked the management of economic activities such as sowing, harvesting, migrations to alpine meadows for grazing and collection of medicinal plants to the sacred grove. These activities are undertaken after conduction of religious functions in the groves and some time sacrifice is offered to please the deity. These features are found to be present in the religion of all caste groups.

Saraswati **(1998),** in his paper "The Logos and The Mythos of the Sacred **Grove"** traced the evidences of sacred grove in the *Upanishadic* literature and describes the different types of forest classification and existence of sacred grove in that period of time. He claims that the sacred groves of ancient times have been turned into sacred cities of modern times, like *Anandavana,* (the forest of Bliss) is a name for Varanasi. Similarly, *Vrindavana* (a grove of Basil plants) was converted into Vrindavana city (Mathura).

Hay-Edic and Hadley **(1998)** considered that small-scale societies identity remains rooted within a **dwelt-in** experience of landscape where divisions between the discourse of science, religion and art may not exist. Natural landscape features or building considered sacred therefore become 'markers' for individual to ground an idiosyncratic claim of the scared in their own life histories. The sacredness of natural sites such as forests, springs or mountains is theirs imbued with ultimate levels of reality unique to the spiritual integrity of a local place as set apart. Features of landscape may appears in a number of interlinked symbolic forms, either biological memories, historical markers orienting in a sense of temporal depth and social continuity in a locality or a mythological power places imbued with numinous qualities owning to the presence of deities or spirits.

c) Functions of sacred grove

The ecologists like Gadgil and Vartak (1976) studied sacred groves in Western Ghats, from ecological point of view. The view put forth for the existence of sacred grove in the village ecosystem was that, it was a bio-diversity conservation mechanism adopted by the community to conserve the species in some place by means of sacred institution. They studied the elements associated with sacred grove and ecological aspects of groves. They argued that sacred grove originated out of more secular causes such as utility of some plants for medicinal or other uses and not out of any sacred concern per se.

Ramakrishnan's and Bhooj **(1982)** work on sacred groves of *Khasi* community of Shillong, in **Megahalaya,** concludes on the similar point that it is a utilitarian approach of the community to practice the sacred groves management. He reported that sacred groves are a tract of vegetation

that was conserved and left untouched by the community considering it to be sacred resort of their deity and any damage to the site or grove will bring wrath on the community. This cultural practice in turn conserves a vast tract of vegetation and store rare and endangered species those have become or are on the verge of becoming extinct. This he interpreted as a mechanism of conservation by means of **socio-ecological** practice.

Paranjpe (1989) highlighted that the function of sacred groves is to maintain a hierarchical order with in the community.

Malhotra **(1990)** worked on the sacred groves of Manipur, and reported that the community uses these groves as a security and protection mechanism. These groves act as protector from the forest **fire,** which was a regular menace in the area.

Tiwari et **al (1996)** studied the sacred groves of Megahalaya from ecological perspective and the species richesness of the groves and its ecological importance in the local environment.

Gutpa (1998) considered that sacred grove as an institution has both utilitarian as well as non-utilitarian functions. The sanctions associated with its use might have evolved for performing a very important function of communication to keep the society together. According to him sacredness has another roots and that is our reciprocity with non-human sentient being such as insects, animals' trees and other aspects of nature. Many indigenous communities seek permission from deity of the forest before harvesting any produce or hunting any animals. The notion is that while destruction of some life is necessary for reproduction and continuity of other lives, there is no moral superiority of one over other.

d) Cultural perspective of sacred grove

Roy (1928) in his work on Oraon religion and customs discusses the origin of religion in Oraon tribe. Along with the origin of religion, along with that he also discusses the origin and types of sacred groves existing in a village and the nature of the deities residing in each of the grove. He also describes the festivals and details of rituals carried out in groves to propitiate the deities of the groves.

BasuMulIick **(1992)** focused on the origin of the Sama religion in historical context and through the linguistic interpretation explains the changes occurred in the terms used for referring different deities of the Sama religion. He highlighted the **inter-culture** diffusion of religion among communities living in the surrounding region and their influence on the Sama religion and the trends of changes occurred in the belief and understanding of the religion in due course of history by means of linguistics.

Roy **Burman** (1993), in his work on the sacred groves of Megahalaya, mentions about the strategic location of sacred groves along the trade route, where the moral authority of the priest-chiefs guided the free flow of commodity.

Kalam (1996) studied the sacred grove among the Coorg community from anthropological approaches of cultural significance of sacred grove in the religion of the community and its interrelation with the social system and states that it is interlinked in completeness to the social system. The reason for evolution of sacred groves is linked with **Malinowaski's** theory of religion i.e. psychological causes of fear or respect for god in the earlier times.

RoyBurman (1996) notes that sacred groves play important social role though they may not feature very distinctively in the day-to-day activities of the local people. In Western Ghats of Maharastra among *Mahadeo **Kolhi*** the sacred groves play important role in maintaining the clan control over the resources, among the *Kunhi* caste they assist in maintaining social hierarchy based on caste and social status. His work showed that sacred groves were not a feature associated only with tribal communities but also existed in the caste and peasant communities.

Malhotra (1998), in this paper gives an overview of the various anthropological dimensions of the sacred groves. According to him, the institution of sacred grove has many socio-cultural, economic, religious and political dimensions. The sacred groves have played and continue to play a very important function at various levels-village, local, regional and pan Indian.

Apffel-Marglin **(1999)** studied sacred grove and festivals associated with it from **sacred/secular** dimensions in a coastal village of Orissa state. According to him secular science created the **"sacred/secular'** as an other-worldly domain totally separate from **this-worldly** realms of nature and society. He argues that in celebrating the festivals in sacred grove the **sacred/secular**

dichotomy is not found. Rather than essentialist categories, local practice conjures a dynamic; shifting, alternating reality, in which no single principal or reality dominates. This work argues that unicity is lethal to diversity and secular-nation states have everywhere adopted science as both a strengthening and legitimising tool, thus endangering diversity. Newly emergent religious 'fundamentalism' negatively reflects the unicity of secular nation-state, whereas much of local practice retains its diversity-generating ways of life.

e) **Typology of sacred grove**

Vidhyarthi and Rai (1976) delineates on existence of sacred grove religion among the tribals of different regions of India. He gave the dichotomous view of benevolent and malevolent nature on which the deities are segregated and worshipped by the tribals of Chotanagpur region.

Berubaum (1996) presents an important seven-part descriptive typology for sacred mountains as; place of power; abode of deity or deities; as a garden, paradise' or wilderness; as connected to ancestors; symbols of communal identity; symbols of purity and longevity; and loci of inspiration and revelation.

Pushpangadan et al (1998) report that in Kerala groves are owned individually in the caste communities, collectively among the tribals. Some groves are owned under the control of public or trust such as greater tradition sacred groves of *Ayyappa.* The tribal groves are dedicated to Vandevata the goddess of forest or natural spirits or demon or ancestral spirits. The fisherman caste "*Dheevara*" or "*Aryan*" also maintain sacred groves in the coastal area of Kerala. These groves are called "*Cheerma*" or " *Cheerumba*" and patron deity is "*cheerma*" *Cheerma* is goddess of small pox and other epidemic diseases. The sacred groves owned by the caste families are dedicated mostly to snake gods (*naga*) or goddess or both. Sacred groves of the tribals living near and around the forest area are known as *"Madam Kavu*" or "*Yersikavu*".

Patnaik and Pandey (1998) reported the different types of sacred groves in the districts of Eastern Madhya Pradesh. According to them, the different types of sacred groves can range from two to four in a village. These types are based on gender, nature and functions of the deities.

f) Change in the institution of sacred grove due to External factor

Sahay's (1976), work "Under the shadow of cross", in the Chota Nagpur region of Bihar, discusses the impact of Christianity on the Sarna religion and on cultural and social orientation of the communities with the new system of adopted religion in conflict with the unconscious traditional religion of the past, and value system existing in the mind.

Hembram (1983) states that through the Sarna (Sacred Grove) Dhanna (religion) discrete ethnic groups in Chota Nagpur were brought to a common platform for asserting rights to self-determination. The Sarna **Dharma,** in fact helped them in consolidating their common identity and solidarity between Christian and non-Christian tribes of the region.

Roy **Burman (1995)** has highlighted the aspects of self-assertions in the *Gond* of Gadchiroli district of Maharastra. The *Gonds* have revived the Danteswari sacred grove to assert their identity and right of self-determination.

Mitra and Pal **(1994)** reported the role of sacred grove in environmental conservation. They observed that Sarna (sacred grove) was one of the basic factors that helped in stalling of the **Koel-Karo** dam project in Bihar.

Patnaik and Pandey **(1998)** reported the process of change taken in the faith towards sacred groves, in the category of converted Christians. They reported that there was a decline in faith from first generation converts to subsequent generation. As the values take time to be parted with.

B) Review of Literature on Common Property Resources Management

In the course of history of research, while the anthropologists were studying the sacred groves as religious centres, and the ecologists as well conserved biodiversity sites, another group of scientists were engaged in different dimensions of study related to community owned resources i.e. common property resources management. Initially the welfare economists (Hardin 1968) were debating on ownership and management of different regimes structure. This led to debates on the ownership and management of common property or pool resources existing in the villages. The earlier scholars have reported about the ownership of sacred groves as a commonly owned space but none studied it from the perspective of common pool resources.

In order, to understand sacred groves from the dimension of common pool resources theoretical perspective, attempt has been made to compile the various approaches and theories to study common pool resources and link with the sacred groves study. The researcher has considered only the institutional, social and cultural theory as they fall into the paradigm of anthropological studies and can help in understanding the sacred groves management in the present context.

a) Economic and Institution theorist perspective of Common Property Resources Management

The discussion of collective action started with the analysis of commons from the perspective of economic, game theory and rational theory model, where the individual decision-making or choice making capabilities in relation to the benefit achieved from using the commons was analysed. From this point of view, cooperative action or management became a subject of study. These theories mainly focused on the human action and attitude towards cooperation and on the causes for such action.

Hardin's (1968) article of "Tragedy of Common" in which, the depletion of pasture land in England is discussed from the point of management of commons and inferred that individual interest mostly over rule the collective interest. Therefore the management model of privatisation of state (government) was stressed forth. This initiated discussion on the protection and management of common property resources. This generated interest in the study of commons and the factors that can lead to collective action in community.

Hayek (1948) in his work on "Individualism and Economic order" considered that the structure of incentives might direct one to cooperate in small societies and endogenous property rules initiated by the village or group.

Olson (1965) work on "Logic of Collective Action" dealt with the decision-making qualities of the individuals and logic used by them to participate in a collective endeavour. He emphasised on the small size and homogenous nature of the group for effective collective management of the commons.

Culliman-Maragalit (1977) in "Coordination, Norms and Social Choice" considered that the key element that determines the success or failure of institutions foster coordinated expectation in relation to a particular physical and social environment.

Ostrom.V, and Ostrom.E, (1977) in the article "A theory for Institutional Analysis of Common Pool Resources, put forth an institutional mechanism to manage common Pool Resource, basically emphasizing on disinterested or neutral third party involvement in checking the problem of Common Pool resources This third party could be provided by government, court, experts etc. They talked about incentive mechanism for the individual working optimally for common pool resources development.

Sugden's (1984) article "Reciprocity: The Supply of Public Goods Through Voluntary Contributions" says that the more heterogeneous a community, the more difficult it coordination becomes.

Oakerson (1986) has developed a model or design for management of common resources efficiently. The model consist of four mutually exclusive subjects; the technical and/or physical attributes of the specific resources or facilities; the decision making arrangement (organization and rules) that currently govern relationships among users; the pattern of interaction among decision makers and outcomes or consequences. According to him for an effective and efficient management of common property resources all the four attributes have to be fulfilled and optimally achieved.

A group of thinkers started pondering over other factors responsible for cooperation and sustenance of the commons in small societies in different parts of the world, in order to contradict the view put forth by the Hardin theory. The significance of role of effective self-initiated institution in the management of commons came to be the factor for success of the conservation and efficient management of the commons.

Runge (1986) stated that in the face of environmental uncertainty, common property institutions may be created; rather than emphasizing the right to exclude some, these institutions provide instead for the right of many to be equally included as a hedge against uncertainty. This "insurance" against environmental uncertainties complements the relative efficiency of common property in pastoral situations where rainfall rather than land is a scarce resource.

Gupta (1986) in his study of management of commons by the Rajasthan communities, found that in **stratified** rural societies different classes of communities like landless, pastoralists or **cultivators-cum-pastoralists** can be expected to have varying stakes in protecting the environment. They also have differing expectations of the kinds of assurances that they should receive from various institutions that control resource use. These expectations may vary over time depending on the extent to which; the availability of the resource is affected by environmental change. However, other factors also alter expectations i.e. accumulated deficits or surplus in household budgets, mobility patterns. Simultaneously operations in factor (labour) and product markets alter the amount of insurance that different classes seek to cover risks in the' future supply of common resources. The implications is that "assurance" institutions that serve different classes, and hence that varying obligations do not emerge only through changes in factor price alone.

Thomson et **al** (1986) argued that institutional arrangement for the management of common-pool resources are created and evolved as response to certain combination of circumstances. According to them responses to exogenous shocks in one period become part of the existing set of institutional arrangements in the next, affecting the subsequent path of evolution in institutional arrangements.

Korten (1986) states that effective functioning of common property system depends on the existence of appropriate institutions. With many common property resources these institutions are local and informal and community based.

Berkes and Farvar **(1989)** considered that common property serve as interface, not only between society and resources, but also between the individual and the society at large. Social roles and obligations are often defined in terms of one's participation in work teams. Common property systems are an integral part of the local culture. Hunting, **fishing** and fruits gathering are a way of life rather than merely a means of earning a living. When societies are fluid, with large numbers of individuals only in casual contact, all having access to the commons, the tragedy is relatively likely. Hence to many whose worldviews are shaped by the urban-industrial society in which they live, with little intimate contact with neighbours and other members of society, the tragedy may appear inevitable. But, in contrast those who use of commons for long-term, such as

in the case of people living in small groups with tight communal control over the resource base and over social behaviour the management of commons are an inbuilt activity with in the social system.

Ostrom (1990) based on her analysis from number of self-initiated institutions, developed principles, which should be fulfilled for effective management of commons. According to her common assembly as a general rule that create a constitution, **defines,** modifies and enforces hierarchically layered sets of rules; appoints officers; monitors resources sustainability; collect and disburses money for improvements; adjust the allocation of benefits; defends the resources from encroachment and theft and deals with external agencies on behalf of its members. If above rules are efficiently, effectively implemented, institutions will be function vibrantly.

Ostrom (1995) stressed on the limitation of her designed principles and said that there is no blue print that can be used to create effective local institutions. She recommended, "design principles can be taught as part of extension programs. Associations of local units can be created to learn more from one another about how successes have been achieved or how to avoid some kinds of failure" thereby granting design principles a perspective status.

b) **Cultural Theorist Perspective of Common Property Resources Management**

The above rational choice approach, as discussed concentrated on the rational decision in the management of the commons. The anthropologist and sociologist findings in empirical studies of small-scale societies showed that common where managed not only by rational institution created for a purpose economic utilization of resources, but also by various cultural elements like kinship, religion and social organisation, which also played vital role in the common management. They highlighted that the decline in the management of common was not only due to failure of institutional system but also because of external factors like colonialisation, modernization and market forces.

Wade (1986) studied an irrigation management system in a district of Andhra Pradesh in India, where he explored the causes for the institution to function efficiently. He states that the factors responsible for collective action are proper power structure, presence or absence of village level organization, need for common property, conditions under which individuals formulates rule for

common property management. The central control at the village level provides protection against the externalities. The village organization through central control provides an efficient mechanism of decision making with respect to water and grazing. In this study Wade examined the common management from the perspective of ecological need of the localities entered into collective management.

Mesers (1986) discussing on the customary resources management in Nepal, found that belief systems in which nature is sanctified often function to hold resources abuse in check through some combination of respect and fear that disturbance to or neglect of the supernatural may cause more harm than good to the resource and to the people associated with it. At various levels, these beliefs serve to remind people of the miraculous (hence fragile) nature of the resource and of the people's own responsibilities to manage it for the sustained public good. The local traditions that have not been totally disrupted by exogenous changes, the management of these institutions have been designed by local user groups on the line of egalitarian and participatory principles (although certain historic conditions and styles of communal association vary from place to place). For example rules concerning resources use or abuse, monetary fees or in-kind contribution are collected to pay watchman and social ostracism befalls on those who neglect communal duties vis-a-vis the resource or who habitually neglect or debase the resources.

Jessup & Peluso (1986) studied common property resources management of minor forest produce in Indonesia. They found that the indigenous forest product collectors do not use all available resources or engage in all possible economic activities at any given time. Rather they switch from one to another or vary the degree of their involvement in response to changing opportunities and problems, including fluctuations in commodity prices and employment as well as environmental variation. These communities develop ownership rights by planting trees or by marking and tending a wild one. Kinship is an important factor underlying the property right. Ethnic groups and villages tend to be identified with more or less inclusive kin groups. Residence in a village, with the right to common property that it confers, is established by birth or marriage, and right to tenure. Inheritance is also according to kinship; descendants share equally in the inheritance of rights to land, trees, and other property.

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Granovetter **(1985)** argued for examining **economic** behaviour and social institutions in terms of their **"embeddedness"** within network of social relations.

Gibbs and Brommley (1989) defined institutional arrangements as the rules and conventions, which establish people's relationship to resources, translating interests into claim and into property right. Common property resource regimes are forms of management grounded in a set of accepted social norms and **rules** for sustainable and inter dependent use of collective goods such as forest, grazing grounds, fisheries and water resources.

Watson **(1989)** states that environmental and social problems may be created if the development of resource management system does not keep pace with the changing social, economic and environmental condition in less developed countries.

Freeman **(1989)** opines that local management can often be effective and with an equally large literature suggesting that many non-local, state management systems are both costly and often ineffective.

Bromley and Cernea (1989) argued that the breakdown of many traditional CPRs is not mainly because of interested actors on a commons but rather the effects of externally imposed social change due to colonialization, marketization and modernization. They noted that **colonialization** brought with it the taking of land and the implementation of non-CPR management forms and theory of rational choice, identify this exploitative period as the precipitating factor leading to the breakdown of many CPR system in the poor countries. Following colonialization, state intervention through nationalization and still later through marketization of common property contributed greatly to the break up of many systems of CPR. These consequences of change led to increased stratification in CPR communities, lessening the commitment to follow the rules of a CPR. They highlighted the missing perspective of power to understand CPR.

Brox **(1990)** discusses the controversy going on in, between and outside academic disciplines about the problems of the commons, also referred to as a "tragedy". He finds that a certain amount of this discussion is based upon epistemological misconceptions shared by disagreeing schools of thought. The common property theory (CPT) should not be considered as a statement about the world in the sense that it can be falsified by evidence, but rather as an analytical tool, a

part of the language we use in describing and explaining the world. He then goes on to demonstrate, using material from Northern Norway, that CPT must be considered a very useful analytical device, forcing us to see things that we otherwise easily ignore, and especially the language the aggregate implications of the local adaptations that we study. At the same time, the CPT has a potential to close our eyes to certain other and very important aspects of the commons, and especially the power and class implications of open and accessible resources.

Niamir (1990) noted that changes in community demographics and in the local physical environment could also undermine CPR's management. Droughts have put a tremendous strain on the productivity of rangeland resources in many regions, reducing their carrying capacity, making them more vulnerable to overuse and resulting in greater concentration of livestock. Increase in population have brought more demands on the land, resulting in pressure to divide CPR's into private holdings in an attempt to grow more food for household consumption and for the market.

Tania (1991) says that social organization of resources use and allocation is linked to a number of institutions ranging from family to state. Resource management regimes, as socially constructed practices, are found upon cultural knowledge, which is often constructed and renegotiated, in response to changing material condition and technology.

Reeve (1991) argues that property arrangements are not intrinsically valuable; at a normative level they are to be assessed by the contribution they make to the realization of values like liberty and justice.

Ireson (1991) noted that CPRs that have persisted typically exhibit social interaction among members, shared cultural norms and cooperative social institutions. He also notes some of the social changes that may lead to the breakdown of these characteristics. In his study in a Laotian village, he notes difficulties in maintaining collective activities as social and economic differences increase in the village. Degradation of the CPR occurs because wealthier "may become willing to risk village displeasure" as " they no longer need to depend on the village assistance".

Campbell and Godey (1992) put it that the strong corporate sense manifested by rural communities should not be mistaken for rural egalitarianism. Corporation should have identity and a sense of common purpose at a village level were perfectly compatible with the experience of sharp inequalities between and marked inter group rivalry.

Wade (1992) notes that the elite dominates the water distribution council, but decries caste influences on its decisions and on the enacting of the decisions by wardens. The main reason for this is the layout of agrarian landlords property. What the councils do is in the interest of agrarian elite, but the fact of scattered holding helps to ensure that the council's actions also promote common interests of landlords. Therefore the council becomes a kind of "privileged group" with the minimum coalition whose members find it in their private interest to bear the transaction costs of organizing others to share in the costs of providing the communal goods.

Granovetter and Swedberg (1992) emphasized to study common property resources management from embedded perspective. According to them economic action is socially enmeshed in economic and non-economic institutions and networks of ongoing social relations. In their work, "embedded" has two distinct and valuable meanings. One is the methodological prescription that analyses economic behaviours. This position reflects the facts that all economies are in some way embedded in other and larger structures. The second is the ontological claims that cultural systems differ in the extent to which economic transactions are embedded in social life and construct culture.

Hanna et al, (1995) stated that the external world has been recognized as one of the sources of uncertainty that make the organization of collective action processes regarding CPRs a complex undertaking, the external world is regarded as a given fact in CPR analysis.

Similarly Brouwer (1995), based on assessment made from the examples of successful and abortive Common Property Resources Management, suggest that instead of focusing on the property regime, one has to identify how in certain society or social entity or community differences in access and control over resources bear on normative principles like democracy and equity.

According to Gallon and Law (1995) in a social perspective, collective action is considered to be socio-technical process; collective action involves not only people and resources such as a common, and so on. Interactions between individual stakeholder and the non-human entities in the environment, as well as agreement between the resource users and other people, are key factors underlying cooperation and other action in everyday life.

Bell (1998) argues that any collective action that persist over space and time must be conceived as a solidarity of interest, it must equally depend upon a solidarity of sentiments-upon the social coordination of reciprocal or complementary concerns for the interests of others and upon the affective and normative ties that leads to such coordination.

MaCay and Jentoft (1998) argued that best-known perspective on the so-called "tragedy of commons" underscores important conceptual and hence policy errors to common pool resources, can take place. They have characterized this perspective as a "thin" or abstract, generalizing explanatory model, with strengths and weakness. Therefore they stressed for a "thicker" or more ethnographic perspective that emphases the importance of specifying property rights and their embeddness within discrete and changing historical moments, social and political relations. They argue that this perspective leads to a focus on "community failure" rather than " market failure" as the presumed cause of environmental problems, hence, to the question about how markets, states and other external and internal factors affect the capabilities of communities and user-groups to respond adequately to environmental change.

Stein and Edwards (1999) studied CPR from social constructive approach. According to them a wide range of resources might be used in common by more than one person, thus comprising a common pool from which individual might draw products or benefits. Such resources may or may not be characterized by the formal or informal use. They consider that social constructivist approach adds an important dimension to the study of CPRs in that it examines how the various stakeholders construct CPRM and how it operates overtime. Adopting social constructivist perspective will help researcher and practitioner to be sensitive to both internal and contextual factors influencing the actors' motivations to adopt a certain strategies, by explaining the process resulting in certain outcomes of CPRM rather than merely describing such outcomes. Secondly, rather than analysing CPR from the framework of success and failure, it should be put to in depth analysis and should try to offer explanation and causes for the outcomes.

C) Review of Literature on Indigenous knowledge studies

At the small society level all resources are collectively owned and managed. These traditional societies through ages by interacting with natural resources have evolved knowledge and system of management of the resources, which is reflected in their culture, belief system, and economic activities. The knowledge possessed is mostly experiential in nature and unexplainable events are explained as an effect of super natural power. In contrast the modern science based on principle of rationality, out rightly rejected the cultural practices of traditional management and developed controlled environment tested practices based on the rational choice principles devoid of values and belief system. This, most of the time came in contradiction with the local practices system designed by the community. When these value free practices were implemented in communities they could not imbibe them as it created confusion and contraction in their social system. This resulted in consideration for via media to take development to people and solution came forth was in the form of traditional knowledge system which catered for the value based management system.

The concern for indigenous knowledge gained significance in order to find an approach to development, which is low capital intensive and high people or community intensive. Basically this was due to the fact that majority of the communities still continue to practice the traditional resources management approach. When comparison of the two approaches was carried out it was found out the traditional management approach was more sustainable because it was community approved and in built in the culture of the local region. Therefore it becomes essential to understand the place sacred groves have in the local management model and knowledge linked with it. Above all is it's over all importance in social system governance of the local culture. Here an attempt is made to compile the theoretical development in indigenous knowledge and its linkage to development of the natural resources.

LeviStrauss (1962) said that primitive cultures are more embedded in their environments; primitive peoples are less prone to analytic reasoning that might question the foundation of their knowledge; primitive thought system are more closed than scientific mode of thought and thus less subject to change in the face of contrary evidence.

Richards (1967) recommended that it might be most fruitful to investigate the differences in social mechanism for preserving knowledge's of religious symbols, myths and categories of experience, and for passing it on to the next generation. These views suggest that we should consider the importance of indoctrination in establishing belief, the techniques of persuasion and the stimuli involved.

Goody (1977) considered that content and accumulation of knowledge in any society depends on the experience of its members, their learning and their methods for preserving and transmitting information. The division of labour, form of specialization and political control of knowledge all contribute to the relativity of ideas in different societies. Difference in teaching methods, in the kind of stimulus and incentives given to people at successive stages of their development, provide grounds for understanding how cultural variations in attitudes to knowledge and values are established.

Howes and Chambers (1980:330) referring to Indigenous Knowledge as Indigenous Technical Knowledge prefer to differentiate it from scientific knowledge on methodological, rather than substantive grounds - an important difference between science and Indigenous Technical Knowledge lies in the way in which phenomena are observed and ordered. The scientific mode of thought is characterized by a greater ability to break down data presented to the senses and to reassemble it in different ways. The mode of Indigenous Technical Knowledge on the other hand is concrete and relies almost exclusively on institution and evidence directly available to the senses. A second distinction derives from the way practitioner to the mode of thought represent to themselves the nature of the enterprise in which they are engaged. Science is an open system whose adherents are always aware of the possibility of alternative perspectives to those adapted to any particular point of time, Indigenous Technical knowledge on the other hand, as a closed system is characterized by a lack of awareness that there may be other ways of regarding the world.

Brokensha et.al.,(1980:7) states "development from 'below' for many reasons, a more productive approach than that from above, and an essential ingredient is indigenous knowledge - to incorporate in development planning indigenous knowledge is a courtesy to the people concerned; is an essential first step to successful development; emphasis on human needs and

resources rather than material one alone; makes possible the adaptation of technology to local needs; is the most efficient way of using western 'Research and **Development'** in developing countries; preserve valuable local knowledge; encourages community self-diagnosis and higher awareness; leads a healthy local pride; can use local skills in monitoring and early warning systems; involves the users in feedback system, for example on crop **varieties"**. These positive reasons - together with the negative reasons, such as the likelihood of failure without using Indigenous knowledge - constitute strong case for incorporating this knowledge in development programs.

Posey (1985) considered that serious investigation of indigenous **ethno-biological /ethno-**ecological knowledge is rare, but recent studies shows that the indigenous ecological zones, natural resources, agriculture, aquaculture, forest and game management, to be far more sophisticated than previous assumed. Furthermore, this knowledge offers new models for development that are both ecologically and socially sound.

Warren (1989) says modern scientific knowledge is centralized and associated with the machinery of the state; and those who are its bearers believe in its superiority. Indigenous Technical Knowledge in contrast is scattered and associated with low prestige rural life; even those who are bearers may believe it to be inferior.

 Thrupp (1989) considered that Indigenous knowledge is not just about immediate technical solutions to everyday problems but that it also contains non-technical insights, wisdom, ideas, perceptions and innovative capabilities which pertains to ecological, biological, geographical or physical phenomena.

According to Berkes (1989) who preferred calling Indigenous knowledge system (IK) as Traditional Ecological knowledge system (TEK) considered that the renewed interest in traditional management systems stems partly from the past failures of development projects and search for viable and sustainable alternatives to current models of resources use. Renewed interest is partly due to a new found pride in traditional values and institutions, both in the third world countries and in the west. Most cultures - developing countries - emphasise responsibility to the community, rather than the unbridled individualism glorified in some western industrial

cultures. Communalism is an important mode of thinking and of managing resources throughout the world from the nomads of the Arabian Peninsula to native Amerindian people. It is not an accident that traditional resources - management systems are often community based. Different mechanism and process have been developed by these communities to transmit and preserve community based knowledge system within the communities. They have institutions to transmit the knowledge at intra and inter generation level.

For Warren (1991) the local knowledge is unique to a given culture or society. Indigenous knowledge in contrast with the international knowledge system generated by universities research institutions and private firms, is basis for local level decision-making in agriculture, health care, food preparation, education, natural resource management, and a host of other activities in rural communities. Such knowledge is passed down from generation to generation, in many societies by word of mouth. Indigenous knowledge has value not only for the culture in which it evolves, but also for scientists and planners striving to improve conditions in rural localities.

E.Evans Pritchard (1992) says science deals with relations. It becomes more intelligible when it is renewed not only in relation to empirical activities but also in relation to other beliefs as part of a system of thought. Knowledge of the social structure is here obviously required for the understanding of some features of religious thought. Then again, religious rituals are performed on ceremonial occasions in which the relative status of individuals and groups is affirmed or confirmed, as at birth, initiation, marriage and death.

Banuri and Apfell-Marglin (1993) considered that traditional knowledge systems are embedded in the social, cultural and moral milieu of their particular community. In other words, actions or thought are perceived to have social political, moral and cosmological implications, rather than possessing only say a purely technical dimension. By contrast the modern system of knowledge seeks to distinguish very clearly between these different dimensions. Technical questions pertain to cause and effect relationship in the natural environment and can coexist with many difference social, moral political or cosmological contexts. Unlike modern knowledge, which bases its claim to superiority on the basis of universal validity, local knowledge is bound by space and

time, by contextual and moral faction. More importantly, it cannot be separated from larger moral or normative ends. In order to make knowledge universally applicable and valid it is necessary to dissembedded it from a larger epistemic framework, which ties it to normative and social ends. Generally in the local context, it anchors technical knowledge to a particular social group living in a particular setting at a particular time.

Dei (1993) considers that indigenous knowledge includes the cultural traditions, values, beliefs, and worldview of local people as distinguished from scientific knowledge. Such local knowledge is the products of indigenous peoples' direct experience of the workings of nature and its relationship with the social world. It is also holistic and inclusive form of knowledge.

Law (1994) says that sociologist of science, who opposed the conventional belief that only false or unexplainable **scientific** knowledge needed sociological explanation, developed symmetry principle. This belief stems from the assumption that if **scientific** knowledge is false, this caused at the end of the trajectory, when some thing went wrong. The very nature of true scientific knowledge thus made it exempt for sociological analysis. The opponents of this beliefs argued that this is asymmetric explanation.

Agrawal (1995) considered major themes that presumably separate indigenous from western knowledge on three chief dimensions; substantive-there are differences in the subject matter and characteristics of indigenous verse scientific knowledge; methodological and **epistemological-the** two form of knowledge employ different methods to investigate reality, and posses different worldviews; and contextual-traditional and western knowledge differs because traditional knowledge is more deeply rooted in its context. Indigenous knowledge is scattered and institutionally diffused, it possesses only as prestige value, even for its adherents and in the last analysis it is the cultural heritage of indigenous peoples. Western knowledge on the other hand is centralized and carries high prestige, and it is knowledge, which is held by the western peoples.

Wiersum (1997) says indigenous knowledge is more a life style than merely a set of traditional skills and know-how, which may easily be transferred to other socio-cultural settings. The appeal of local and indigenous knowledge is not its transfer or operationalisation, but its local value as a means of cultural persistence and continuity.

Seeland (1997) considers that indigenous knowledge provides the basis for grassroots decision-making, much of which takes place at the community level through indigenous organizations and associations where problems are identified and solution to the problems is determined. Solution-seeking behaviour is based on indigenous creativity leading to experimentation and innovations as well as the appropriate of knowledge and techniques introduced from other societies.

According to Lewis (1998) very word 'belief' often implies in its usage a judgment about the uncertain truth, where as the reliability of knowledge that has been asserted does not convey the same doubt as belief. Knowledge is legitimate 'belief only questionably so. Both terms may refer to an attitude or state of mind on the pact of the subject (that of believing, knowing) both may refer to the content or proportion (that which is believed to be known). The indigenous system has more of belief and modern system has more knowledge-based information. Sociological explanation of knowledge is associated with ideas, with the type of society and social structure. They look for consistency, continuity and integration, which imply mostly conservative effects. If the social structure persists, so will the functions and values, which produced and maintained the key ideas. The people share a language, concepts, upbringing and outlook. The shared experience orients and motivates many of their interest and attitudes.

Vannuci (1998) says in all cultures, certain aspects of knowledge become stereotyped and the original meaning or causes of the belief are forgotten with time.

According to Hay-Edie and Hadley (1998) one part of the movement for popularisation of indigenous knowledge was to revalorise the traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) of local peoples, many natural landscape features such as forests, groves, mountains, islands, springs and caves becoming the objects of conservation interest owing to their status as sacred places. Environmentalists see in such sites a capacity by traditional societies to conserve biodiversity as a result of their local symbolic systems while indigenous peoples themselves are mobilizing their efforts to have these sites, central to the perpetuation of their cultures, legally recognized and protected at the national and international level while remaining under their own local administrative control.

According to Purecell (1998) indigenous combined with knowledge is considered to signify a methodology, a social science perspective and even philosophical and ideological positions, all of which rest on the recognition of the asymmetrical place of knowledge in the power relations historically constituted by the expansion of Europe. Knowledge is understood as that which carries the attributes of inconvertibility (although at times probabilistic rather than absolute) objectivity, rationality, testability and finally the bedrock of positivist legitimacy, replicability or **verifiability. Verifiability** and replicability imply that not only may something be known but also that the methods of discovery must also be known, and **further,** that the 'knowledge' must contain the element of explanation. This concept of knowing therefore excludes that which is known intuitively even if extrapolated from long-term experience or uncontrolled observation. More generally, this type of knowing excludes knowledge that may be considered true only within or specific cultural narrative world, for example rules of specific cultural practices, origin stories or folk euphorisms. Casual or correlation links may be postulated, but may not be testable.

1.6 Research Question (Conceptual Framework)

The review of literature on the theoretical approaches in different disciplines shows that attempts have been constantly made in different subject areas to understand the patterns of management of resources in general and commons in particular. The scientists have tried to explain conditions and procedure for collective choice, patterns of resources uses, and changes in it due to external influences in course of history. While in the case of development of knowledge, scientific or rational knowledge dominated the research field and undermined the importance of local knowledge, except for the social science disciplines like Anthropology. But the recognition of the local knowledge gained significant ground when the application of the scientific knowledge failed to bear the intended result due to social and cultural obstruction in acceptance of the rational knowledge, which some times stood in contradiction to the local knowledge.

The theorists on commons can be categorized into four clear-cut streams viz. economic, game theory, political economy and finally social cum cultural perspective. The first three can be again clubbed into the category of rational choice theories, which is derived on the principles of rational approaches based on objectivity. The approach here is application of dominant, universal

theories of economy, game theory and political economy to understand the common pool resources management. For example, the game theorist tries to explore through mathematical model and game situation, the factors and necessary conditions that will result into collective action. Likewise the economic theories sees the man as a rational man taking decision individually devoid of cultural and social restrains to optimise his gains. According to them, these aspect of individualism lead to degradation of resources therefore they suggest various management approaches to curb the individual rationality in favours of collective rationality. The scientists from political economy emphasise on resources and power relationship, and suggest for crafting institutions made of bureaucratic principle and implementing in the management of natural resources. The methodological approaches followed by these theorists were mostly theoretical and less of empirically field-tested methods.

The fourth category of theorists belonged to the Anthropology and Sociology disciplines, whose major strength are empirical studies based on ethnographic approach. They stress on micro or middle range theory in comparison to mega theories, when it come to study of the human societies. According to them generalisation will distort the results due to cultural diversity and cultural variation existing within and beyond the region. The empirical studies showed that in small-scale society man acts rationally to manage the resources, but his rationality is contextual to his own cultural sphere. Unlike economists, who translate diverse values into a common standard of reference, cultural analysts are more likely to analyse the phenomena in a particular cultural context.

In the small-scale societies the need and process of management is governed by social cultural, needs and these are given preference over the utilitarian needs (not the basic needs). These societies use different patterns of resources management for different kinds of resources used by the community for its various needs. It categorises resources into different units to be used for particular purposes and has designed institution to manage each one exclusively for that particular purpose. The principles of management of the resources in these societies can be correlated with the degree of difficulty in managing a resource and making use of extreme mode of management i.e. for example sacred resources used for psycho-cultural purposes are managed with the help of sacred symbols and strong taboos and prohibition to restrain the person for deviating from the rules and to make him strictly abide by the norms of the community. On the contrary the economic resources have secular pattern of management, with lesser degree of restriction and control.

The anthropologists tried to question the issues raised by the other scientists and with the help of empirical evidences challenged their theories. The emphasis was that in the small-scale societies the institution of kinship and religion dominated other institutions. All the institutions and social organization at micro level are embedded in the cultural system, seeing them sectorally will not give a complete perspective of resources management rather than it will give a distorted view which, will **further** complicate the issue of resource management. Therefore the need is to study the resource management problems from holistic perspective and taking the micro level approaches against the macro level approaches.

The evaluation of development programmes carried out in different parts of the third world countries indicated that programmes designed on the principles of western knowledge (rational man knowledge) alone can not bring improvement in the life of small scale societies. The importance for indigenous knowledge system gained weight and section of development planners started believing that the incorporation of indigenous knowledge (culturally embedded knowledge of small scale man) along with the western knowledge can bear the fruits of development.

Simultaneously the concern for the conservation of Biodiversity and sustainable management of natural resources was gaining importance in the decades of eighties and nineties. At the same time decentralisation of power to the local population for the management of natural resources by means of their traditional practice was initiated under the philosophy of participatory resources management. Therefore the quest to know the traditional practices of community based management system gained importance in resource management area. This generated interest in the scientists of Common Property Resources and Indigenous Knowledge to test their hypotheses on factors and causes for collective management in the traditional communities and paradigm and principles of knowledge system existing in the traditional communities.

Sacred groves being one such traditionally managed resources collectively owned by the community. Anthropologists were already perusing studies to understand the culture for explaining the existence of such resources from the perspective of religion. While anthropologists tried to understand sacred groves from a holistic perspective, where in the communities shares it collectively within the social group as a sacred place of the super natural

power (religion) with in the social system and had designed a cultural system for interaction with it. These sacred centres are based on certain cultural principles and had a linkage with other sub-systems of the village community. However, the ecologists have analysed sacred groves from utilitarian perspective and considered it as a conservation strategy adopted by communities to protect resources and its biodiversity. According to them, the communities have created institutions in the social system for the management of sacred grove to regulate the human interference that causes damage to the resources.

The indigenous knowledge system perspective of sacred grove when looked along with the management of common property resources perspective, it offers well sustained and embedded institutions for resources management, which helped in sustenance of the society for long time in history through various cultural upheavals.

In this study the researcher makes use of anthropological approach of holistic perspective to understand the interaction patterns of the communities (as a collective unit) living in villages with these sacred resources. The emphasis here is that resource management practices are developed and embedded in socio-cultural system. The social structure of the society takes into account all types of resources available in the village ecosystem from tangible to non-tangible and used by the communities for livelihood as well as for social and psychological support. These are patterned into the cultural system at different levels. For the management of these resources, institutions that are engaged are structured specifically for each particular institution differently. These are embedded in overall structure of social system. The respective roles, rules, incentives and sanctions for management are gradually synthesized, evolved and acquire stability. The culture assigns symbols sacred or profane as per the needs and utility to the social system to the natural ecosystem with which it interacts.

1.7 Objective of the Study

The following objectives have been identified for the study of sacred groves existing in the Jaspur district of the Chattisgarh state of India. The focus of the study is communities that are having faith in the sacred grove culture. The specific objectives are as follows:

- to understand existing status and culture of sacred grove in the Jaspur region;

- to analysis the management of the sacred groves from the **perspective** of management of common property resources and analyse factors for the collective action, sustenance and deterioration;

- to delineate the indigenous knowledge system developed and conserved with respect to sacred groves, and the process of transmission;

- and to assess the threat concerning protection and management of sacred groves.

1.8 Research Methods

The method followed here is traditional anthropological ethnographic approach based on participatory observation method. The ethnographic approach provides the cultural panorama of the society, each component intermeshing into one another giving completeness to the culture of the community. Sacred grove and common pool resource are two different components of the culture viewed segment wise by scientists of different disciplines. Here an attempt is made to understand sacred groves and common pool resource as element of culture. Culture sees them in contextual terms rather than in tight jackets systems. The research started with the framing of the objective of the study. After analysis of existing literature in the various subject areas the objective of the study was formulated. For this literature was collected on sacred groves, common property resources and indigenous knowledge systems from books and journal, libraries, government records and gazetteers etc. After working on literature review, the question to be addressed was developed for the research. After this the next issue was selection of study area from where the data collection for the research.

1.8.1. Selection of Study area and villages

Based on the information available from the secondary sources, sacred groves as belief system is found to exist among the communities of Gond, Oraon, Bhils in undivided Madhya Pradesh state of central India. The selection of study area was done on the basis of three criteria. One being that those communities, which are practicing sacred groves belief system, must still be living in some form of relative remoteness. This was possible, only for those areas, which are still relatively cut off from the mainstream because of inaccessibility of the region due to lack of proper communication system. This criterion was identified for providing an opportunity to

study the society, which still has some cultural traits in original forms and practices. Second criterion for the selection of the study areas was that the groves selected for study should have some form of vegetation. The sacred groves existing in the village ecosystem are to be collectively owned and managed. From it economic and social benefit is being derived by the society. A third criterion for selection of the study area was that the communities with a sizable population existing in the region, must be following sacred grove faith for reasonable period of time.

Jaspur district has thirty five percent of forest cover of its total geographical area. This district earlier formed the part of undivided Madhya Pradesh state. In November 2000, sixteen districts from Madhya Pradesh were separated to form Chattisgarh state. Jaspur district is not connected by train route. A state highway runs from Ranchi (the present capital of Jharkhand state) to Raigarh via Jaspur. Oraon community who constitute 60% of the population of the district (Census 1991), provided an opportunity to study villages of similar condition to verify the belief system, knowledge and management practices existed in relation to the sacred groves in the area. Though the villages in the region were heterogeneous in nature, Oraon were dominant in number in most of the villages. This enabled the researcher to see the presence/penetration of belief system in other communities in a village, where the sacred resources are managed collectively.

Therefore, for this particular study Jaspur district of Chattisgarh was selected on the basis of above criteria. This region was under the influence of Christian missionaries and Hindu missionaries in the course of history. A large population of tribal have adopted Christianity, and a section of them later on re-converted into Hindu fold. This process led to an assault on the traditional knowledge system by both the external factors. This situation also gave an opportunity to know how the knowledge system was affected and conserved by the community in this dynamic process of social changes taking place in the region and meaning given to sacred groves culture and the grove by these missionaries.

After selection of the study area i.e. Jaspur district the next stage was selection of the area for fieldwork. For this, Jaspur block of the Jaspur district was selected. The reason for selecting this block was that this block falls in-between the three-altitudinal zone of the district. Secondly this region has a mix of agricultural and forest economy for its population, which provides an opportunity to study the various resources management pattern existing in the communities. After this the matter of village selection for intensive fieldwork was taken up.

1.8.2 Selection of Villages and coverage

The selection of villages for the study, was based on the factors of i) the number of groves existed in the village, and ii) dominant communities residing in the village. Purposive selection was done to identify the villages for the study. The criteria for selection of villages were a) heterogeneous composition of the village, and b) accessibility of the villages for fieldwork as the region is having dense forest. Based on these criteria four villages were selected for the fieldwork. The Oraon communities dominate these villages and are practicing sacred groves belief system since ages. One village selected has only non-Oraon communities practicing Sarna belief system, while the entire Oraon population have converted to Christianity fold and no longer practice the Sarna faith.

Four villages identified for the study, were extensively surveyed and the whole villages were covered in order to know the different perspectives the population regarding the belief, knowledge, practices, participation and management of sacred groves in the village. Second purpose for studying the entire population was to know social organization of village with relation to sacred groves for various economic and socio-political activities. Third reason for covering the entire population was to know the process of knowledge dissemination, within the generation and between generations and division of labour etc.

1.8.3 Fieldwork & Data Collection

The method applied for the study was ethnographic approach with participant observation as an important research tool. This method professes for the study of a culture in its totality. In order to meet this objective, it was essential to do fieldwork in the region by interacting with the people. For the same, data were collected from the secondary sources on demographic profile, physical features, forest conditions and types etc., from district revenue office, forest department, and tribal welfare department. The fieldwork was carried out to collect the data from the study area. The duration of fieldwork was spread out in number of phases of small duration of stay in the field (because of the limitation of the researcher faced as an employed person). The total duration of the fieldwork is about one year.

1.8.4 Tools and Techniques

A schedule was prepared for collection of data on general information at the household level. The schedule consisted of questions ranging from the family details to cultural practices of the people; the village political system, religious system, economic system, social system and interrelation with the outside world.

After the general **data,** specific data regarding the culture was gathered from the interviews with the key persons in the village associated in the management of the groves like Baiga (priest), **Kotwar** (watchman) and village **Patel** or Mahato (village traditional chief), who are the custodians of information on the culture of the sacred grove. Discussing it with people retested the information available from the key informants. The information on linkage of sacred grove with the village social system, rituals, place in the worldview, prohibitions and taboos etc., was gathered from the key informants and people. The researcher participated in some of the ceremonies to know the symbolic explanation of the ritual process and meaning the community tries to derive from some occurrences. Discussions with the people of the villages form the basis of data on the management of sacred grove as common, the matter of ownership and utilization rights of the people of the village, differential usage, NTFP collection, grazing, use as a social place etc.

1.8.5 Data Analysis

The data collected form the villages were subjected to qualitative analysis apart from quantitative analysis. The issues of ownership, use right were analysed from the common pool resources theories and interpretation was carried out in the dimension of religious commons as well as multiple resources use. The linkage with the cultural system and non-tangible relationship the community has developed with the resources were covered. The details are available in subsequent chapters.

1.9 Chapterisation

Chapter one consists of introduction of the subject, literature review, conceptual framework and objectives of the study. Second chapter consists of research methodology, were the researcher elaborated the methods adopted to study. Third chapter provides an ethnographic profile of the

study area and villages selected for the study. Chapter four consists of description and analyses of sacred grove as a cultural system with in village ecosystem. Fifth chapter provides discussion on sacred groves from common pool resources perspective, and the benefits the society avails from it, the value it associates with it and importance of it in the overall dynamics from micro level to macro level. The sixth chapter deals with indigenous knowledge system and its linkage with the sacred groves and other local institution of management. Factors of sustainability and decay and their impact on the sacred grove cultural institution and resources are also discussed. The last chapter consists of summary and conclusions.

CHAPTER II

STUDY AREA

2.1 Location

Jaspur is a district in the newly created Chattisgarh state; earlier it was part of undivided Madhya Pradesh. The total geographical area of the Chattisgarh state is 135,100 Sq. Km. and its capital is Raipur. The state has Madhya Pradesh in the west direction, Andhra Pradesh in the south direction, Orissa in the east direction and another newly created Jharkhand state in the northeast direction and Uttar Pradesh in north direction. According to census 1991 the total population of the state is 1,76,15,000.

Jaspur district is located in the north-eastern corner of the state (Map 1). It is located between 20°17' and 23°15' N Latitude and 80° 4' and 81°26' E Longitude. The geographical area of the district is 4570 sq. km. It is surrounded by Raigarh district in south, Sarguja district in west, Gumla District of Jharkhand in the northeast and Orissa in southeast. The total population of the district is 6,56,352.

2.2 Administration set up

Jaspur district has four subdivisions under its jurisdiction, namely Jaspur, Kunkuri, Bagicha, and Pathalgaon. The district headquarter is located at Jaspur. There are six blocks in the district. The district has one forest division with three subdivisions Jaspur, Kunkuri, Pathalgaon, with six ranges namely Jaspur, Tapkara, Duldula, Sanna, Baderkhol, Pathalgaon and one wildlife sanctuary Kansabel.

2.3 Physical Features

The Jaspur district is located in the Vindhya mountain ranges; it lies between 274 Mts. to 1136 Mts. above the sea level. The district is topographically divided into three agro-climatic zones namely low land area called as *Nichaghat*, which lies between 274-700 meters, and has two subdivisions namely Pathalgoan, and Kunkuri located in this region. Next is zone consisting of the gentle rolling hill of Jaspur block area, located in the altitude of 700-900 meters. In this region the subdivision of Jaspur located. The next zone is highland area called as *Upper Ghat*
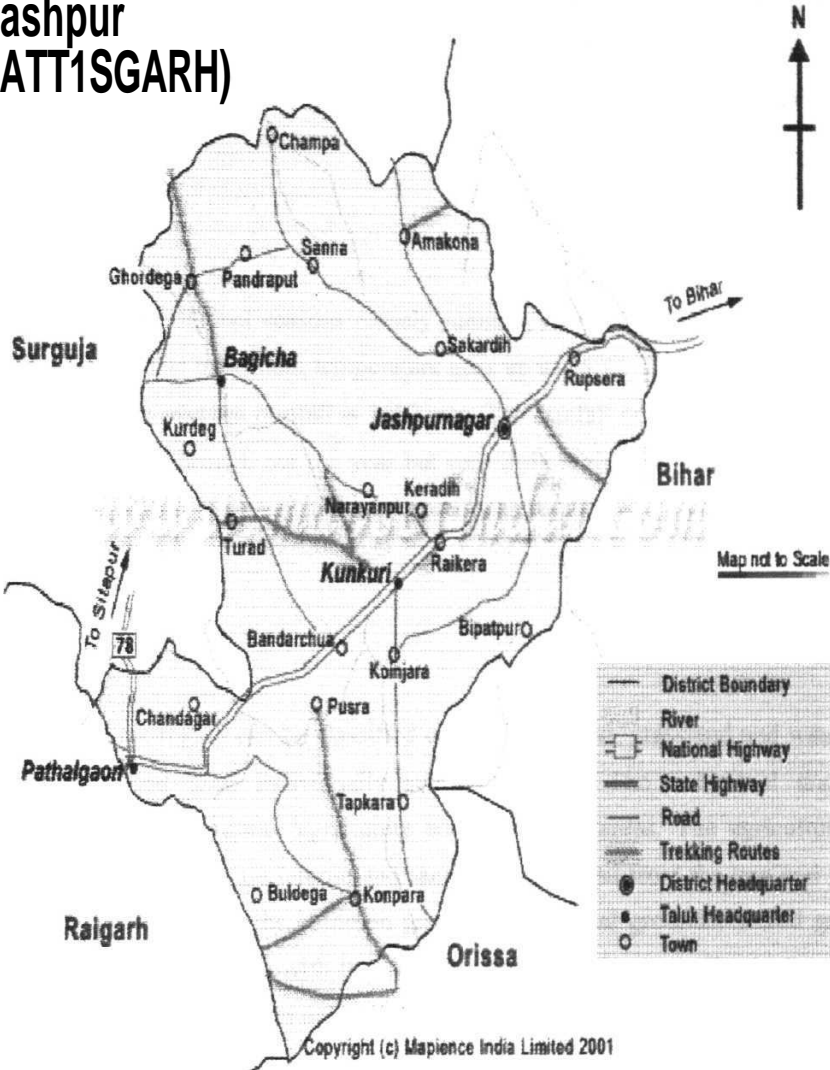
Fig 1.

lying between 900-1136 meters. The subdivision of Bagicha falls in this region. This region has the highest peak of the district. The northwestern portion of the *Upper Ghat* has further elevated to form plateau known as Pats. The areas of *Khudia* highland is situated in this region, *Ib* river has it origin in the region.

2.4 Climate

The district has three distinct seasons namely summer, rainy and winter. The summer is spread from April to June. The maximum temperature goes up to 45°C. The rainy season is spread from July to October. The average rainfall is 1692 mm. The rainfall normally varies from 1599 mm to 1826 mm and occurs through out the year but very little during the months of February, March and April. The winter is severe and minimum goes to as low as 1° C and it is spread from November to March.

2.5 Resources

The resources of the region can be classified under land, forest, grassland and water. The land is basically owned and used individually and collectively. The individual area consists of predominantly large area under agriculture and settlement areas. The agriculture is basically depended on the rain. Soils are latertie and sandy loam derived from the trap and granite. Under the collective ownership are the common grazing land, burial grounds, sacred groves etc. The ownership of these resources is with the state, but the use right rest collectively with the village and it exclude other villages from using it.

The forest cover of the area is 35.3 percent of the total geographical area. The ownership of the forest is with the state and managed by the forest department of the state. HG Champion (1968) classifies the forest division of the district under "Moist Peninsular High Level" type. Sal *{Shorea robusta)* forest is mostly situated on the slopes or at the base of hills. The Sal forest that occurs in this area is "Sal Savanna forests". Within the above type considerable variations are observed depending on the nature of soil, topography and biotic factors. The biotic factors, which are significantly influencing forest growth, are reckless cutting of trees, frequently

occurring forest fires, grazing by cattle and goats. According to Champion and Seth (1968) following forest types exist in the region:

- Moist peninsular high level Sal forest,

  Moist Sal savanna forest,

  Dry peninsular Sal forest,

- Southern dry mixed deciduous forest.

The major species are Sal (*Shorea robusta*), Saja (*Terminalia robusta*), Behara (*Terminalia bellirica*), Hara *(Terminalia chebula)*, Mahua (*Madhuca indica*), Bija *{Pterocarpus marpusium)*, Char (*Bucnnania lanzan*), Ghont (*Zizyphus xylocarpus)* etc. The wild animals include Chital, Deer, Sambhar, Hare, Langur, Wild hen etc. Timber, fuel wood, Sal seed, Tendupatta and Hara are the main forest produce in the region.

Grassland is available in the *Pats* area of upper high land in the Sanna region. As *Ib* River has originated in this region of *Khudia Rani* Mountain; it is a sacred place in the district. Besides this the forest area is also used for grazing purpose. In the area of agriculture land after harvesting of crops is used as common for grazing.

Agriculture land is owned privately in the name of head of the family and all the male member have right over the land as an inherited property. This land is used for agriculture purpose and individual families grow crops on it. Livestock are reared and owned individually.

2.6 Communities

Number of ethnic groups inhabits the district of Jaspur. This district consists of communities belonging to tribes and castes. The percentage of tribal population is 66 percent of the total population. The district is a scheduled area district. Historically the district has seen large section of tribal population converting to Christianity. The percentage of the converted Christians in this district is 59 percent. The communities living in the district are *Oraon, Kanwar, Korwa, Rawotia, Lohar, Ghasi, Khairwar, Cherwa, Pinka, Gasiya, Domar, Tori, Nagesia, Mahkhur* etc. *Korwa* occupy the *Upperghat* and *Khudia* high land. The Oraon usually cultivate in valleys of middle level altitude, lying between *upperghat* and *Nichaghat. Raotia, Kanwar, Nagesia* and *Mahakur* inhabit the Nichaghat. The *Mahakhur* are professional grazers who graze their cattle on the *Khudia* high land during the summer and rainy season.

2.7 General Description of the studied villages

The villages selected for the study are Baghima, Ghamhariya, Komodo and Echkela. All these four villages are located in the Jaspur block of the district, which falls in the middle zone of altitudinal distribution of the district i.e. the area between *Upperghat* and *Nichaghat.* The region has plain agriculture lands with gradually raising hill covered with forest on the western side leading to the *Upperghat* zone of the district.

1. Baghima Village

Baghima village is at a distance of four-kilometres from the Jaspur town in the south direction on the Sanna road (fig 2). The total geographical area of the village is 210.87 hectares. In Baghima village, Sarhul Sarna, which on eastern side of the road, has a settlement of ten to fifteen houses constructed on the west of the road leading to Sarna. In this settlement Baiga of the village lives with his family. *Sarhul Sarna* is located in north east of the village settlement.

The village has six communities living in it. From table (2.1) it is clear that the *Oraon* form the major community with ninety households, while others four communities constitute rest twenty households. The Christian are basically the *Oraon* who have converted to Christianity in the past. The *Brahmins,* referred to as *Maharaj*, by the villagers, have migrated from Bihar region in the past. The other two communities are *Lohar* who provide the services of agriculture implement repairing to the village. The *Dhangar* are schedule caste communities placed in the lowest level of ladder and are engaged in basket making.

Table. 2.1 Composition of the different communities Baghima village

S.No	Community Name	No. Of Household
1	Oraon	90
2	Christian	10
3	Brahmin	4
4	Lohar	4
5	Dhangar	2
6	Total	110

MAP OF BAGHIMA VILLAGE

S

Agriculture Land

Way to Pat Sarna and Forest

School

Aganwari
Centre

Dhangar Settlement

Yadav

**Brahmin
Settlement**

Lohar Settlement

Agriculture
Land

Agriculture Land

Oraon Settlement

Traditional Panchayat

Agriculture
Land

Samudayik Bhavan

Agriculture Fields

Panchayat Bhavan

Way to Baghima Village

Hatcheries

Sarhul
Sarna

Way to Sanna

Water Pond

Agriculture Fields

Way to Dogar Toli Village Panchayat

Legend

⊓ - Hand Pump

Map not to scale

Fig 2.

2. Komodo village

Komodo village is located at a distance of seven kilometres from the Jaspur town (fig 3). It is located in the southwest direction, by road but in real sense the village is located in west of the Jaspur town exactly behind the hills. The total geographical area of the village is 576.82 hectares. This village has seven communities living in it. The *Oraon* is the predominant community followed by *Rajput.* This village has service communities such as Lohar. Apart from this two other communities i.e. *Brahmin* who moved into the village have come from Bihar, and *Yadav* who have come here from Raigarh side. In the recent past two households belonging to *Gond* tribe, have moved in from Sarguja region and settled at the outskirts of the village. The table2.2 gives the communities living in the villages.

Table. 2.2 Composition of the different communities Komodo village

S.No.	Community Name	No. of Households
1	Oraon	73
2	Christian	1
3	Rajput	11
4	Brahmin	2
5	Yadav	1
6	Lohar	4
7	Gond	2
8	Total	94

3. Ghamhariya Village

Ghamhariya village is located in southeast direction from Jaspur town (Fig 4). The distance of this village from the Town is four kilometres and adjacent to Road linking Raipur and Ranchi, capitals of Chattisgarh and Jharkhand. This village is distributed into two settlements, one is Gadha Ghamhariya located at a distance of one and half kilometre from the main link road, which is the older settlement and now considered as a village. Whereas Ghamhariya village is located next to the main link road is the new settlement and is established by the communities who have moved from the Jaspur town. These two villages share the *Sarnas* and participate in the ritual collectively. *Baiga* of the Ghamhariya village is Mohandas Nagesia, whose age is fifty-two years. The total geographical area of the village is 817.63 hectares.

Fig 3
MAP OF KOMODO VILLAGE

N

Agriculture Land

Forest

MS

S

W

CB&AWC

SS

Agriculture Land

Rajput
Settlement

Oraon Settlement

Agriculture
Land

Brahmin settlement

PS

Dam

Culvert

Forest

Gond Tribe Settlement

Agriculture Land

Legends
PS-Pat Sarna
SS-Sarhul Sarna
W-well
AWC-Aganwari Centre
CB-Community Bhavan
S-School
Hand Pump

MS-Mahadani Sarna

Forest

MAP OF GHAMHARIYA VILLAGE

N ↑

Way to Gadha Gamhariya

Play Ground

Agriculture Land

Agriculture land

Engine
workshop

Settlements

Late
Sarna

Mahadani
Sarna

Way to Ranchi

AF

Aganwari
centre

S

Coming from Raigarh

D

PP

Forest Rest
House

Agriculture Land

Legends

⊢ Handpump

Road to Jaspur Town

D-Dhaba
PP-Petrol Pump
S-school
AF –Agriculture Field

Map Not to scale

Fig 4

The Gadha Ghamhariya village has predominantly *Oraon* population, along with *Nagesia* a tribal community, *Lohar* and *Gayar* backward caste communities (fig 4). There is no Christian family living in this village. The table 2.3 shows the community wise distribution in the village

Table.2.3 Composition of the different communities Gadha Ghamhariya village

S.No.	Community Name	No. Of Households
1	Oraon	91
2	Nagesia	3
3	Gayar	2
4	Lohar	1
5	Total '	97

Ghamhariya village has heterogeneous community composition of tribal and caste communities. All together it has thirteen communities living in the village. The *Raotia* considered to be a backward caste in the area, has maximum households of twenty-five followed by *Nagesia* tribe, which has twenty households. There are caste communities like *Brahmin, Rajput, Agarwal, Gupta* (both are trader communities), *Sinha* (Kayasth community) and two *Jain* families. Kumhar and Lohar are the communities providing services to the agriculturalist communities of the village. Apart from this, *Gayar* a backward caste, and *Chick* a scheduled caste live in the village **(Table2.4).**

Table.2.4 Composition of the different communities Ghamhariya village

S.No.	Community Name	No. Of Households
1	Raotia	25
2	Nagesia	20
3	Brahmin	5
4	Kumhar	12
5	Gayar	8
6	Oraon	4
7	Sinha	2
8	Rajput	1
9	Agarwal	1
10	Jain	2
11	Gupta	1
12	Lohar	2
13	Chick	2
14	Total	85

Fig 5

MAP OF GADHA GAMHAIRYA VILLAGE

Forest

N

Agriculture Land

Map Not to scale

MS

Agricult
ure land

Agriculture Land

AWC

Engineering
Workshop

Baiga House

LS

FS

SS

School

Ranchi
Road

Legend
SS-Sarhul Sarna
MS-Manohar Sarna
FS-Fool Sarna
LS-Late Sarna
AWC-Aganwari Centre

Hand Pump

Play Ground

GAMHARIYA VILLAGE

Jaspur Road

Raigarh Road
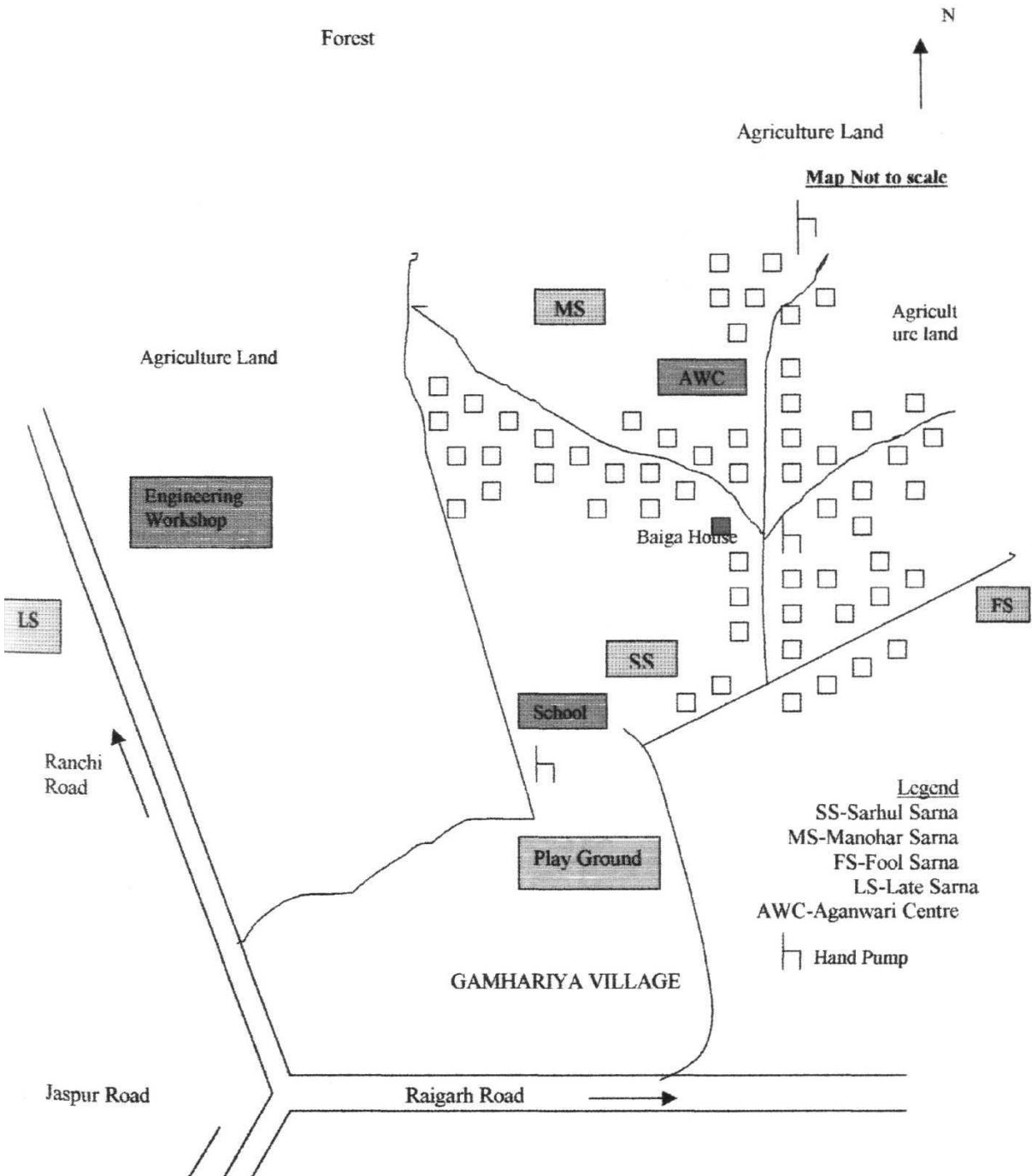
4. Echkela Village

Echkela village is located in the south and southeast direction from Jaspur town at a distance of fourteen kilometres (Fig 5). This village is larger than three other study villages in size and population. The entire village constitutes one panchayat, with no other settlement **under its** jurisdiction. The total geographical area of the village is 1025.93 hectares.

All the Oraon households of the village have converted to Christianity about hundreds years ago. At present none of them believe or follow the traditional culture of the *Oraon.* The Christians of the village neither have belief in *Sarna* nor go to *Sarna* for rituals. Now days, they go to the church constructed in the village. The converted *Oraon* register them as *Oraon* a scheduled tribe in government census in order to claim the benefits of government scheme meant for the tribal community.

Echkela village has total 200 households of which the population of Oraon community is 235 from fifty households. Other houses belong to the tribal as well as caste communities. Raotia with hundred households is the dominant community of the village. Nagesia is the other tribal community living in the village. The upper castes like Brahmin, Rajput along with the lower castes like Lohar, Kumhar, and scheduled castes like Ghasi and Chick live in the village. There is one Muslim family living in the village (Table 2.5).

Table.2.5 Composition of the different communities Echkela village

S.No.	Community Name	No. of Households
1	Christian	50
2	Raotia	100
3	Brahmin	1
4	Nagesia	18
5	Lohar	8
6	Ghasi	6
7	Kumhar	4
8	Rajput	1
9	Muslim	1
10	Gayar	8
11	Halwai	1
12	Chick	2
13	Total	200

Fig 6
MAP OF ECHKELA VILLAGE

FC
AWC
Dhaba
AWC
E

Agriculture Land

Christian
Settlement

Patwari
House

Agriculture Fields

Shop

Sch

School

PO

SS

V

Raotia Settlement

Agriculture Land

SB   CB

Agriculture Land

MS

FS

Agriculture land

Agriculture Land

Legends

KS
Agriculture Land

Road to Echkela village

Raigarh road ⟶

MapNot to scale

Church
PO-Post office
Hand pump

V-Veterinary
Sch- School
SB-Society Bhavan
CB- Community
Bhavan
SS-Sarhul Sarna
MS-Mahadani Sarna
FS-Fool Sarna
KS-Kadamara Sarna
AWC-Anganwari
Raigarh road Centre
FC-Forest Chowki

2.8 Demography of the villages

The total population of the village **Baghima** is 538 from 110 households, whereas the total population of the Komodo village is 516 from ninety-four households. The population of Gadha Ghamhariya village is 461; from 97 households and of Ghamhariya village is 551, from 85 households. The above three villages have predominantly Oraon community along with other communities living with them in village. Whereas the population of Echkela village is 1260, which has *Raotia* community in majority and all the *Oraon* households have converted to Christianity, along with other tribal communities. The table (2.6) gives the village wise distribution of the population of the four villages.

Table.2. 6. Demographic detail of the studied villages

S.No	Name of the village	No of Households in each villages	Population of the village
1	Baghima	110	538
2	Komodo	94	516
3	Gadha Ghamhariya	97	461
3	Ghamhariya	85	551
4	Echkela	200	1260
5	Total	586	3326

2.9 Economic system of the villages

The village economy basically revolves around agriculture. All the households have agriculture land. The agriculture is rain fed and fully depended on the southwest monsoon. The region has intermittent rain through out the year, but the rainfall in the monsoon season only is helpful for agriculture activities. The main crop grown is paddy. Apart from that the villagers grow maize and vegetables in their homestead garden. As the agriculture is rain fed, the villagers get only one crop of paddy.

2.9.1 Land Ownership Pattern in the villages

The agriculture forms the main economic activity of these villages. The majority of the households in the each village own the land. It is property owned hereditarily by the men members of the family. Below is the land ownership pattern of the **Komodo** village (Table 2.7). Out of the seventy-four households of *Oraon,* all households own land except one, this being an old member living separately from his family members and has given land to his sons. The other landless family belongs to the *Lohar,* who basically provide services to the agriculturalists in the village. The caste families have moved in from other area and have gradually purchased land from the local inhabitants.

Table.2.7. **Community wise Land ownership pattern in Komodo village**

S.No	Land owned (acres)	Communities						Total
		Oraon	Rajput	Brahmin	Lohar	Yadav	Gond	
1	Landless	01			01		02	04
2	0-2	14	01			01		16
3	2-4	22	02		03			27
4	4-6	16	03					19
5	6-8	06	01					07
6	8-10	07		01				08
7	10-12	04	03					07
8	12-14	02						02
9	14 & above	02	01	01				04
10	Total	74	11	02	04	01	02	94

The Gadha Ghamhariya village has twenty-four households as landless, of which twenty-two households belong to the *Oraon* community and one to *Nagesia* community and other to *Gayar* community. The joint family of Birsai Ram has the maximum land holding of **fifteen** acres of land. Out of other six households only four have land of medium size i.e. less than six acres of land per households (Table 2.8).

Table.2.8. Community-wise land ownership pattern in Gadha Ghamhariya village

S.No	Lands owned (acres)	Communities				Total
		Oraon	Nagesia	Gayar	Lohar	
1	Landless	22	1	1		24
2	0-2	10	1	1		12
3	2-4	22				22
4	4-6	15			1	16
5	6-8	9	1			10
6	8-10	6				6
7	10-12	5				5
8	12-14	1				1
9	14 & above	1				1
10	Total	91	3	2	1	97

The Ghamhariya village with heterogeneous composition of communities has only three landless households, of which two belonging to the households of *Oraon* and *Nagesia* tribal communities and third one to a household *of Lohar* community. The maximum land belongs to a joint family of *Lohar,* which has eighteen acres of land. In this village, fourteen households have land of more than ten acres each, out of which eight households belong to the caste communities of *Lohar,* **Kumhar**, *Brahmin, Gupta, Sinha* and *Chick* (see Table 2.9). The landless households among the tribal have increased after the in-migration of the caste communities in the village. Members of the caste communities apart from owning land are employed in the government jobs like postman, Policeman, and Driver. Few of the caste families do business in the town of Jaspur. They run hotel, general shops, and mechanic shop in the town.

In Echkela village the farmer with the highest area of agriculture is Seetal Kumar Raotia, who has sixty-five acres of agriculture land. His is head of a joint family of four brothers living together. The least land is with Meghnath Raotia who has only one acre of land.

Table.2.9. Community wise land ownership pattern in Ghamhariya village

S.No	Land (acres)	R	N	L	K	O	B	G	C	Gu	S	J	Ra	A	Total
1	Landless	1		1		1									3
2	0-2	3	5		2			3	1						14
3	2-4	11	6		5	2	1					1	1		27
4	4-6	4	6		2		2	1	1						16
5	6-8	3			2		1	1							7
6	8-10	1					1				1			1	4
	10-12	2	1					1				1			5
7	12-14				1			1							2
8	14& above		2	1	1			1		1	1				7
9	Total	25	20	2	12	4	5	8	2	1	2	2	1	1	85

*R-Raotia, N- Nagesia, L-Lohar, K- Kumhar, O-Oraon, B-Brahmin, G-Gayar, C-Chick, Gu-Gupta, S-Sinha, J-Jain, Ra-Rajput, A-Agarwal.

2.9.2 Other Occupational based communities of the villages

The *Lohar* community provides services needed for making and repairing of the agricultural implements as well as iron material and utensils needed for domestic needs. The mode of payment for this service is similar to Jajmani system in operation in caste based villages in India. For some services cash is charged on the basis of work done at every instance.

The *Dhangar* are engaged in basketry work. The entire family makes the baskets and sells them to the villagers as well as in the near by market place. For which the requirement of the Bamboo is met from the forest or from the *Nistar* depot of the forest department. Earlier the communities were allowed to collect species needed for economic as well as for domestic needs. Later on the government, restricted this provision of collecting from the forest, instead it established depots called as *Nistar* depots. Each depot has a fixed number of villages in a radius of five to ten kilometres under its control to provide the forest material of economic as well as domestic needs at rates fixed by the government.

2.9.3 Agriculture Activities

The agriculture forms the primary activities in the monsoon season, when every household is engaged in agriculture activities. Only the *Kharif* crop is cultivated in the fields. The labour for agriculture is mostly from within the family and close kin groups, whereas in the case of caste-based households of *Brahmins and Rajput,* they hire labour for agriculture work.

Once the agriculture season is over, a section of villagers migrate in search of employment in the near by region of agriculture belt of Raipur in the south and Ranchi in the north. Mostly the youth migrate to the areas of Raipur and Ranchi in search of employment in the agriculture and non-farm sector for duration of five to six months. They return before start of agriculture activities i.e. prior to coming of monsoon rains. This group of migrant population belongs to the age group between 20-50. All those persons who have stayed back consisting of young and aged persons manage the house, agriculture, and livestock. They are also engaged in collection of NTFP (Non Timber Forest Produce) etc. The residents of Komodo are totally dependent for their livelihood on Paddy cultivation, supplemented by rearing of livestock and collection of NTFP from the forest. The villagers go to forest and collect fuel wood to sell in the market and make some earning from it. The women and girls do the task of selling the fuel wood. Men also assist women in domestic activities. For grazing of livestock they take them to forest areas and also collect fodder and leaf forage from the forest to feed them.

The festivals and rituals of the village revolve around the agriculture and welfare of the village and its community. Whenever there is drought, the villagers link it to the wrath of the village deity and consider it needs to be appeased by an animal sacrifice. In order to appease the deity, an animal is sacrificed in the grove. On the other hand, the girls of the village catch a frog and tie it to a stick with its leg and roam around the village making noise. This is a magical approach, which the villagers practice with a belief that it will bring rain. *Oraon* community gives prime importance to *Sarna,* and believe that in *Sarna* their sacred deities resides. According to them each trees is sacred and deity resides in each tree in the grove. Therefore they protect the *Sarna,* because the deity in it provide them protection and assist in production of good agricultural crop.

2.9.4 Usage of Forest Resources

The forest resource meets substantial needs of the villagers in the form of NTFP (Non Timber Forest Produce), which they collect from the forest. The fuel wood is the primary item collected from the forest on the daily basis. It fulfils energy requirements of the village population in the winter season, where the other energy sources to protect from the cold are missing. Secondly fuel need of cooking is met by the wood collected from the forest. The villagers stock up the wood collected from the forest in their backyard and on the tree in the courtyard of the house and use them at the time of rainy season as well as for distress sale. Men of the villages collect the fuel wood from forest and make them into small pieces so that they are useable as well as easy to transport for marketing. Women take them to town and sell them. The town is largely dependent on the wood energy for the need of domestic purpose like cooking and heating. Thirty kilograms of fuel wood generally fetch forty rupees in a day.

They collect NTFPs from forest like *Mahua* flowers, *Mahua* seeds, *Sal* flowers, *Sal* seeds, Sal leaves, *Mahul* leaves, and Tendu leaves, *Chrongi (Buccnania lenzen)*, Bamboo etc. The males, females and children do the collection of NFTP from the forest as per the availability in the season. Generally NTFP is available in the seasons when demand for agriculture work is low, like leaves of *Mahul* are available in the month of July after sowing and transplantation of paddy, when the villagers have free time to engage in collection of the leaves. Similarly *Mahua* is available in the month of April, which is collected by all the family members. In this case, this tree is owned on the hereditary basis and the villagers have developed a traditional system of tenurial right in course of time; where a family is given right to collect it fruits and seeds for personal use. Other villagers acknowledge this right, in term of usage of the product of the tree.

The leaves of *Sal* are collected for leaf plate making which is correlated with the demand for the plates for ritual or other social occasion. The seeds are available in the month of June, i.e. pre-monsoon period, where they have enough time to collect the seeds. Collection procedure of NTFPs varies from the species to species collected. Some times NTFP is collected and sold for income in off agriculture season, like Tendu leaves, which provides villagers with employment for a period of forty-five days in the month of May-June. *Tendu* leaves are a monopoly (nationalized) product and is collected and sold to the forest department at the rate fixed by the

department. The men, women and children equally contribute in collection of Tendu leaves, after collection, they make bundle of fifty leaves each and sell number of bundles to the collection centre made by forest department. Forest department established *Phad* centres in various ranges, where the collectors register themselves with it. These *Phad* centres act as collection centres, of *Tendu patta* for forest department. In summer season especially in the month of May, collection of *Tendu* leaves is done on large scale, under the management of Forest department, which provides the tribal communities good earning in off-agriculture and low employment season.

The collection of NTFP like *Tendu, Achar,* **Mahua, Mahul** leaves, *Sal* seeds, and Honey from the forest adjoining the village, provides them with additional sources of economic as well as livelihood needs.

Apart from the fuel wood, the villagers go to forest to collect fodder and even take cattle to forest for grazing. Besides this, some villagers' collects fodder from the forest to stall-feed their cattle. The agriculture residue is also used as fodder for cattle. By using grass from different commons and by product of agriculture, farmers try to meet the requirement of the fodder of the cattle. In summer season there is shortage of fodder. In the time of dry season when the fodder availability reduces, it is by substituted by the **leaf of** *Sal* and *Pipal* collected from the forest areas.

2.9.5 Livestock management

Rearing of livestock is done for meeting milk needs of family as well as for the agriculture work. The cattle dung collected is used as manure for the agricultural field. The villagers of this region consider cow a sacred animal and equate her to mother earth who supplies them with food materials. *Oraon* community own livestock like cow, buffaloes, ox, goat, pig, hen etc. They prefer cow and ox instead of buffaloes, and due to which the Oraon have lesser number of buffaloes. *Yadav* community living in **Komodo** are engaged in tending to cattle like other pastoral communities and take cattle for grazing in the forest hill of *Upperghat* in summer season when the availability of grass is reduced. The ox is basically used for ploughing work. The animals are taken into forest for grazing. Apart from that during of agriculture season, agriculture fields are converted into season common for grazing of cattle. The goat, pig and cock are kept for the purpose of nutritional needs as well as for sacrificial use.

2.9.6 Other Services

Apart from traditional mode of occupation, the villagers based on individual educational **qualification** are doing services in different sectors in the town, for example they are working as teachers, helpers and assistant in shops etc. Some Individuals belonging to caste communities are working in government department as postman, policeman, driver, teacher, and professor. Some households own shops or run hotel or mechanic shop in the town. In **Ghamhariya** village nineteen households have persons working in services sector, while seven households are engaged in business. In Gadha Ghamhariya village, which has maximum number of landless households, people belonging to these households are mostly working as wage labourers in agriculture as well as in the town. This village has eight households working in services sector.

Jaspur is part of scheduled area, it falls in ITDP (Integrated Tribal Development Programme) zone were number of tribal development programme are under taken for the development of the communities and the region. Under the employment generation schemes, the local population got opportunities to earn income in off agriculture season.

2.10 Social system of the villages

The social system of the villages give different panorama as it has communities ranging of tribal, tribal converted to Christianity and in-migrated caste groups from the adjoining areas into the region, who have settled in the villages of tribal dominance. Each unit of villages has its own social arrangement pattern but collectively they reflect elements that are visible in other villages of India in general, like hierarchy, social segregation, and pattern of sharing of food and space with other members of village belonging to different communities.

The caste groups are considered upper in ladder and are referred as *Maharaj* for *Brahmins* and *Baba* for *Rajput.* The households of caste groups in their relation with the tribal groups follow the principle of segregation and separation in the matter of space use, sharing of food and other interaction process. They do not take the food prepared by a tribal household, and share the food with the tribal, only when the person belonging to the caste group prepares it. The place of settlement of these caste groups is at a distance from the main settlement of tribals. The tribals take food given by the upper caste households.

Next in layer are the *Oraon* and other tribal communities. Here the principle of arrangement on segregation and separation is linked to the nature of ownership of resources and occupation of the group. The groups that own agriculture land and engaged in agriculture activities treat each other as equal and share the space and food with one another. Where as the other communities who do not have land are providing services are placed at lower order and a distance is maintained in settlement and sharing of food is unidirectional i.e. food is taken by the service communities from the tribal or land owning groups, while land owning groups do not take food prepared by the service giving communities.

The caste-based families of *Brahmin, Rajput* and **Yadav,** follow the traditional system of marriage that is marrying within caste group and maintaining the *Gorta* exogamy. The family acts as primary unit of operation for all the activities of economic and social **functions**. The organization of work amongst family members is on the bases of age and sex. The males, supervise the agriculture work and women do the domestic work. These families hire labour for agriculture and taking care of cattle. The labour is mostly from tribal communities living in the village. The people of these communities have employment in services sector and also undertake business.

The society of the *Oraon* and other tribal communities in the region is organized on the basis of family, clan, and tribe. Each clan has a totem, which it protects and it is taboo to harm it. It has a symbol on its flag, by which it is identified on the cultural occasions, when they collectively assemble and celebrate. The clans of the *Oraon* community in the villages are *Dhek* (Frog), *Topo*, *Lakra* (Hyena), *Tigga* (woodpecker), *Kujur* (**Plam** tree), *Ekka* (Tortoise), *Tiriki* (Cricket insect), and *Kindo* (Tree). The clan totems are respected and tabooed from killing. The marriage with in the clan is prohibited. These totems are **mythologically** linked with the origin of the particular clan. They are respected and harming, killing as well as eating them is taboo for the clan members.

Oraon and other tribal communities are patriarchal in nature with males having authority over property and decision-making on family matters. The man owns the property. The eldest male is the head of the family. The head of the family is decided on the basis of age and generation. The eldest member of the highest generation will be the head of the family. But in some cases the

qualities of the individual in making good decision and providing each individual with basic needs, makes him the head of the family. The head of the family distributes the work among family members on the basis of individual capability. The division of labour is based on age and sex. There are works exclusively for the men like agriculture and for women like kitchen work or domestic work. But women of tribal communities help in transplantation of paddy as well as at the time of weeding.

2.10.1 Types of Family

The types of family reported from the region are Joint, nuclear, extended and broken or incomplete households. In Joint family people of three or two generation live together in one household. Here members of three different generations or at least two generation spread horizontally and vertically live under one roof and eat from one hearth. The property is owned collectively.

The head of the family manages all the family activities starting from economic, religious and takes decisions in all matter from marriage of the family members to activities of agriculture. Sometime an able person may not be the eldest or oldest person, leads and manages the family affair and takes vital decisions concerning the family and acts as the head of the household. There are few extended families existing in the village where apart from nuclear family one or two extras members, mostly close relatives, live with the family.

All the resources and earnings are pooled with the head of the family. The head of the family decides how to distribute it among the family members so that it contributes to the welfare of the family. As per necessity of the family, he spends the earnings on them, decides how the earning would be spent for meeting the family livelihood. The head of the family represents the family in the community and activities of the village. The head of the family manages the family affairs at family, neighbourhood and community level. If the head of the family dies then the eldest son of the family takes over. But all the male children have equal right over the movable and immovable property of their father.

The family operates as a functional unit where the work is divided on the basis of age and sex. The male looks after the agriculture work and women take care of the domestic work. In case of agriculture work again members of different sex performs different activities. Male member do the tilling work and sowing work, whereas the women assist their male members in weeding activities and harvesting activities. Similarly males collect fuel wood from the forest and women sell it in the market. Their division of labour is on the basis of age, as the young males are assigned the work of grazing cattle in the common land and forest area. The young girls assist their mother in the domestic work and looking after the cattle, feeding them, bring water and contribute to the domestic chores.

The children after marriage establish their separate house with in the premises of the father's house. The land some times is not divided when the father is alive, but the produce is shared. The separated son contributes in the agriculture work on the family fields.

The most prominent from of family in village is of nuclear type, majority of households are of this type. This married couple along with their unmarried children live under one roof and eat from the same hearth. The family manages economy affairs by itself.

Another form of family that existed in village is extended family, where in an extra relative stays, with the nuclear family. One house where an individual after separation from the family lives alone as he is unmarried, this family is classified as broken or single member household.

All the villages studied have four types of family reported, namely Joint, Nuclear, Extended and Isolated. The nuclear families are more in number in all villages except in Ghamhariya, in which the majority caste families have land along with business and occupation to support the large family. In the tribal dominated villages nuclear families are more in number followed by joint families and extended families (Table 2.10). Few isolated families are reported from the villages. These are the households where single member lives alone.

Table.2.10. Types of families in studied villages

S.No	Communities	Types of family				Total
		Joint	Nuclear	Extended	Broken	
1	Baghima	28	75	6	1	110
2	Komodo	22	51	15	**6**	94
3	Gadha Ghamhariya	25	62	10		97
4	Ghamhariya	49	31	2	3	85
5	Total	123	221	33	9	386

In Komodo village (Table 2.11) there are forty-nine nuclear families, and twenty-two joint families. The extended families are fifteen in number and only six families are isolated type.

Table.2.11. Types of families in Komodo village

S.No.	Communities	Types of family				Total
		Joint	Nuclear	Extended	Broken	
1	Oraon	19	37	12	5	73
2	Christian		1			1
3	Brahmin		2			2
4	Rajput	2	6	2	1	11
5	Lohar	1	2	1		4
6	Yadav		1			1
7	Gond		2			2
8	Total	22	51	15	6	94

In Gadha Ghamhariya village nuclear type of families are more in number with sixty-two households (Table 2.12). Joint families are twenty-five and extended families are ten. This village does not have any isolated type of family.

Table.2.12. Types of families in Gadha **Ghamhariya** village

S.No.	Communities	Types of family				Total
		Joint	Nuclear	Extended	Broken	
1	Oraon	23	58	10		91
2	Nagesia	1	• 2			3
4	Gayar		2			2
5	Lohar	1				1
6	Total	25	62	10		97

The Ghamhariya village has forty-eight joint families, thirty-five nuclear families and two each extended and isolated families (Table 2.13). This village has caste communities residing in the village who apart from owning land are engaged in occupation as well as in business, which can support large families.

Table.2.13. Types of families in Ghamhariya village

S.No.	Communities	Types of family				Total
		Joint	Nuclear	Extended	Broken	
1	Oraon		3		1	4
2	Nagesia	11	7	1	1	20
4	Raotia	14	10		1	**25**
5	Gayar	6	2			8
6	**Kumhar**	10	2			12
7	Lohar	2				2
8	Jain	1	1			2
9	Gupta	1				1
10	Sinha	2				2
11	Agrawal	1				1
12	Brahmin		5			**5**
13	Rajput			1		1
14	Chick	1	1			2
15	Total	49	31	2	3	85

2.11 Political system

In 1994, after passing of the 73rd amendment on *Panchayati* Raj bill to the Constitution for empowerment of local bodies in rural areas, the government of Madhya Pradesh was the first state in the country to implement it. The state government conducts *Panchayat* election at an interval of every five-year and previous election was held in the year 1999. This was held prior to division of the Madhya Pradesh.

Baghima panchayat has four villages under its jurisdiction namely Dumartoli, Tikingunj, Karantoli and Baghima. The present sarpanch is a Christian *Oraon* by name Edwin. The village has *panchayat* members to help in the conducting the work of *Panchayat.* Ghamhariya panchayat has Ghamhariya, Gadha Ghamhariya, Pandri Pat, and Nawatoli villages under its jurisdiction. The *sarpanch* of the *panchayat* is Donibai who belongs to *Nagesia* community. She is wife of Sureshram Bhagat, who is *Zila* panchayat chairman. Vice *sarpanch* of the Panchayat is Gulabram *Nagesia* whose is thirty-six old and is resident of Gadha Ghamhariya village.

The *panchayat* of Komodo village has three villages namely Komodo, Sirodi and Sirodi pat under its jurisdiction. Komodo village *Sarpanch's* name is Tigga, who lives in Sirodi village and vice-*sarpanch* name is Gopalram Nikunj *Oraon* who lives in Komodo village. The *Patwari* (land revenue collector at village level) of the region named Rahit Kumar Sukra who age is thirty-three years and he lives in Sirodi pat village. Only one village comes under the jurisdiction of the Echkela *panchayat* i.e. Echkela village. The *sarpanch* of the Echkela village is a woman by name Hiramani Triki, belonging to *Oraon* community. The *panchayat* secretary is Mehganath Raotia, belonging to *Raotia* community.

Number of powers is passed on to the *Panchayat* in the state to empower them and make the process of decentralisation more effective. The functions of *Panchayat* are examination of annual accounts, conducting of development programmes, distribution of benefits of social schemes to the target groups and budget preparation and preparation of future development programmes and plans for the *Gram Sabha* area. As the process of decentralisation is in nascent stage, most of village *panchayat* studied are functioning on ad hoc basis; only future will give the real picture of its achievements in the area of decentralisation.

Apart from the formal institution of *Panchayat*, the village has traditional form of social organisation managed under the leadership of **Patel** who acts as the traditional leader. The traditional institution for resolving conflict in the village is referred as traditional panchayat. It deals with the issues related to social, cultural and economic matters of the village. This is constituted for settlement of dispute, and a meeting is held when the disputants make a request for judgement. The process begins with assembly of at least one male member from every household and each representative is considered to be one of the *Panch* (adjudicator). The assembled *Panchayat* selects one **Mukhiya** (Head of *Panch)* to give final verdict after consultation with the *panch* members present in the assembly. The villages studied have a higher body of adjudication consisting of eight to ten villages to resolve those conflicts, which could not be solved at village panchayat level. This is called as *Parha panchayat* and is headed by a *Parha Panch,* who is elected for a fixed term of five years by the villagers falling under on *Parha Panchayat.* The condition for being eligible this position of *Parha panchayat* is that one should be member of any community living in the villages under on *Parha Panchayat.* The village panchayat and *Parha panchayat* settles issues mostly related to marriage alliances, elopement, property disputes, issues related illegal man and women relationship, deviation from societal norms and matter pertaining to misuse of *Sarna*.

The *Parha panch* of Baghima village is Mohan Ahir who lives in Tikingunj village. **Ghamhariya,** Gadha Ghamhariya, Pandripat, **Durkachora,** Chopati, Nawatoli, Juhanidand, and Echkela village come under the jurisdiction of Ghamhariya *Parha panchayat.* The Parha panch is elected on the basis of voting. The Parha Panch of this group of villages is Jabaruram Raotia, whose age is forty-seven years and belongs to Juhanidand. The *Baiga* of the Komodo village named Bahadurram *Nagesia,* forty years of age, lives in Motupara village. *Parha panchayat* of Komodo village has six villages in its jurisdiction, which includes Sarodi, Sarodi pat, Duma toil, Dongar, **Pipal** Pat.

2.12 Religious system

The community's living in these villages' practice three forms of religion namely the *Sarna* religion (Sahai, 1976) practiced by the *Oraon* and other tribal communities, Hinduism practiced by the *Hindu* communities and Christianity practiced by the Christian *Oraons* in the villages. Among the traditional communities influence of the great tradition religion is conspicuous in many belief and rituals practices.

Sarna religion is oriented around the *Sarna* located within the boundary of the village, where the village deity resides and worshipped at regular interval for the welfare of the village. The communities have faith and belief in number of deities arranged in hierarchy (Roy, 1928:14-18). The highest divinity is *Dharmes* or Supreme Being; the creator of the universe (sun) is at the top of the layer. Next in layer is spirits of dead ancestors, followed by the tutelary deities and spirits of village, called as *Pat, Sarna Bhuria, Desauli, and Mahadani* etc. The fourth class belongs to *Chandi,* the spirit of hunting and war, propitiated by men and *Achrel* and *Jodha,* which are the special spirits worshipped by women. Next in layer are the village spirits such as *khunt Bhuts* or tutelary spirits of each original founder clan of the village.

In the sixth class are the spirits of household such as *Barnda* and *Chigrinad* etc, followed by mysterious powers residing into certain objects and symbols such as the *Mandar sala* the *Jatra Khunta* or the village flags, village emblems, totems, musical instruments etc. The next consist of tramp or stray spirits, followed by forces such as evil eyes etc.

The *Baiga* of the village is the religious leaders and is assigned the task of performing all the rituals related to the Sarna religion. This post is hereditarily held and the villagers make payment in kind to the priest at the end of the harvest for his services to the village communities. The villages have *Ojha* who is medicine man as well as curer of sorcery of the village.

The villagers celebrate number of festival ranging from *Sarhul* to *Holi*. The Sarhul festival is celebrated in the month of *Baisak* (March -April); this is celebrated at the village level. The other festivals celebrated in the villages are *Ashadhi pujan* celebrated in the month of June and July; *Hariyali* celebrated in the month of July after the transplantation of paddy has taken place. *Karma* is celebrated in the month of August and *Jitia* festival is celebrated in August or September. The *Kadleta* festival is celebrated in the month of October and *Nawakhani* is celebrated after the harvesting of paddy is done with and this is generally held in the month of November or December. *Holi* is celebrated in the month of March.

Hindu communities practice *Hindu* religion and worship *Hindu* deities namely *Shiva* or *Mahadev, Ram, Hanuman* and *Durga* etc. and have faith in Hindu scriptures like *Ramacharita Manas* and *Bhagavat Geeta.* They celebrate festivals like *Navaratri,* the new year of *Hindus*, which is held in the month of April. Followed by number of festival mainly *Teej, Janmastami, Navaratri, Diwali, Mahashivratri, Basant Panchami* and year ends with celebration of *Holi.*

There is a two way acculturation process between tribal communities and *Hindu* communities, where they participate in one another rituals and show faith for either deities. The Converted Christian has taken to Christianity faith and visit Church for the ritual and social activities. They mainly celebrate Christian festivals like Good Friday, Christmas and New Year.

2.13. Life Cycle Rituals

Every society irrespective of region has some belief and rituals attached with various stages through, which a human being passes i.e. from birth to death after it. The communities of the villages perform several rituals from the time of birth, marriage and death.

2.13.1. Rituals Associated with Birth

The rituals associated with birth start from the movement it is known that a woman conceived. The pregnant woman has to take number of precautions in order to protect herself from evil eye and evil spirits, which may cause harm to the baby in her womb. Generally the pregnant woman is asked to avoid going near the Sacred Groves and other such places that has presences of deities or spirits in the village ecosystem. During this phase the woman is not allowed to go out of the house and to far off places.

At the time of birth the midwife of the village is called for and the women of household and relatives assist her in the process of childbirth. After the birth, newborn baby is bathed in hot water. The umbilical cord is cut with a clean knife and the umbilical cord is buried underground. As soon the child is born the women inform the men of the household about the sex of the baby, who then accordingly place a plough or a basket at the door of the house, indicating the status of the sex of the baby. The father of the newborn baby calls for the *Baiga* of the village. On his arrival he is offered a red cock, rice and some money after blessing the baby by waving over the head of the baby.

The households observe impurity for three days; the mother and her baby are secluded in the lying room. The other members of the household are considered ceremonially unclean and do not participate in the village ceremonies and do not take food from other households. During this phase they do not worship the deities. Then for three days the mother of the child is massaged with mustered oil. The baby is also massaged with dry fomentation made of mustered seed every

day in the morning and evening for few months. The villagers consider that during this phase the child and women are liable to be caught by the evil spirits therefore they take certain precautionary measures to prevent it. To guard the mother and the child a **stick** with iron tipped or a sickle is kept at the bedsides the mother's head.

On the fourth day and sometime on the fifth day after delivery, the house and its courtyard is cleaned and plastered with the cow dung paste. The clothes used during the impurity days are cleaned. The room used by the woman is cleaned and the clothes of both the child and woman are cleaned. Some families call their relatives and celebrate the occasion by having dinner and *Handia* (rice bear).

The naming of the child is performed within six month from the time of birth. For name giving ceremony an unmarried boy shaves the child's head with a newly bought blade. In case of a boy, the hair on the crown of the head is left out. The shaved off hair is thrown in the village stream. Some selected elders of the villages are invited and in their presences the **naming`** ceremony is carried out and mostly the name is based on the names ancestors.

The caste communities of the villages also have similar practises of birth ceremony, where they take the help of the midwife and she is paid small remuneration for her service to the family. In the cases of upper caste family the Brahmin priest is called to perform family rituals such as naming ceremony etc. These households perform *Chatti* (Sixth day) ceremony; relatives and neighbours of the newborn baby are invited to the house, for the purificatory rite followed by feasting to acknowledge the new entrant in the community. On this day some families also perform the naming ceremony. The tonsure ceremony i.e. removing of the first hair is done within a year period, or in the odd year. For this the barber of the households is called to perform the tonsure ceremony, who after shaving the head takes some money and rice for his services.

2.13.2 Marriage

The communities of the village practice monogamous system of marriage. The tribal communities like *Oraon, Nagesia* etc., follow clan exogamy but endogamy with respect to the tribe. If any person breaks this and marries out side the community then he is ostracized is prohibited from participating in any community function and affair. Neither any person from the

village will receive food, water, and other material from the ostracized person or his family, nor share his things with him. All the households in the village end their social relationship with the ostracized family. This is practiced strictly to keep the community norms and values protected and respected individually and collectively by the whole community.

The community members follow monogamy form of marriage. Earlier they practiced polygamy i.e. on the basis of economic standards those who could afford more wives, could marry. But now days they strictly adhere to the monogamous custom. But if the wife expires, then the person is free to marry second time. The widow marriage is also allowed in the community.

In the fixing of marriage some relatives act as mediators for settlement of the alliance. Marriage process begins with the bride's family going to the bridegroom's house with a branch *of Karma* tree and place it there. Thereafter the bridegroom's family takes the *Chin* tree and places it at the bride's house and discusses the detail of the marriage alliance. Then they decide that they should worship their respective deities and offer a pot of liquor, so that they get permission for the alliance. Thereafter they agree for the marriage. The bridegroom's father with some elders of village along with the Baiga goes to the bride's house and fixes the date of marriage. Till the marriage procession reaches the bride's house, the worship of family deity goes on at regular intervals. Once the bride goes to her in-laws places then the rituals are concluded and stopped.

Once a family approaches another family for alliance, and finalizes the relationship, from then onwards, for two months both households keep worshiping their respective deities, requesting them to keep the two new entrants safe from evil spirits and seek permission from the deity for the martial knot. This process is also viewed as to appease the deities of each family so that they do not become antagonistic and harm the families, instead to get the blessing for the newly married for happy and long family life. For this they make sacrifice of cock or Buffalo to the deities.

Bridegroom's family visits the bride's family in procession (*Barat*), to perform the marriage rituals. This ceremony lasts for two days. The marriage is held at the brides place. After the marriage the bridegroom returns to his village with bride. The father of the bride gives some money to his daughter at the time of marriage. Once the bridegroom's family and the other villagers return with bride to the village of bridegroom, each household in the village take the

couple to their respective house and offer gifts and bless them with long life. The father of the girl gives some amount to the son-in-law at the time of marriage as the daughter's share in his property. They do not have dowry system in practice. The girl has no right over the property of the father, but is considered to be partner in her husband property. The ownership right of property is only for the male members of the family.

2.13.3 Death Ceremony

The tribal communities of the village depending on the age of the person bury or cremate the dead body. Those of old age are cremated, while dead person of young age is buried. In the *Brahmin* community, those dead males who have under gone initiation (Thread) ceremony are cremated, while those who have not under gone initiation ceremony are buried. In the case on women they are buried if unmarried, while married women are cremated.

Once a person dies in the tribal communities of the village the mourning process begins immediately, the women of the households and their relatives starts wailing in chorus. The dead body is taken out into the courtyard of the house by the usual door, and placed with the head towards north and feet towards south. After removing the dead body from the houses the door is shut and ashes of the hearth are spread on the floor.

The corpse is bathed in clod water, if the body is of a woman whose husband is alive then Vermillion mixed in oil is anointed on the forehead and she is made ready as a married woman with hair well parted. A lamp is lighted next to the corpse. After hearing the news the relatives and neighbour collect at the residences of the deceased each one carrying some paddy and rice in a basket. On reaching the house of the deceased, they go round the corpse and empty the straw and rice into basket kept by the side of the corpse.

The wooden frame made of two long bamboo poles and with few cross bars fixed across is prepared in the mean time by the male members of the village. On this the corpse is laid and taken to the *Masan* (burial ground located in the forest) on the shoulder by the men, and women also join the procession. The paddy kept in the basket is brought along with the procession. At the cremation ground all the paddy in the basket is placed in the ground at the spot over which the head of the corpse rests. Some rice and *Handia* beer is poured into the mouth of the corpse.

Oraon follow a dual system of cremation that if the death is taken places prior to starting of agriculture season or after the harvest the corpse is cremated. If it takes place in between the agriculture season, then the body is buried and after the agriculture season is over then it is taken out and cremated.

Once the cremation is over the members return and take bath in the pond or stream near the village and go the house of the deceased, and undergo ceremonial purification. *Oraons* on the day of burial offer a sacrifice of the pig to the dead body and prepare the food and eat it along with the other community members. The *Brahmins* have thirteen days of mourning ending with a feast on the thirteenth day for the entire community as well as village members.

In the *Oraon,* the Bones are collected and a ceremony is performed to place the deceased person in the ranks of ancestors. After this the *Baiga* performs rituals of **purifying** the village and placing the ancestor is the categories of deities.

2.14 Dress Pattern and Material culture

The population of the region along with the *Oraon* follow a specific dress pattern that can be differentiated on the basis of age and sex. The older men folk of the village wear fewer clothes, i.e. a *Dhoti* and *Baniyan* (vest). The new generation youth have adopted the Pant and Shirt as dress. The women wear sari and the younger girls have taken to *Salwar* and *Kurta,* which is prevalent over other parts of India. Their houses are made of mud and poles and stick of Sal trees *(Shorea robutsa*), and they cover the roof by *Koulu* (tiles prepared traditionally at home). Christian Oraon **plaster** their houses with black mud where as non converted tribes **plaster** it with white and boarder the lower portion in three colour strips mainly, red, black and green. The utensils used are mostly made of aluminium.

2.15 Infrastructure

The Baghima village is connected with a road connecting the village from Jaspur. Baghima village has one primary school run by state government and an *Aganwari* centre. On the side of Tikatgunj there is small water pond of the village. There are two-hand pumps and one well for providing drinking water to the village. **Ghamhariya** village is adjacent to state highway

connecting the Raigarh district with Ranchi city of Jharkhand. It has a primary school, a middle school and a high school. It has a community hall and an *Aganwari* centre. The village has three hand pumps to provide the water for drinking to the village. This village has a water tank (pond) in the village, where as Gadha Ghamhariya has a primary school, three hand pumps and a village pond. The *Aganwari* centre has one **in-charge** with an attendant to assist her.

Komodo village is connected by road and it has one community hall. **Komodo** village has two primary schools and a middle school. The village has community hall and *panchayat* Bhavan in one building. It has an *Aganwari* centre and four hand pumps for water. The *Aganwari* centre is managed by an Aganwari in charge and assisted by one attendant. This centre has sixty-three children in it.

Echkela has a metal road connecting the village with the Jaspur town. The village has three primary schools of which one run by state government and two primary schools managed by a private body. It also has a middle school and a high school of state government. This village has one higher secondary school. This village has four Aganwari centres, and has a community hall and a panchayat Bhavan. The village has **five** hand pumps provided by the government for water. Earlier the source of water was well, this village has eleven wells and a water pond. Under the housing development scheme (Indira Awas Yojana) four houses are constructed in the village.

2.16 Literacy

The literacy levels in the village vary on the basis of age, sex, caste and community. The older generation has more number of illiterates. While the younger generation has more literate population as the facilities of school are available in all the studied villages. Similarly the level of educated is more in upper castes, since they have migrated to this region in search of employment. The level of literacy is less in lower caste as they still are engaged in traditional occupations and are less inclined toward education. The Christian families have more literate person compared to the tribal families. The level of literacy in women is less compared to men (Table 2.14).

Table.2.14. Village wise literacy status of studied Villages

S.No.	Name of the Village	% Of Literate Population		% Of Illiterate Population	
		Male	Female	Male	Female
1	Baghima	19.03	6.09	80.97	93.91
2	Ghamhariya	25	6.27	75	93.73
3	Komodo	21.18	12.98	78.82	87.02
4	Echkela	22.83	15.29	77.17	84.81

CHAPTER III
SARNA OF JASPURNAGAR

3.1. Religion of Area

This region exhibits a great inter-mixing of religion of different cultures. In general the *Sarna* (Sacred Grove) dominate over all form of religion. The *Oraon* community religion is predominant. Though it has been gradually influenced by the religion of other cultures existing in the region. These cultures are of the great tradition communities living in the region. The dominance of *Sarna* religion is evident in the religious belief, customs and practices. The communities have number of deities and belief system associated with it. This could be well understood from the perspective of the worldview of the communities in the villages studied.

Redfield (1952:33) characterized worldviews as one in which a) confronter and the confronted tend to be unitary; b) the predominant attitude towards the non-human is one of maintenance of the relationship; c) the universe is thought to "care", to be morally significant. Greetz (1957:426) has observed that worldview as the cognitive, existential aspects of a given culture, combining with ethos and values (the moral and aesthetic aspects), underpins religion "to give to a set of social values what they perhaps need most to be coercive: an appearance of objectivity". Worldview deals with the sum of ideas, which an individual within a group and /or that group have of universe in and around them. It attempts to define those ideas from point of view of the individuals holding them from inside the culture rather than outside (Mendelson, 1972: 576).

In *Oraon* religion, the surrounding ecosystem is both spatially and vertically incorporated. The deities and spirits are organized in a hierarchical order (Roy, 1928:11-82). The hierarchical categories flow into each other, and their arrangement may change from one event to another. According to the need, more importance may be accorded to one over the other (Ghosh, 1996).

They assign specific function and a place to each category of deity, both in their cosmology as well as in their village ecosystem. It was primarily because the *Oraon* way of life interacts with the local environment, the fauna and flora, the rocks, stones, pathways, fields, rivers, stream, forest as well as the people of the region in a closely interconnected way. Each sphere of life flows into other almost continuously. There is an underlying logic, but it is determined in a re-

interpreted manner. It shifts from time to time from event to event and from interaction to interaction. The decisions made are based on values of maximization, but more with the complexity of relations evidenced in the totality of the worldview of the *Oraon* (Ghosh, 1996).

In the hierarchy of deities (Roy, 1928) *Dharmes* is the supreme deity of the *Oraon* religion. The *Oraon* consider him as the creator of the universe and the sun. Earlier it was considered to be nature deity like mountain (BasuMallick, 1992). Later on it took to mean the sun, it is now replaced by the Hindu word *Bhagwan* that means the supreme God. *Dharmes* is benevolent and has given the management of the world, into the hands of various tutelary divinities and spirits or devils whom the *Oraon* must propitiate. A sacrifice of white cock is usually made in the name of *Dharmes*, whenever other spirits or deities of the village are being propitiated or worshipped especially during the principal *Oraon* festival of *Sarhul*, which is held in the *Sarna* (Sacred Grove). The supreme god is invoked at the time of severest difficulties.

Second in hierarchy are the ancestral spirits namely *Pach-Balar*. The ancestral spirits are very close to the *Oraon.* After death each person becomes a spirits. Earlier, *Oraon* used to bury the dead. At present they cremate them. They have two ceremonies for the dead i.e. green and dry. After cremation, they collect the bones in a pot and bury them in the yard of their houses. Hence, each plot of land, each house and land under it, is inhabited by the spirits.

In the third layer are deities and spirits of the village, who are regarded as *Deotas* or gods and other as *Bhut* or Ghosts. *Pat* or *Pat raja*, *Chala Pachcho* or *Sarna Bhuria* and *Devimai* belong to this grade. To the later section belong the *Darha Desauli, Mahadani, Devi Mai, and Mahadev* in some villages. All of them live in sacred groves spread around the villages. Here all the natural resources like hills, caves, water bodies etc are assigned with a deity and are propitiated regularly on an annual basis or at a fixed interval of times as desired by the village community.

In the next layer are certain spirits like *Chandi* and the spirits of hunting, who are worshipped by the young men and *Acherael* and *Jodh.*, They are special spirits of women. The *Khut Bhut* or tutelary spirits follows them, who are the spirits of the original founder of a village. *Khut-Bhut* (clan spirit) is one of the most important spirits of the *Oraon. Khut- Bhut* essentially means the spirit of the original settlers of the village. Since the original settlers of the village had to clear the jungle and make their huts etc, it involved disturbance of the spirits residing in the jungles

and for that reason the original settlers of the village or their descendents (*Bhumihar*) had to make periodical sacrifice and worship to these spirits as a means of propitiation. They are protectors of the entire lineage. After the above are the household ghosts, who are often spirits of ancestors.

Next in order are the spirits or mysterious powers residing in certain objects or symbols such as totem and totem-emblems, village emblem, certain musical instruments or swords used for sacrifice etc. Now a day totem is worshipped at the time of marriage. The totem objects are not eaten. In the last are the spirits of the persons met with **un-natural** deaths, apart from the **veil** ‘ eye, evil mouth etc.

3.2. Spatial arrangement of deities/spirits in Oraon worldview

The deities in *Oraon* religion are placed both in vertical and horizontal plane on the basis of power and function assigned to them by the society. As seen in the classification of deities in various ranked categories, with the specific ritual process prescribed for the community, the Oraon have provided different role to different deities/spirits.

Dharmes or the supreme god is placed in the sky and has the supreme power to control all the other gods and spirits in the *Oraon* pantheon. While worshipping *Dharmes*, *Oraon* basically faces east direction, which is the direction of the rising sun. They do not have any groves or place allotted for *Dharmes* in the village ecosystem nor they have any exclusive occasion for offering sacrifice. But they offer sacrifice of a white fowl to him at every important festival like *Sarhul, Kadleta* etc.

Dharmes's control over the other spirits is evident from the arrangement and rituals, at the principal festival known as Sarhul. In this first *Dharmes* is worshipped and sacrifice is offered to him, then later on to other spirits. This arrangement is meant to symbolize their belief that *Dharmes* will whenever necessary, controls the other spirits and sees that they behave properly. Location of the sun in the sky is presumed to be that he sees all that man and spirits do down on the earth. The *Oraon* consider that *Dharmes* punishes offences against customary morality.

Second in hierarchy is the *Pach-Balar* (ancestors spirits). The soul of deceased *Oraon* is considered to enter into community of the *Pach-Balar* spirits on the day when the bones of all the *Oraon* of a clan, who have died in the course of the year, are ceremonially dropped in the stream or deposited in the clan *Khundi* a place with in the house. The place is considered sacred. The *Oraon* believe that after death occurs; a person goes to the world of the dead where he is reunited with his ancestors. The soul of deceased *Oraon* is believed to enter into the community of ancestor-spirits *{Pach-Balar)* on the *Harbora* day i.e. the bone are dropped in the stream at a particular place where the community does it regularly. Hence, each plot of land, each house and the land under it are inhabited by spirits, which affect everyday life of an *Oraon.* Except for the annual ceremony, there is no special religious festival on which offering or sacrifices are made solely to the ancestor-spirits. These spirits are involved at every feast and on every suitable occasion their living relations make offerings to them.

The ancestor spirits are usually remembered when one is seriously ill. A vow is taken to offer a fowl on recovery. The spirits are involved and their living relations make offerings to them during every feast or festival such as *Sarhul, Karma, Jitia* and *Nawaknani*.

The village deities and spirits are offered periodical sacrifices by the village priest or *Baiga* on the behalf of the village community. *Sarna Bhuria* or " the old lady of the grove" ranks as the chief among the village deities. She is believed to be residing in the sacred winnowing basket in the house of the *Baiga* to which the sacred knife for cutting the sacrificial fowl is attached. She is propitiated during *Sarhul.* She is most popular of *Oraon* deities and receives sacrifices in a most elaborate manner in the ritual performed during the annual spring festival known as *Sarhul.* Similarly the villagers must offer to *Sarna Bhuria,* the first fruits of his fields. It is believed that these deities are such mighty one, that dogs and birds do not touch the remnant of sacrificial feast at the *Sarna.* The spatial location of this grove is in the vicinity of the village as it is considered to be benevolent deity.

Pat is believed to be the master of all the village spirits who protects the village from sickness or any other misfortune. *Darha* is the gatekeeper of the village and protects it from incursion of the spirits from outside. *Mahadani* is another village spirit whom the villagers used to be propitiated with human sacrifice in the past, whenever a famine or drought occurred. These are male deities

and spirits are considered to be fearsome in nature and are located on the boundaries of villages. Each of these deities is provided with a grove, which is located in a different direction of the village. The other village deities like hills, caves, or water bodies are the natural markers and support providing system, worshipped collectively at regular interval by the village communities.

Chandi seat is located in uplands or hill slope. *Chandi* is special deity of Oraon bachelors and is offered sacrifice in the month of *Magh* (Jan-Feb). *Acherael* is a special spirit of woman, who is not represented by any symbol nor have any place of location. She is worshipped to protect the women folk of the *Oraon.* The some villages the *Khut Bhut* is also placed in the groves along with the village deities. They have a wooden pen (a wooden log carved in the shape of a pen) with a nail fixed into it, indicating that he is located there and is controlled by the village deity from harming the villagers. He is a clan spirit and each is entrusted with the propitiation of their respective *Khut Bhut* in the respective *Khut Bhut* lands. Sacrifice of pig is offered to *Khut Bhut* (lineage ghost), as they are protectors of the entire lineage.

After this come the household ghosts which are often spirits of the ancestors. They are believed to be the guardian spirits of each and every household. Even one has to offer sacrifice to these spirits when separated from the parent's family by setting up a separate hearth, storage place etc. They sacrifice a pig, goat and fowl and only the agnate members participate in it.

Weapons and musical instruments, which are considered sacred, are used/played usually during an occasion, whether religious or social. They are anointed with oils and the blood of sacrificial animal at ceremonies.

3.3. Sacred Grove of Jaspur

In the *Oraon* religion, the Sacred groves i.e. *Sarna* is the space allocated for the village deities and all the activities related to them are carried out as a collective phenomena. Sacred groves in the Jaspur region are referred to as *Sarna.* In the Chotanagpur region *Sarna* is a form of tribal religion (Basumallick, 1992, Sahai, 1976). *Sarna* constitute an patch of area covered with naturally occurring forest trees considered to be a place left for the spirit of the original habitants of the area referred as *khut bhut* (Sahai, 1976). Sacred grove is a patch of relic vegetation (Gadgil and Vartak, 1976). The prominent trees in *Sarna* are *Sarai* or *Sal* (*Shorea* *robusta)* along with

other naturally occurring trees in the groves. The community belief is that it's an abode of the village deity who protects the village production system and population from internal and external threats.

3.3.1.Sacred groves of Baghima Village

Baghima village has two *Sarna,* namely *Pat Sarna* and **Sarhul** *Sarna.* Presently fisheries department has established its office, along with fish spawning and breeding centre, in major portion *of Sarhul Sarna.* Only a small portion of land in the southern corner of the actual *Sarna* area is left for the community to conduct the rituals. This has led to a dispute over the **legal** ownership of the grove and the matter is referred to the court to resolve the matter.

a) Sarhul Sarna

Sarhul Sarna (Patnaik & Pandey, 1998: 321-27) is the residing place of prominent deity named *Sarna Bhuria* or *Chala Pachhao* also referred as *Mata bai* in the village, a female deity. She is considered to be a benevolent deity, who looks after the village production system. The deity is seated under an old *Sal* tree located in the centre of the grove. A stone is placed under the tree to symbolise the deity. It is located in the Northern direction of the village. The total original area of the *Sarhul Sarna* was six acres, but lately the fisheries department of the State government has taken away about five acres of land. The present area of *Sarhul Sarna* is about one acre approximately. The village community celebrates its main festival of the village *Sarhul* in this grove of the village. Apart from that the villagers perform other rituals and celebrations relating to village agriculture and social system in this grove. *Baiga* of the village perform the rituals pertaining to the *Sarna.* There is no restriction or taboo to enter or participate in *Sarna* on the occasion of the ritual. Apart from this, *Sarna* is some times used for social ceremonies. The villagers consider the total six acres as the property of the villages and claim right over it, as they have traditionally owned it for generations.

b). Pat Sarna

The second *Sarna* in the village is *Pat Sarna;* this is located on the boundary of the village next to the water stream on the pathway leading to the Tikingung village. The Deity of this *Sarna* is a male deity called *Pat Devta,* considered to be protector of the village from sickness and other

misfortunes. The deity is of malevolent nature and is considered to control all the other spirits of the village. A red cock is offered every year, in all the village festivals performed by the *Baiga.* A grey *(Kaser)* or reddish colour goat is offered to this deity at an interval of three years. The area of this grove is one acre. It has *Sal* trees along with other species. It is used selectively. The villagers, with a fear not to harm the deity, restrict the gazing and collection of products of the trees from this grove. Here the assembly of the traditional panchayat of the village is held to resolve any kind disputes. The women are prohibited from entering this *Sarna.*

3.3.2.Sacred groves of Komodo village

Komodo village has only three *Sarna* named *Gudima Sarna (Sarhul Sarna), Pati Sarna and Mahadani.*

a). Sarhul Sarna or Gudima Sarna

Sarhul Sarna of this village is considered to be the abode of *Gudima* or *Sarna Bhuria,* a female deity. The *Gudima* is considered to be a benevolent deity and associated with the production system of the village. This grove has an area of one acre. It has number of *Sal* trees whose height ranges between fifteen to twenty metres. This is located in the eastern direction of the village and is inside the boundary of the village. Here also there is similarity in the belief system as compared to the Baghima village. *Baiga* of the village performs the rituals pertaining to the *Sarna.* No taboo or prohibition is associated with this *Sarna.* In this grove the villagers perform *Sarhul* and *Karma* festivals of the village.

b). Pat Sarna

The deity residing in the *Pat Sarna* is *Pat Devta*, who is a male deity and is of malevolent nature. He is considered to be the protector of the village from external threats and calamities. This grove is located in the Northeast direction, on the boundary of the village, which next to the hill and barren land adjoining the forest. This grove has number of *Sal* trees. The rituals are performed under a *Sal* tree considered to be sacred site with in the grove. A red cock is offered every year, in all the village festivals performed by the *Baiga.* Animal sacrifice is offered at regular interval of five years to appease the deity. The decision to sacrifice an animal ranging from goat to Buffalo is taken on the advise by the *Baiga* depending on the intensity of the problem. Women and children are restricted from entering this grove.

c). Mahadani Sarna

Komodo village has a third *Sarna* referred as *Mahadani Sarna*. It is the abode of *Darha Desauli* spirit, who is the protector of the village. According to the villagers, this spirits acts as the guard or gatekeeper of the village, believed to protect from the incursions of spirits from outside. A wooden stake driven into the ground at the *Sarna* represents *Darha* spirit. This grove is located in western side of the village, on a hilltop. It has number of *Sal* trees in it. The sacred site with in the grove has four *Trishul* and two huge stones indicating the place where the spirit resides. The place where rituals are performed has stones and the rocks anointed with vermilion. A red *(Rangua)* coloured cock is offered as sacrifice to *Darha* spirit at the time of *Sarhul* festival and other collective festivals of the village. This particular spirit is offered a sacrifice of a cock at the time of *Sarhul* and *Kadleta* festivals every year and buffalo at an interval of twelve years. On the *Asadhi* festival day, the villagers worship this spirit to remove all the evil spirits existing with in the village premises. Women and children are restricted from entering this grove.

3.3.3. Sacred Grove of Ghamhariya village

Gadha Ghamhariya village has four *Sarna* and their names are as follows, *Pat Sarna, Layte Sarna*, Gudima *Sarna* (also known as school *Sarna), Manohar Sarna* where as Ghamhariya village has two Sarna, namely *Sarhul Sarna,* and *Mahadani Sarna.*

a). Sarhul Sarna

This *Sarna* is the abode of a female deity referred as *Sarna Bhuria.* The nature of this deity is benevolent and is associated with the production system of the village. The size of this grove is two acres and it is located on the outskirts of the village. *Sarhul* festival is celebrated in this grove. It has mainly *Sal* trees along with other trees like *Mahua (Maduca indica),* Pepal *{Ficus religosa),* Behra (*Terminalia tomentosa*) etc. There is no restriction on any person entering and collecting the products of the trees in the grove.

b). Pat Sarna

The deity of this *Sarna* is a male deity called as *Pat Devta.* He is considered to be protector of the village from the sickness and other misfortunes. The deity is of malevolent nature and is considered to control all the other spirits of the village. A red cock is offered every year, in all the village festivals performed by the *Baiga.* It is located in the middle of the Gadha Ghamhanya village and has six *Sal* trees and four Mango trees. To perform the rituals, a platform is constructed in this *Sarna. Karma* festival and dance on the occasion of *Karma* festival is celebrated in this grove. Generally women are not allowed to enter this *Sarna.*

c). Layte Sarna

This *Sarna* is located in the east of Gadha Ghamhanya village. It is the abode of *Darha Desauli* spirit, who is a male and is of malevolent nature. According to the villagers, this spirit acts as the guard or gatekeeper of the village, which it is believed to protect from the incursions of spirits from outside. A wooden stake driven into the ground at the *Sarna* represents *Darha* spirit. It has an area of one acre. It has about sixty to sixty-five trees, mostly *Sal* trees. In this ***Sarna*,** villagers of Ghamhariya celebrate *Kadleta* festival.

d). Manohar Sarna

This *Sarna* is located in the west of the village, and has an area of two acres. This *Sarna* has trees, flower plants and shrubs. This *Sarna* is sources of flowers for the ritual activities of the village, which are exclusively used in rituals performed in the other *Sarna* of the village. The villagers are prohibited from using the flowers from this *Sarna* for household worship. The **flowers of this *Sarna* are used for rituals in *Sarhul Sarna*, *Mahadani Sarna*, and *Pat Sarna.***

e). Gudima Sarna of Ghamhariya village

In this **Sarna,** the deity is *Gudima* or *Sarna Bhuria,* a female deity of benevolent nature, and is associated with the production system of the village. This *Sarna* is located in west of Ghamhariya village on an area of half-acre land. This *Sarna* has about twenty to twenty-five Sal trees. The government has constructed a Primary School for the village on a portion of it; therefore it is also called as school *Sarna.*

n

f). Mahadani Sarna

The spirit living in *Mahadani Sarna* is *Darha Desauli* or *Dulhadev* and is considered to protect the villagers from the external problems. This *Sarna* is located in the east of the village on an area of four hectares. It has about hundreds *Sal* trees and of different age class; some being two hundred years old. The other species found in the *Sarna* are *Saja, Jamun, Hara, Chironji, Putal, Kathal, Bans, Karanj, Behara, Kachnar.* **A wooden stake driven into the ground at the *Sarna*** represents *Darha* spirit. Here also they worship under a *Pepal* tree, the worship place had a club shape iron erected and small stone idol placed there. It has a white flag with *trishul* mark on it. Near the place of worship is a rock structure in the shape of sitting horse with chopped head. According to a myth there was fight between the god *Churipar* residing in this particular *Sarna* and *Tanginath* of other grove, and *Tanginath* copped of the head of the horse *of Churipar.*

Generally, if the villagers are facing any problem of external threat from pest attack or epidemic diseases or natural calamities, or drought; then the spirit is requested to protect the village from the impending problem. In return the villagers offer sacrifice of cock or goat or buffalo. The type of animal to be sacrificed depends on the gravity of the problem and the availability of the animal. Once the problem is resolved then the villagers collect money and procure the needed material for the rituals. On a decided day they assemble in the grove under the direction of the *Baiga* of the village and perform the rituals. People avoid visiting *Sarna* at the time of night for fear of being possessed by the spirit. The women are not allowed to participate in the rituals taking place in *Sarna.*

In 1994 Jaspur forest department under Employment Assurance scheme (EAS) has done conservation work of this *Sarna,* during which they have constructed a platform for carrying out rituals.

Myth of Mahadani Sarna in Ghamhariya village

According to the villagers of Ghamhariya, *Dulhadev* lives in *Mahadani Sarna* of the village. He is always riding a horse. According to the myth, in ancient time a marriage procession has come to the village. The bridegroom was riding a horse. For some reason the procession halted in the grove and the bridegroom died and took a form of a spirit and started living in this *Sarna.* Then onward this *Sarna* is called *Mahadani Sarna.* The spirit of this *Sarna* is always riding a horse, who in night comes out of his place of residence and goes round the village and protects the village from unwarranted visitors like wandering spirits and evil powers who can harm the villagers and their property. While he travels on his horse, though he is invisible, villagers can hear the sound of a horse running around the village.

When ever the villagers faces any misfortune, then they approach spirit of the *Mahadani Sarna* and offers sacrifice of a he-goat and *Handia* (local rice beer) to make the spirit happy, so that he eliminates the adversary. Similarly if any household has a missing person or cattle, then the head of the household requests the grove deity to get back the person or cattle safe and sound. Once the problem is solved, the spirit is offered sacrifice of a Goat. According to the villagers *Dulhadev* locates the lost person or cattle riding on his horse back, and bring them back to their residence. Prior to solemnising any marriage, the house in which the marriage is to be held offers small dress to the *Dulhadev* of the grove. And after the marriage is solemnised, it is essential for the bride and bridegroom to visit the grove and worship the grove spirit and take his blessing before starting of their wedded life. The belief among the community of the village is that if they do not observe this practice, the spirit of the grove *{Dulhadev)* himself will take the sacrifice of the couple.

3.3.4.Sacred grove of Echkela village

Echkela village has four *Sarna* namely *Sarhul Sarna, Phool Sarna, Mahadani Sarna* and *Kadamara Sarna.*

a). Sarhul Sarna

The deity of this *Sarna* is the *Sarna Bhuria* or *Chala Pachao,* a female deity and is located at a distance of half a kilometre from the Echkela village in the north direction of the village. The nature of this deity is benevolent and is associated with the production system of the village. The total area of this *Sarna* is two acres. In this *Sarna* the villagers celebrate the *Sarhul* festival of the village. No taboos are associated with this *Sarna,* collection of fallen twigs, fruits and other material is allowed. Women can also go in this *Sarna.*

b). Phool Sarna

This *Sarna* is located in the north west of the village at a distance of half a kilometre from the village. This *Sarna* has Sal trees of twenty meters height and along with other flower bearing trees and plants, used in the various rituals conducted in the different *Sarna* of the village. In this *Sarna* no ritual is performed. The only use of this *Sarna* is that the flowers for the rituals in different *Sarna* are collected exclusively from this grove. If the trees stop flowering, the *Baiga* of the village offers worship to the deity in this *Sarna* to make the trees in the grove bear flowers. After which the flowers once again start blossoming on the trees.

c). Kadamara Sarna

This *Sarna* is the abode of *Darha Desauli* spirit, who is a male and is of malevolent nature. According to the villagers, this spirits acts as the guard or gatekeeper of the village, which is believed to protect from the incursions of spirits from outside. A wooden stake driven into the ground at the *Sarna* represents *Darha* spirit. This *Sarna* is located in northwest of the village at a distance of one and half kilometres from the village. It has an area of one acre and is surrounded by agriculture field from all sides. An old stone wheel is lying in the grove, which the villagers believe is the wheel of the chariot of the spirit who lost it, while fighting the battle with *Tanginath* (a spirit). This grove has *Sal* trees twenty-five meters high and girth of three meters. It

has platform for rituals. The platform in the grove is used for the ritual performances. The ritual in this *Sarna* is performed on special occasions when the villagers are facing drought or attack of disease, calamity etc. Then villagers request the spirit of ***Kadamara*** *Sarna* to protect village from calamities and to bring rain so that the agriculture could be carried out and food problem of the area could be solved. They promise to offer a sacrifice of an animal mostly goat or buffaloes. The word *Kadamara* according to the villagers means sacrifice of buffalo. The nature of offering made to the spirit of the grove is directly proportional to the intensity of the problem. If the problem is of minor type the rituals have offering of coconuts etc and may be sacrifice of a cock. If the problem is of great magnitude then the offering of buffalo is a must.

d). Mahadani Sarna

This *Sarna* is located at a distance of one kilometre from the village in an area of two acres. It is located in the west direction from the village. This *Sarna* has male spirit residing in it, *Mahadani Devta*, who protects the village from external threat. Whenever the village faces any kind of external threat, they approach the spirit in this *Sarna* and request him to protect the village from the impending external threat; in return they will offer him with sacrifice of an animal. The *Baiga* is the mediator between the villagers and the spirit of the *Sarna.* Once the request is fulfilled then the villagers collect money and decide a day to offer the sacrifice. On that day they go to the *Sarna* and offer the sacrifice. After the sacrifice they prepare the food and eat all the food in the grove itself and nothing is brought home. Women are prohibited to enter this grove. The responsibility of the protection of the village is with the deity of this grove.

Therefore, Echkela village has four *Sarna*; each is of specific importance to the village. It is totally ingrained into the culture and life of the villagers. It is believed that if anybody breaks the norms of the village and does not plead pardon to the *Sarna* deity; then the deity of the grove punishes him by destroying his entire lineage. Therefore whenever anybody does wrong and he feels guilty, he goes to the *Sarna* and pleads to the deity of the grove to pardon him for the mistake of breaking the norms of the society. This fear of wrath of the deity if any one breaks the rule and norms of the society, provides the strength to sustain the rule and norms of the society.

From the above, it has been noted that each of the study villages has minimum of three groves with in the village boundary. These groves can be classified on the following basis. Each sacred grove has certain principal deity residing in it, may be male or female. Community has assigned certain strength and power to these deities on the basis of productive or protective functions provided by these deities to the society. Location of these sacred groves in the village ecosystem is governed by the malevolent or benevolent nature of the deities as well as the function they provide to the community. It is generally found that in the study area that the location of the sacred groves is in all direction except the south, which according to the villagers is an inauspicious direction. •

3.4.Sarna in Oraon Worldview

The village deities and spirits, who rank third in *Oraon* pantheon arrangement, are placed in sacred groves referred as *Sarna.* In *Oraon* worldview *Sarna* are arranged in two concentric zones. In the inner circle is the *Sarhul Sarna,* which is mostly located near the village settlements. This grove has principal village deity assigned with power to control all other spirits. This grove provides productive and benevolent benefits to the community. This signifies healthy relationship developed among the human, nature and supernatural power for productive and benevolent functions. The attributes and functions of *Sarna Bhuria* clearly indicate that she is in origin a nature deity, representing the earth or spirits of vegetation and symbolised as mother earth.

In the outer circle are *Sarna* belonging to the village deities or spirits namely *Pat* and *Mahadani* or *Darha Desuali* referring these Sarna as *Kadamara* or *Mahadani* etc. Which have deities/spirits providing protective functions and are of malevolent nature, are located on the boundary of the village. These deities/spirits are of male gender. Their protective role assigned to them to be allocated the spaces on the boundary of the village. Similarly the nature of ferocity of the deities/spirits makes them to be separated from human, but to be properly propitiated through rituals.

The two concentric zones identified for sacred groves exhibit the relationship developed between two different natures of deities and human. One benevolent and productive in nature is placed near the human settlement, while other malevolent in nature, is placed at the boundary and acts as protector for others.

3.5. Festivals or Rituals Associated with Sacred Groves

The community seeks to ensure safety and prosperity to the village-community as a whole at each stage in the annual cycle of its economic pursuits of the villages such as agriculture, food gathering, hunting and fishing. All the activities associated with the economic pursuit of the villages are celebrated collectively. The community celebrates its rejoicing and its sense of renewed social solidarity with feasting, drinking and dancing. Therefore there are series of festivals associated with various livelihoods activities of the village system spread through out the one-year annual economic cycle of the village community.

Few festivals are associated with collection of Non Timber Forest produces (NTFP) or food gathering activities (Roy 1928:190). In the villages of Jaspur region, the villagers celebrate two festivals associated with food gathering activities namely *Pahgu* or *Holi* and *Sarhul*. There is one festival associated with the hunting activities of the village system that is *Jeth sikhar*. The festival for the cattle owned by the villagers called as *Sohorai*.

Agriculture being the predominant activity of the villages, number of festivals is associated with the different stages of agriculture activities of the villages. Though, *Sarhul* festival was considered to be mainly associated with food gathering in the past (Roy 1928: 190), is at present predominantly being celebrated as a festival associated with the agriculture. The other festivals associated with agriculture are *Hariyari*, *Kadleta*, *Kharihani* and *Nawakhani*. Some other important festivals of the villages are *Asadhi*, *Karma*, *Jitia*.

In all the festivals of economic pursuit, rituals are performed in sacred groves of the village. Some performances are held in grove and in some cases after the rituals are performed in the prescribed place, the next day the deities/spirits of groves are offered sacrifice, in the grove. *Sarhul* festival is the main festival of the village celebrated, every year in the month of *Baisak* (March-April). This festival ceremony is held in the *Sarhul* Sarna of the village. In the month of *Kuaar* (August) *Karma* festival is celebrated, where the unmarried girls of the village keep fast and worship in *Sarna.* Where the girls seeks blessing from the *Gudima* of *Sarna* for a suitable husband. After rituals they dance and sing in the *Akhara* of the village.

On the other occasion, it is basically need-based approach applied to visit *Sarna* i.e. as per issues and problem faced by the village people seek resort to the *Sarna* deity to overcome and solve their problems. In the rituals held in *Sarna* only the male members participate. Very young children are prohibited from participating in these rituals as they are considered to be susceptible to be caught by the deity or spirits residing in the grove and harmed.

For example, the villagers of Baghima village told about various situations in which the people seek resort in the deity of groves. If somebody in the village is very poor, he visits the *Sarhul Sarna* and narrates her/his problems and prays to the deity to solve it. According to villagers, deity solves their problem. According to the villagers of Baghima village, two persons are there in the village, whom the *Sarna* deity has blessed and they never have shortage of food, though the do not do any work. The name of these two person are Sitaram Oroan of age thirty-five years and Jitaram Oraon of thirty-nine years of age. The vessel meant for storing rice in their house fulfils their requirement of food grains. Whenever they need rice they take out from the clay vessel and by the deities blessing that much rice is again **filled** in the vessel. Thus their pots are never empty and are always filled with rice. Such beliefs of the villagers provide the sources for invincible faith the villagers have in the *Sarna* deity.

a) Sarhul festival

Sarhul festival is celebrated in each and every village in region, in their respective *Sarhul Sarna.* The *Sarhul* festival is held in the month of *Chait* i.e. March or April, i.e. the first month of the Hindu calendar. This festival is celebrated as a marriage day of sun *(Dharmes)* and earth *(Sarna Bhuria)* symbolizing the productivity aspect of the marriage of sun with the earth to bring prosperity on earth by good agriculture crops.

It is also a thanks giving rituals for the previous year as well as welcoming of the new agriculture season. Until this festival is celebrated in the village no one gathers or use new fruits or starts agriculture activities. In past, it was decided on the basis of natural indicators like flowering of *Sal* trees. The flower of *Sal* trees plays an important role in the ceremony of *Sarhul* festival, which is generally held after blossom of flowers in the *Sal* trees.

As Roy (1928:193-94) stated *"the month of Chait (March-April) ushers in the spring with its varieties of blossoming of plants and trees and newly sprouting edible leaves and tubers. Of these, the Sal blossoms form the most striking feature of blossoming nature in the land of the Oraon. And so the Oraons hold a religious festival in spring in their sacred grove or Sarna, in which Sal Blossoms form an essential elements and which is popularly known as the Sarhul or the feast of Sal Blossoms, but which in their own language name as the Khaddi and also Khekel-benja or the marriage of earth"*.

The *Sal* tree plays a major role in the life of the communities as well as in their various ritual celebrations. Once the Sal trees are in full Blossom, *Baiga* in consultation with the elders (traditional Patel, clan elders and other communities members) of the village fixes an appropriate date to celebrate the *Sarhul* festival. Hindu community resident of the village like *Brahmin* and *Rajput,* are allowed to enter the *Sarna* as well as participate in the rituals. The *Kotwar* gives the information about the date of *Sarhul* to each house in the village.

After fixing the date and day of celebration for *Sarhul* festival, a fixed amount of money is collected from all the households. In this they exclude the houses of Christians. Sometime instead of money, a fixed amount of rice i.e. one wooden *paila* (two and half kilograms) is collected from each household. The grains collected are sold in the market. The price realised by selling the grains in the market is used for purchasing the material required for the ritual of *Sarhul.* The material consist of four to five earthen pots, coconuts, *Roli* (red vermilion), turmeric, winnowing fan, knife, *Dhotis*, clothes for *Baiga* and *Panbhar*, *Janau* (thread worn by the Hindus), *hawan* material, fruits and five different coloured cock. If goat or pig is also to be sacrificed then money is collected for the same and animals are purchased as per specification of *Baiga.* The *Kumhar* of the village supplies the earthen pots and members of *Ghasi* community play the music on the day of *Sarhul* festival. The *Lohar* makes the *Trishul*, in which a Lemon is pierced and placed at the time of ceremony in the *Sarna.* He also provides the new knife needed for sacrifice. They all are paid for all the material and their services in celebration of the *Sarhul* festival.

Meanwhile the wife of *Baiga* and *Panbhar* go to each and every household to collect a small handful of paddy. This is offered to the *Sarna Bhuria* and later the sanctified rice is distributed to head of every household of the village to mix with the seeds kept apart for sowing in the forth-coming agriculture season, so that there is surplus production of the grains in the coming year.

The celebration of the *Sarhul* festival is held for three days. The *Baiga* keeps fast for three days, which includes the day of *Sarhul.* A day before the *Sarhul* the small flag that is with the *Baiga*, called as *chandi jhanda,* is planted on his house's gate. On the day of *Sarhul*, *Baiga* gets up early in the morning and taking along with him *Panbhar* and other village elders to the pond or water body of the village. Here they take bath. After bath he and others returns to his house and enter into the room where the sacred winnowing fan *(Sup)* and sacred knife is kept. These two are used in the rituals of *Sarhul* festival. He worships them and requests the deity of *Sarna* i.e. *Chala Paccaho* to sit on the *Sup.*

In the meantime, wife of *Baiga* along with other women of the village go to the water body and take bath. After returning from the there, the ceremonial marriage of the *Baiga* along with his wife is performed to symbolise the marriage of sun *(Dharmes)* and earth *(Sarna Bhuria).* After this *Baiga*, *Panbhar* and other villagers, taking along the winnowing fan, knife and the materials required for the rituals go to the *Sarna.* In Baghima village at the time of worship in *Sarna*, a person from *Dhangar* households will go to the *Sarna* early, and cleans the place where rituals is to be conducted. On reaching the grove, *Panbhar* and *Kotwar* again clean the place near the sacred site for worship and sacrifice. *Baiga* performs rituals in the *Sarna* along with the male member of the villages; all the villagers come to *Sarna* bringing coconuts.

Echkela and Ghamhariya have exclusive grove (*Phool Sarna* and *Manohar Sarna),* meant for the flowers required in rituals *of Sarhul* and other such ceremonies of the village. While in Baghima and Komodo, the flowers are collected from the forest. The *Panbhar* collect large amount of *Sal* flowers, which is offered to the deities and then distributed to the villagers, as *Prasad* of the deity, which villagers take home and keep it in the house. It is believed that it brings prosperity in the coming year.

The *Baiga* performs the rituals by tying unbleached thread or *Janeu* to the *Sarna* tree in three or five rounds. The *Panbhar* along with the village youth clean the grass of about a foot width and twelve feet in length area called as *Akhara,* commencing from the eastern side of the tree and leading in straight line toward the northern side. This space is used for sacrifice of five different coloured cock to respective deities of village. At an interval of two to three feet distance rice is kept to feed the sacrificial cocks. If goat and pig are to be offered similar space of size three by two feet is cleaned for each of them toward south west of the place cleaned for fowl sacrifice.

At first four different coloured cock are sacrificed. *Rangua* or **Lal** (Red) cock, to *Pat* **Devta**, *Surkh* (Crimson) is offered to **Mahadani, Kala** or *Mala* (Black) is offered to *Darha Desuali* and **Bhura** (brown) are also sacrificed to *Sarna* **Bhuria.** Before sacrificing the cocks they are washed and made to eat the rice kept in the **Akhara.** Then each deity or spirit is hailed to accept the sacrifice. The head of all the fowls are not wholly cut but partly served from the neck. In the last *safed* (white) cock is offered to **Dharmes** (sun god), the supreme deity of the village. If no white fowl is available, then white egg of hen is offered. This sacrifice is offered at the southern most end of sacrificial *Akhara.* The reason for offering sacrifice at the southern most end of the *Akhara* is that *Dharmes* controls all the deities and spirits of the village, and if any mischief done by any of them will be controlled by him. Similarly sacrifice is offered in the last is to *Dharmes* to over come for the any humanly mistake in the process of sacrifice.

If the goat or pig is to be offered to the deity, then sacrifice is performed with the sacred knife possessed by the *Baiga.* The pig is hacked to death by few villagers. The *Baiga* himself sacrifices the goat. *Panbhar* assist *Baiga* in sacrificing rituals. After the animal sacrifices *roli* and turmeric is applied to the *Sarna* tree and coconut is offered to it. *Sal* flowers are offered to the village deities.

Then the *Yadav* family bring milk and *Ghasi* household person brings fuel wood and sal leaves. The salt is bought from the house of **Mukhiya** (Patel or headman) of the village. Meanwhile few men dress up the slain coloured cocks and white cock separately. The coloured cocks mixed in rice collected from different households is prepared as *Tahari.* While white fowl is mixed with little rice packed in *Sal* leaves and roasted in fire. The goat or pig sacrificed is cooked separately. Milk is used to make sweet *Tahari* mixed with rice.

The *Baiga* takes up a small amount of cooked *Tahari* and roasted meat and offers the same to the four spirits by name *Darha* **Desauli**, *Pat* **devta**, **Chala** *Pacchao* and *Dulhadev.* After this *Baiga* with the help of *Panbhar* distributes the *Tahari* as *Prasad* (sanctified food) to all the male members present in the grove. Then he takes out for himself and *Panbhar* and all eat it and nothing is taken back to village. After this the *Tahari* made of four different colour fowls and milk are distributed to every one. Women are prohibited to eat the food made of the fowls. They consider that if women eat or enter the grove, the deity of grove may get angry and harm them.

Those who want to eat food prepared from goat or pig sit separately. But all get the *Tahari* made of fowls, as it forms the essential sacrificial meal.

The men of other castes such as **Brahmins**, **Lohar**, **Yadav** and *Ghasi* etc are offered **Sidha** (uncooked food materials) so that they can prepare separately for themselves as per their norms.

In the village, at *Baiga's* house food is prepared for the women of the village. It consists of cooked rice and baked cakes made of *urid.* When *Baiga* with others return to the village, then the women eat the food.

Baiga goes to every house and blesses the women members and fixes a twig of *Sal* flower in the roof of the house to bring prosperity and happiness in it. In this manner he proceeds to every house and perform the same chore. Later he returns to his home and goes to the sacred room and places the winnowing fan and knife in the room. After this villagers are asked to meet every one by forgetting the past difference and decide to work collectively for the well being of the village and community. They pledge to protect the values and norms of the community on this day. The *Baiga* uses the remaining amount of the money collected for the rituals and the material purchased for the rituals belong to the *Baiga*.

The house made liquor called *Handia* plays an important role through out the celebration of *Sarhul* festivals. Few pots of *Handia* are prepared with utmost cleanness, which is offered to the deities and spirits and later on consumed by all villagers.

Now day's element of Great tradition deities finds place in the ritual process of the villages in this region. *Mahadev* and *Parvati* are worshiped in most of the ceremonies. *Sarhul* is celebrated to worship the *Sarna* goddess, called as *Matabai.*

After the ritual ceremony is over, all the villagers of all ages and sex assemble in *Ankara* or centre of the village to sing and dance all night. This celebration is carried out for three days. After the celebration of *Sarhul* is over, the villagers start preparation of fields for forth-coming agriculture season.

b) Rituals held in other groves

In *Pat Sarna* rituals and sacrifice is offered to the deity at regular interval through out the year. At the time of *Sarhul* festival a *Rangua* or *Lal* (Red) cock is sacrificed for *Pat Devta.* At the time of *Kadleta* festival in month of *Sawan* (August-September), the *Baiga* sacrifices a cock to the *Pat Devta.* Similarly, a day after *Nawakhani* festival, the village *Baiga* sacrifices a red cock in **the name of *Pat Devta* in *Pat Sarna.***

The sacrifice to *Darha Desauli* of *Kadamara Sarna* is offered at an interval of three to twelve years. A buffalo is sacrificed to the spirit. Goat is offered at an interval of three years and a black cock is offered in *Sarhul* festival every year. The old stake is replaced with the new one and liver of the sacrificed animal is nailed on the stake and the spirit is asked to rest in peace till the next sacrifice is offered to him.

In *Mahadani Sarna,* sacrifice of buffalo is offered at an interval twelve years and a goat is offered at an interval of three years. During this time the wooden stakes is replaced with new one. After sacrifice of the animal, the liver of the animal is removed and nailed on the wooden stake pegged in the *Sarna.* When the animal is sacrificed, the spirit is told remain quite till the next sacrifice, when it will be again offered sacrifice of animal meat. The meat is distributed equally among the families of village.

3.6 Festivals of food gathering and Hunting

In the villages of Jaspur region, two festivals associated with food gathering activities namely *Pahgu* or *Holi* and *Sarhul* are celebrated. The *Phagu* festival is held in the month of *Phagun* (February- March). It is a festival of celebration of ending of the year. A day before *Phagu,* the branch of *Arandi* tree (Castor oil) is brought by the young men and planted in the centre of the village. Two branches of *Semar* tree (*Salmaliamalabarica*) are also kept along with it. Around it dry wood and paddy straw is placed. The *Baiga* of the village performs ritual and fire is set. After this *handia* is distributed. Drinking, dancing, and singing go on for the whole day. After this festival the *mahua (Madhuca indica)* flowers is collected and dried. After celebration of *Sarhul* festival, other forest produce like *Sal* flowers, *Sal* fruits and *Tendu* leaves collection takes place.

After *Phagu* festival, hunting festival is celebrated. There is one festival associated with the hunting activities of the village system that is *Jeth sikhar*. In this, they go collectively to the surrounding forest and do hunting in the month of *Jeth* i.e. June. It is more associated with agriculture well being. If there is failure in hunt it is considered that forth-coming agriculture season will be bad for the village community. Therefore, all attempts are made to see that there is no failure in the hunting expedition.

3.7 Rituals for Agriculture Practices among Oraon community

The entire agriculture activities like preparation of agriculture fields, sowing, greening of the fields, ripening of the crops, harvesting and eating of the first produce are associated with celebration by the villagers of the area. These villages celebrate Numbers of festivals, principle ones are *Danda Relenga, Hariyari*, *Kadleta* and *Nawakhani.*

The agriculture season begins, immediately after the celebration of *Sarhul* festivals. At first they perform rituals at the field, which depends and varies from family to family. It is entirely a family affair. Initially they perform *Muthi Chodana* worship, prior to planting of new crop of paddy. The *Muthi Chodana* pujan, is the first step for starting the agriculture activities. This is done prior to coming of the monsoon, so that the fields are ready before the first shower of rain.

For the rituals the farmers takes a hand full of old seed of paddy, *Agarbathi* (essence smoke sticks), coconut, and flowers; and goes to the field along with the plough and the bullocks. The ritual is performed by reciting the name of *Mahadev* and *Paravati* and in the process they put a hand full of paddy seeds in field and request the deities that "today I am beginning my agricultural season by preparing agriculture fields, whose protection is in your hands for which you will be propitiated at the time *Nawakhani* (offering of new grains) festivals, therefore it your total responsibility to ensure by the safety and security of the field and its crops". Next, a hand full of paddy seed is put into the field and the farmer recites prayer to the mother earth that "I am putting seeds of paddy in your womb, whose protection and projection or growth is in your hands. Hence, please allow me to split your wombs to put the seeds into it".

After performing the rituals for starting agriculture works, the field is ploughed and the loams are broken into finer particles of soil and levelled by a leveller *(Patta).* All the field preparation work is done in the month of May and June, prior to beginning of rainy season. By the time the rain comes, the prepared fields are ready for paddy cultivation. First in a small patch of field, the paddy is sowed to germinate. After it is fifteen days old, it is transplanted in the entire field. For the transplantation the lineage and clan groups contribute the labour.

a) Danda Relenga

The Oraon populations' rituals are mostly connected with the production aspect of crops and have different speculative mechanisms to foretell the production in future. *Danda Regnala* is a festival performed at the household level. This festival is celebrated in the month of *Ashards* (June-July). The belief is that this ritual helps the villagers in judging the outcome of the crop to be sowed in the coming season. The material used for this festival include an egg of hen, *Haldi* (Turmeric), limestone, a branch of *Tendu (Drospyros melanoxylon)* tree split into two and broken in to eight pieces of length 30-40 cm, and a *Bhelwa* tree branch, which is split from the middle like a fork with one end remain jointed. A square is made which is made of *Roli* (red colour powder) and *Haldi* (Turmeric powder). After this, limestone (white colour) is used making a circle joins all four corner of the square. The shape is not always prescribed or defined. Thereafter ritual is carried out by the *Baiga* of the village.

After the ritual is over, the prediction of production of crop in coming season is done. For this, the split branch of *Tendu* is made into four pieces each, the outer surface is rough and inner side flat. This is thrown in the circle made for ritual. If half of the sticks fall with the rough surface upward and other half with the inner portion upward, then the production will be normal. If more than half of the rough surface faces upwards, then the production is considered to be more than the normal and is considered to be auspicious sign for the coming season. In contrast to it, if more than half of inner surface is upwards then it is expected that production will be less and is considered inauspicious. After the ritual these sticks are thrown into fields of paddy and deities of the village are worshipped and other Hindu deities like *Mahadev* and *Parvati* are worshiped to protect their field and crops from evil spirits and natural calamities like unwanted rain and diseases.

A difference exists between the *Danda Rengla* described by Roy (1928) then it was performed individually, during the *Karma* and before the paddy in the barn. The procedure as described by him is that in *Danda Rengla,* the specialist is called to the house for the ceremony; a place in the courtyard is cleaned, swept and pasted with the cow dung. He takes his seat in the middle and draws a figure more or less in the form of egg, then along circumference seven small half-circle to represent the seven parts into which the world is divided. The big circle represents, the rainbow of god's of granary. As they have only three-circle world in their language for the series of colour they use only three colours to represent the rainbow. They use the red dust of the burnt mud of their hearth; the white floor or the yeast is used in making *handia* (rice beer) and powdered charcoal.

In the centre, the *Baiga* puts a handful of rice on which he places an egg and twigs of *Bhelwa (Semecarpus anacardium)* tree, one end of which is split up and a small piece of the wood fixed in it. Sitting then with face towards the east, he draws two intersecting lines representing the *panchayat* of the village in a sup (winnowing pan) containing some rice. He then puts on the eggs and the twig of the *Bhelwa* and goes on singing the stories of genesis.

b) *Hariyari* Festival

Hariyari is an ancient festival celebrated before carrying out the transplantation of paddy. No transplantations of paddy are done prior to performance of this ritual. This is performed in the month of *Asardh* (June-July). If any one wants to carry out the transplantation before the collective ritual is celebrated, then he calls *Baiga* who offers rice and beverage as libation to mother Earth and prays for plenty of rain and a bounty full crop. This is called as *Bangari.* It is then followed by transplantation of five seedlings by the *Baiga.* Only then, the usual transplantation operation takes place.

Hariyali festival is celebrated, when the entire region looks green due to the plants of paddy, when they reach certain height and ready to be transplanted. This is a collective ritual, celebrated at the village level. When paddy germinates the *Baiga* holds talks with the villagers to fix a day for the celebration of *Hariyali.* The Kotwar belonging *Ghasi* community of the village goes to each household and informs about the date of the *Hariyali* festival. Some fixed amount of money is collected from every household for purchasing ritual materials and cocks required for the ritual.

On the *Hariyali* day, Men of the village along with village head man, *Baiga*, *Panbhar*, *Kotwar* go to the outskirts of the village in the east direction to the upland, where the festival is held annually. A member of *Dhangar* community cleans the place and **plasters** it with cow dung paste. The place of sacrifice is cleaned and prepared. A small quantity of rice is placed on the ground for the number of animals or birds are to be sacrificed. While sacrificing the cocks *Baiga* faces towards east and requests the deities and spirits to protect the crops from sickness, pest attack, and to protect the cattle and humans from any impending trouble expected to the villagers. The birds are offered to the respective deities as done at the time of *Sarhul* festival. The *Baiga* asks deities to accept the sacrifice. The acceptance is understood by the behaviour of the sacrificial animal. If the animal eats the rice kept in the sacrificial place, then it is understood that the deity or spirit has accepted the **sacrifice** and the animal is sacrificed.

When all the fowls are sacrificed, a little blood is dropped next to the rice kept near the sacred site. Other members clean the birds and animal and make preparation for cooking the sanctified food *(Tahari)*. The liver of the sacrificial animal and birds are removed and cooked separately. A bit of it is offered to the deities and spirits with a libation of *Handia.* The *Tahari* is distributed to all the members present on the occasion. After this the place is cleaned and wastes is put into a pit and closed. Women are not allowed to participate or take the sanctified food prepared for the occasion.

c) Kadleta

This festival is performed after the formation of rice grains and is ready for harvesting. This is generally performed in the month of *Bhado* (August-September). This festival is performed to protect the crops from the evil eyes and evil spirits. In this festival sacrifices are offered to the village deities by the *Baiga* of the village for the protection of the village crops from evil eyes and evils spirits. The ritual follows the same pattern of performance taken place in *Hariyali* festival. On this day the young men of the village collect saplings of *Bhelwa (Semecarpus anacardium*) and Tendu (*Drospyos melanoxylon*). They are distributed to all the households. Each household plants a sapling of these braches in their respective fields.

d) Nawakhani

The agriculture season ends with harvesting and thrashing of the paddy. The produce is collected in the storehouse and after offering the new grains to the village deity on *Nawakhani* festival the paddy is brought into use for eating. Once the crop ripens it is cut and brought to *Khalihan* (thrashing ground). Most of the time it is a common place, and some time the *Sarhul* Sarna is also use for thrashing of paddy. In *Khalihan,* paddy is thrashed and rice is taken out. This festival is aimed at offering the first produce from the crop to the deities of the village and ancestors who have protected the crop from disease and calamities. Otherwise they will be angry and in future will not protect their crop, but harm the village and its crops. In the rituals the new grains are offered to the deities requesting them to keep looking after their crops in future in similar manner.

This festival is celebrated in the month of *kartik* (November), and is celebrated at household level. No specific date is fixed for celebration of the festival. *Matabai* (old lady of the grove) and ancestor spirits are first to whom rice is offered. During *Nawakhani* they sacrifice a black hen to the ancestor spirits. The hen had to be killed with the blow of hand. Great rejoicing and drinking of *handia* and mutual feasting follow this offering of the crop to god.

3.8 Festivals associated with livestock

Sohorai is the festival celebrated for worshiping of the cattle's owned by the villages. It is generally a remembrance of the services rendered by the cattle in agriculture production and by providing milks to the village households. It is held in the month of *Kartik* (October-November). On the occasion, every household give bath to their cattle by taking them to the water body in the village. Then they are decorated by anointing of horns with oil mixed in turmeric. After this they are taken to the grove and worshiped. The village deities are requested to keep them healthy, so that they keep providing the services to the human community. After the ritual is over, they are brought to the house and offered feeds mixed with floor of wheat and remnant of pulses to eat.

3.9 Other important festivals of the villages

a) Ashari pujan

Ashasri pujan is held in the month of *Ashad* (June) on the *Purnima* or **full** moon day of the month, essentially for the protection of the village from the epidemics and natural calamities. A week before the *Pornima*, money is collected from every household, to purchase ritual material, to be used in the worship. Then the ritual items like chicken, coconut, *roli*, limestone and other *hawan* (sacrificial) objects are purchased. In the night of full moon day *(Pornima)*, when all the villagers slept, at around mid-night, *Ojha, Baiga* and the aged men of the village undertake the worship for the security of the village. The *Baiga* of the village performs this ritual; if by any chance *Baiga* is not present for the occasion then any elder person of the village or *Mati Ojha* (medicine man) will play the role of *Baiga* and performs the needed rituals.

The ritual begins with the group going round the village. In the process they hit with a stick on each door of the house in the village with out uttering a single word. On reaching the cross road or corner of the village, they break an egg and offer a coconut, perform *puja* with *roli* and *limestone* and move to the next cross road or corner of the village. They repeat this procedure at all cross road of the village. After conducting worship at all the crossroad of the village, they go to the place where they conduct the ritual annually. Here they perform the ritual by offering the coconuts and other ritual material to the deity. The food items offered to the deity, are eaten there itself and nothing is brought back to the village.

In Komodo village, the place where *Asadhi* festival is celebrated is located at a distance of half a kilometres from the *Pat Sarna* on the hilltop and it at the boundary of the village. When the people return to their respective homes after the ritual, they believe that any evil spirit following them will be stopped by the *Pat Sarna* deity who is the protector of the village.

After the ritual is over and when the group start journey back to the village, no one say's words like "let us go". This due to the fact that the villagers believe that if any one says these words the evil and harmful spirits will follows that person and harm him, which only *Baiga* or *Mati Ojha* identify and can cure it. For that they have to perform a ritual, for which the entire cost is to be born by the affected person.

b). Karam Festival

The *Karam* is celebrated in the month of *Kuaar* or *Ashwin* (September or October). This festival is held on the **full** moon day. The unmarried girls of the village basically celebrate this festival. The girls keep fast on the day of the *Karam.* The boys of the village go to the nearby forest, and select branches of *Karam* (*Adina* cardifolia) tree, which are straight and have not been damaged in any way by worms or other pests and leaves are all perfect and fresh. The branches are not allowed to touch the ground.

In the meantime, girls of the village collect white flowers and stand on the boundary of the village to join the group of boys who have gone to bring the branches of the *Karam* tree. On the arrival of the boys, they take the branches, and together return to the village singing and dancing. The branches of the *Karam* tree are taken to centre of the village or as in the case of Gadha Ghamhariya village planted in the *Sarna.*

Baiga of the village arrives and performs rituals. He worships the village deities and requests them to bless the girls and boys of the village. The girls thereafter worship the trees and pray to be blessed with able husbands. Then they break their fast by eating the offering made to the deity and also of the food prepared for the occasion.

Then, they take a small branch from the tree and go to houses singing and dancing at each house. Then the entire village goes to the *Sarna* and offers flowers to the village deity for the well-being of the village and return to their respective houses. In night, both the girls and bachelors of the village join at the centre of village or *Akhara* place and dance for the entire night.

c) Jitia Festival

This festival is celebrated in the month of *Badra* (Aug-Sep) on *Tij Krishna pakhsa* (third day of receding moon). The women of the village celebrate the *Jitia* festival for long life of their husbands. On the day of the festival, the women keep fast from early morning till late night without having water or any food. After performing ritual and offering the food prepared for the occasion to *Paravati,* the consort of lord *Shiva,* a Hindu deity, they break their fast and eat food offered to the goddess. Thereafter they do *Jagaran* i.e. keep awake the whole night singing

songs. The belief is that if the woman keeps fast and falls asleep, her worship is affected and the **lifespan** of her husband is lessened. The remedy for this is that the woman has to take the ***Kalas*** (Pot) along with one coconut and an egg with her husband and worship in *Sarna* to rectify her mistake. After performing this ritual it is believed that the actual age of her husband will be restored back.

3.10. **Functionaries** Dealing with Supernatural Powers

The head of each ***Oraon*** family or lineage (***Khunt***) is responsible for the propitiation of the spirits or deities of its family or lineage respectively. *Baiga* is considered to be the priest and religious head of the village. He is considered the ultimate religious head of the village. The *Baiga* has the right over the Sarna and conducts rituals in Sarna. In his absence some time the *Mati Ojha* (Medicine man) of the village can performs the rituals. He is believed to ensure cordial relations between the villagers and the supernatural powers.

The post of *Baiga* is hereditary, but if due to any factor, the post of the *Baiga* has fallen vacant, and then it filled through an elaborate ceremonial procedure. In this, every villager belonging to tribal communities has right to get selected as *Baiga.* The procedure has randomisation element, where the deity herself selects a person as *Baiga* of the village. There after the post is passed on hereditarily. He performs the sacrifices to propitiate the deities and spirits of the village who reside in the sacred groves. He is consulted in every religious matter and the villagers always take his guidance in different matters. From religious point of view, every village is organized separately and is an independent unit. Sometimes two villages have a common sacred grove or priest but such cases are rare.

The *Mati Ojha* is a black magician who plays the role of witch finder, witch doctor, spirit-finder and exorcizer. The village priest or the most senior man in the family or clan can undertake the propitiation of different supernatural powers and prayers. They know how to do it through observation though sometimes there are chance variations in the way of propitiation and prayer from one village or other.

Only Elder men of the village participate in the performance of ritual in sacred groves. The women are prohibited from participating in the rituals held in the sacred groves. The young boys are restricted from participating in the rituals. They can do so only after marriage or when one becomes a father. Then only they can participate in religious activities and acquire the knowledge. So age and sex are significant **criteria,** which determine the religious participation and religious activities of sacred grove.

Oraon believe in the propitiation and worship of a host of supernatural power related to sacred groves, which are supposed to be benevolent while others, those are malevolent and propitiated out of fear. The super natural powers of sacred groves have local significance.

Oraon's also offer sacrifice of animals like buffalos to the supernatural beings. They also make various magical observations during festivals and on occasions of risk or any sort of supernatural or natural danger that may threaten the individual, the family or the village community.

The sacred groves, the place of *khunt, kadleta, danr, devithan,* and the place of path, and *kundi* or *phulki* stones were some of the important sacred centres of the *Oraon* and are the places of practically all their religious activities. Besides these fixed centres there are also temporary representations of sacred centres having no fixed place but are located only at the time of need viz. during the performance of a *Khalihan puja, Bangari, Katni dewar puja* sacrifice to ancestor spirits or such other religious ceremonies.

CHAPTER IV

SARNA (SACRED GROVES) VIS-A-VIS COMMON POOL RESOURCES

In the earlier chapter, the cultural features of the sacred groves in the villages of Jaspur district have been discussed. Sacred groves are commonly owned resources. The villagers use it and interact with it, for collective gain of the community. In this chapter, sacred groves are analysed from the perspective of management of common pool resources. The survival and utility of the common property is due to close dependence on natural resources. This makes survival more subject to a variety of unpredictable natural events that are likely to fall unequally in both time and space on the local population. If this inequality is threatening to a sufficiently large group, incentives may exist in collectively managing it through exclusive use. The institutionalised processes of management and allocation of the resources, contribute to the social stability at the same time promote efficient adaptation to changing resource availability over time (Broomly and Chapagin, 1984:49). The study villages have number of commons used by the villagers for different purposes. They can be listed as follows: sacred groves, grazing land (*Charnoee* land), cremation ground, water springs etc. The sacred groves are religious commons of the village in this region. These groves existing in the village provide psychological and sociological benefits to the village community.

The Common pool resources have certain features like property rights, ownership pattern, structure and function of institution for managing it and rules and roles for the communities follow for efficient use of the common resources. The sacred groves are analysed from various theoretical perspectives of common property resources management mentioned in the chapter I. In this chapter the following theories of institution (Ostrom design principle), culture (Embeddedness of culture) and Social Constructivist approach are used to understand the management of sacred groves in diachronic and synchronic dimension.

4.1 Institutional perspective (Ostrom Design Principle) vis-a-vis Management of sacred grove in the study area

Ostrom (1990) provided with eight-design principle, to study the efficiency of an institution of self-organised systems. This became a trend breaking work in common property resources management. With help of this design principle, the study of institutions of common property resources became an important feature to explain the success or failure of the management of the commons. According to Ostrom (1990) a self organised system to be successful needs to satisfy these design principles, (Gokhale, et al 1998)

1. The long term benefits flowing from the restraints on resources use should be commensurate with the costs incurred by the community,

2. The conservation system should deal with a well defined resource under reasonably secure control of a well defined social group,

3. The group responsible for the conservation system should effectively organised to administer the system,

4. Existence of a monitoring machinery accountable to and respected by the actors,

5. Collective choice agreements,

6. Conflict Resolution Mechanism

7. Flexible rules relating to resources use patterns and,

8. Graduated sanctions against violation of management rules.

These designed principles are applied to study the institution of sacred grove in the study area to analyse how a self-organised system does it fulfil the necessary conditions for successful management of groves in the process of interaction of man and nature.

1. The long term benefits flowing from the restraints on resources use should be commensurate with the costs incurred by the community

The society at micro level is always susceptible and vulnerable to the unpredictable and uncontrollable nature. The communities design mechanisms to cope up with it. Sacred groves are one such design made by the traditional communities to explain the unforeseen impact of the nature. Therefore, sacred groves are incorporated in the local worldview. The village community have allocated an appropriate space to all the deities of their worldview as per their ascribed hierarchy and functions. The sacred groves of the studied villages are classified on the basis of productive and protective functions derived by the society. Hence, the different type of groves existing in a village fulfils, the psychological as well as sociological requirement of the community.

The benefits to community from these groves are tangible as well as non-tangible. The village community looks toward to the sacred grove deities for immediate as well as long-term support. The short-term benefits are in the form of support to production system. This is evident from the pattern of association community has developed through regular ritual process for all deities of the groves. Beginning with *Sarhul* festival where all the village deities of different *Sarnas* are offered obeisance, they at regular interval are worshipped in different festivals linked with economic activities of the community. This basically reflects the regular sustainable need-based approach of interaction with the deities of groves for surplus yield and protection of crops from external threat and pest problems. Therefore all those who are part of the village community, including the caste communities, have developed faith in the groves and participate in its rituals and prescribed by the rules meant for *Sarna.* For example, in Echkela village, although the *Oraons* have converted to Christianity, but they continue to show faith in the **Sarna,** when it comes to linking it with village production system.

The long-term benefits to the communities from sacred groves are in form of protection to human, livestock and production system of the village from the unforeseen incidents. It may be in the form of illness, natural calamities or epidemic. These incidents make the communities vulnerable and make them collectively solve the problems of distress. They seek solution from the deities of village living in these groves of the village. The mechanism used by them is by paying obeisance to the deities. For which they offer sacrifice to the deities of *Pat, Mahadani* or **Kadamara Sarna,** at a fixed interval, either once a year or after three or **five** or twelve years. This is basically for the long-term benefits incurred by the communities m the form of protection of human and livestock population of the village from diseases and external evil spirits. The description provided for mode of **functioning** of the deities living in the *Pat* and *Mahadani* groves, is that they constantly go round the village ridding on the back of a pony, keeping a watch and protecting the village from the attack of evil spirits and other calamities. This explanation shows the psychological support, communities of the village derive from the acts of deities of the groves. In return they protect the groves with a sentimental feeling of fear and respect. They have associated number of taboos, in order not to displease the deities of the groves. These are intangibles benefits; the communities derive from the groves.

The tangible benefits are that they are common property, from where they collect various non-timber forest produce, herbs and shrubs needed by the households of the village and healers of the village. Some groves are allowed for grazing. Some *Sarhul Sarna* is used for dance, recreation purpose and conducting marriage ceremonies.

2. The conservation system should deal with a well-defined resource under reasonably secure control of a well-defined social group: (Ownership)

One third of the area in all the villages in the Chattisgarh state is treated as common. This includes the sacred groves, grazing land and wasteland. The administration has categorised sacred groves either as temple land or village common land under the control of village panchayat. The actual ownership of the sacred groves located in the revenue area rest with the community. It has the usufruct right as well as traditional customary ownership (as per revenue records), but for sacred groves located in the forest **area,** they

are under the ownership of forest department and community only has **usufruct** right. The table 4.1 below shows the status of the groves as **classified** by the block revenue officer in the study villages.

Table 4.1 Classification of the groves of the study villages by the revenue department

S. No	Name of the Village	Type of sacred grove	Revenue department Classification	Area (Ha)
1	Baghima	Sarhul Sarna	Sarna land	0.021**
		Pat Sarna	Not mentioned in the records	0.5*
2	Ghamhariya	Sarhul	Jungle of big trees	0.995
		Manohar	Jungle of big trees	0.057
		Letye	Jungle of big trees	0.236
		Mahadani	Hill and rocky land	4.256
		Pat	Hill and rocky land	0.045
3	Komodo	Sarhul	Grassland	0.77
		Pat	Not mentioned in the records	-
		Mahadani	Not mentioned in the records	-
4	Echkela	Sarhul	Reserved land	0.198
		Phool	Reserved land	0.243
		Kadamara	Jungle of big trees	0.121
		Mahadani	Jungle of big trees	0101

Sources: Records of Block Revenue officer of Jaspur.

*As informed by the villagers

** As per earlier records land of Sarna was 2.1291 Ha.

The concept of common property is well established in informal institutional arrangements based in custom and tradition (Berkes, 1989). According to traditional view, application of concept of common property should be restricted to communally owned resources i.e. those resources for which there exist communal arrangements **for** the exclusion of non-owners and equitable allocation among co-owners. All the study villages exclusively own the sacred groves in its area and used by its own residents members and restrict its uses by others. Members of other village are not allowed worship in the village groves. Although each village has similar set of sacred groves and deities, villages clearly differentiate its groves, controlling process, management and use.

They fear to interact with the groves of other village, because deity in the **grove** may harm them. They fear in passing through a grove of other village in night.

According to the villagers the total area of the sacred groves are collectively belongs to the village. In the revenue records, sacred grove is registered as Sarna or temple land, this is mostly in the case of *Sarhul Sarna.* While in the case of other *Sarna* i.e. *Pat* or *Mahadani* **Sarna,** they as are per their location and are classified as common land of the village as forestland or grassland (see table 4.1), although they may belong to the revenue department. Each village in the region has at least two or three groves of the similar typology.

3. The group responsible for the conservation system should be effectively organised to administer the system: Institution Of Management

The villages have historically continued the practices of sacred grove culture. They have well-developed social organisation, in term of management of these groves. These villages have number of institution like the village priest, village chief, assistant to village priest, watchman etc. The villages have village Priest called **Baiga,** who looks after the administration of sacred groves of the village and has total control and management right over these sacred groves. The post of *Baiga* is held hereditarily. The community has an established mode of payment for the services, he provides to the community.

Baiga acts as the village priest and conducts all the rituals associated with the sacred groves in the village. His work is to interpret problem faced by the village such as calamities, drought or attack of external evil spirit and appropriately take precautionary measure by conducting ritual ceremonies to please the deities of the groves. Secondly, to interpret and diagnose the personal problem of members of the village, i.e. whether the problem faced by an individual is due to any act of negligence or misconduct towards the groves deities. He takes measures to solve them by performing the needed rituals on the behalf of the person in the grove. If the problem is not due to displeasure of the grove deity, but is illness or effect of an evil spirit, then Baiga sends the person to village medicine man called as *Mati Ohja.* Besides this he has the responsibility of overall management of the groves i.e. look after the protection aspect of the grove so that no one

causes harm to it. There is prohibition to remove material from the groves without the permission of the *Baiga*. The *Baiga* has first right over dry wood or fallen trees in the groves. He can use the wood for his own purpose or give to other members of the village as per their need. If used personally a portion wood is to be sold and the income generated from it should be used for the betterment of the grove.

One person can be *Baiga* of more than one village. The *Baiga* of the Echkela village is Rahbal, who is seventy years old and he lives in Tolapara. He is Baiga of four villages namely, Echkela, Chapar, Tolapara and Jhilmili. He conducts ritual for the four villages and has the management right over the Sarna of these villages. But there is no overlap and mix up of conduction of rituals. For each village he separately conducts rituals in their groves.

Each village has prescribed pattern of payment in kind for the services he provides to the village communities. Few villages have a portion of land assigned for the *Baiga* to meet his livelihood needs. Ghamhariya village have three acres of land meant for *Baiga* to meet his livelihood. Besides this, every year, he gets five *Paila* (One *Paila* is equivalent to three Kg) of *Dhan* (Paddy) at the time of harvest, from all the land owning households. A *Paila* is a wooden vessel. One *Paila* of grain is equivalent to about three kilograms. But some villages do not have any land in these villages. Every household gives a fixed quantity of grain after the harvest. In Baghima village it is eight *Paila* of Dhan at the time of harvest from each land owning households. Besides this, Baiga takes all the offering made in ritual conducted in *Sarna* and other place, where he is asked to perform rituals.

In Komodo village every household gives him eight *Paila* of Dhan after every harvest, from every *Bukhar* of land. Generally the villagers divide their cultivable land into number *Bukhar* i.e. smaller manageable unit. A fixed area that can be cultivated by a pair of bullock and one plough in a given season is equal to one *Bukhar.* This includes the number of helping hands required from a household, who can support it with labour. This roughly comes out to be two and half acres of land. A household some time has more than one *Bukhar.* Such households have to pay according to the number of *Bukhar* they have, for example if a households has two-Bukhar of land, then he gives sixteen *Paila* of Dhan.

The post of *Baiga* is held hereditarily. A bachelor is debarred from being *Baiga* as his wife plays an important role in **Sarhul** festival. In *Sarhul* festival, the marriage of Sun and earth is celebrated, this is symbolised in the form of marriage *of Baiga* and his wife. In case a *Baiga* is a widower then his eldest son and daughter-in-law performs the ritual of marriage ceremony. After the death of *Baiga* this land is hereditarily passed on to the eldest son of the *Baiga.* Then he becomes the *Baiga.* But in a circumstance where there is no heir or successor left for the *Baiga,* or the present *Baiga* is removed from his post due to certain unavoidable reason, and his successors are reluctant to take the responsibility of the **Baiga,** then the villagers go for selection of a new *Baiga.* The selection of Baiga is done through the process of randomisation, where every individual from a selected class in the village has equal and fair opportunity to become a *Baiga.* For this, a ritual procedure is conducted in the village.

The selection of new *Baiga* is held in the *Sarhul Sarna* of the village. All the male members of the village assemble in the grove, where the process of selection of new *Baiga* is conducted. This is held in the month of December. A day is selected in this month, and all the village members are informed of it. On that day, all the male members of the village assemble in the grove. The *Sup* (winnowing basket) placed in the sacred place in the house of the out going *Baiga*, brought to the grove. The deity of grove is considered to sit on the *Sup.* This generally considered to be the emblem of **Baiga's** office (Roy, 1928: 8) and is used in every ritual carried out in the groves.

The out going *Baiga* also brings a new *sup,* and some raw rice. A *Sal* branch is brought and one end of it is split into a fork like form. The fork end is attached to the old *Sup. A* young bachelor, who is considered to be sensitive to the super natural power, is selected and blindfolded. The stick attached to the old sup is given in his hand. The members of the village present in the grove take few grains of rice from the new sup brought by the out going *Baiga* and throws it on the old sup and requesting the grove deity to sit on it and select the man of her choice. In this process, the bachelor gets possessed by the grove deity and starts moving toward the village. The out going *Baiga* follows the Bachelor scattering rice and water on the way. Few villagers join him in the procession while others wait in the groves. It is believed that the deity selects the person of her choice.

When coming to village he moves from house to house. At whichever house the blinded folded person places the sup, the male head of that household is selected as new *Baiga* of the village. After selection of new *Baiga*, the land meant for *Baiga* is passed on to him. Since, this land is allocated for the post of *Baiga*. Once a person selected as *Baiga*, he remains so, through out for his lifetime and no selection can be conducted again. The new *Baiga* is called for and the group now returns back to the grove. The New Baiga carries the new sup on which the deity of the grove is considered to be seated.

In Ghamhariya village, the selection of *Baiga* is done is a different manner. Here all the potential candidates assemble in the *Sarhul Sarna*. The out going *Baiga* comes with the old *Sup*, which is in his possession. He also gets a new sup and some rice. A bow and arrow is also brought. Each candidate is asked to pull the arrow by fixing it on the bow, with the head of the arrow facing toward his chest. To whichever candidate's chest the arrow sticks on its own, that particular candidate is selected as new *Baiga*. The new candidate is given the new sup and rice is thrown on it and the deity of grove is requested to sit on it and the villagers along with the new *Baiga* return to the village.

Baiga has two assistants *Panbhar* and *Kotwar* (watchman). These two posts are also held hereditarily and selection for these two post is held in similar fashion as done for the *Baiga*. They are paid in kind i.e. a fixed *Paila* of *Dhan* is given each one of them after every harvest from every land owning household. The work *of Panbhar* is to assist *Baiga* in conduction of rituals in *Sarna* and act as messenger to the village on the issues relating to grove management. The work of *Kotwar* is to do patrolling of the village and keep a watch on the common and private resources of the village, including groves so that no one causes damage or harm to them. If he comes across any such incident, should be reported to the *Baiga* or headman of the village. *Baiga* tries to take appropriate measure to punish the person. If *Baiga* is unable resolve the issue, then he takes the matter to the village panchayat, which resolves the problem.

The other unit of village administration that collaborates with *Baiga* in the management of sacred grove is the village headman called as Mukhiya. He generally belongs to the clan of first settlers in the village. *Mukhiya* looks after the general management of the village and dispute settlement. Baiga also forms part of the village Panchayat and his words have substantial weightage on the village issues.

The use of *Sarna* and the products of its trees, vary with the type of *Sarna* and the nature of the deity associated with it. As, *Sarhul Sarna* belongs to a benevolent deity, is used elaborately and freely by the villagers. *Pat, Kadamara* or *Mahadani Sarna* belong to fearsome deities therefore number of taboo and prohibitions are assigned to its use. In Ghamhariya village, the *Sarhul Sarna* is used for celebration social functions. The villager cannot use the material available in the *Sarna* without the permission of the *Baiga.* The *Baiga* has the right over the material of the groves i.e. dry wood fallen trees etc. It is believed that if anybody causes harm to the trees or things in the grove, the *Chala Pacchao* deity of *Sarna* punishes him/her. This reflects in the form of sickness or crop damage to the perpetrator. Immediately, he contacts the *Baiga,* who suggests him with a solution, mostly it is performance of ritual in the grove, to appease the annoyed deity. Once the person performs the ritual, the deity pardons him. If some one is seen causing harm to grove, the matter is reported to the *Baiga,* who levy fine on him for infringement. Owing to fear of punishment by the *Sarna Mata,* the person immediately pays the fine. In some cases, if the person does not pay the fine, the matter is brought to the village panchayat for settlement. The panchayat punishes the person with strict warning or fine. *Baiga* cannot use the fine amount entirely for personal use but has to utilise a portion of it for the worship of *Sarna,* and rest for his personal use.

If any tree falls down in the *Sarna,* then the *Baiga* takes that tree. He can sell of the wood, and the amount obtained from it cannot be fully utilized by him, but three-fourth of the amount is used for the development of *Sarna* and rituals of *Sarna. Baiga* uses rest for his personal matters. But if the tree wood is used for construction or as fuel wood then *Baiga* has complete right over it. If some villager is in need of wood, then he can request the *Baiga* to give the wood to him, *Baiga* charges some money from him and gives the wood. The village members are afraid to interfere with groves of other villages and it is the case with their grove. This is because of the persistent fear of being harmed by the grove deity.

4. Existence of **monitoring** machinery accountable to and respected by the actors

The monitoring of the grove is done in two ways. Firstly through the taboos associated with groves, where the influences of the deities are considered to check the misuse of the groves. Secondly, through functionaries like *Baiga* and **Kotwar,** whose duties are to monitor these groves. Taboos vary with different types of the groves. Generally *Sarhul Sarna,* have least degree of taboos associated with it. The taboos associated with *Sarhul Sarna* are mostly of prohibitive nature, and apply to people who are impure. For example, women who are undergoing menstrual cycle are prohibited from going near to or inside the grove, and on all other occasions they are allowed to go inside the grove. Similarly those families, in whose house a death or childbirth has taken place are considered to be impure and prohibited from entering the grove. Since it is considered that impure person will pollute grove, which will annoy the deity of the grove and who in retaliation may harm the individual or village and its crops. Similarly, pregnant women avoid going near to or entering the grove, with a fear that the deity of the grove may harm the child inside her. Besides this there is prohibition of extraction of dry woods and produces of trees in the grove, without the permission of the *Baiga* of the village. Generally the collection of *Sal* seeds, herbs and edibles like mushroom are allowed.

In the case of the other groves like **Kadamara** or *Pat* or **Mahadani** *Sarna,* taboos are of stricter nature and are based on sex and age. The women are generally prohibited to go near to or inside these groves, as it is considered that deities of these groves may harm the women, for they are considered to be weak and prone to be troubled by the deities of these groves. Children (below fourteen or **fifteen** years old) are prohibited to enter inside these groves for the same reason as for the women. Here also, all the impurity related taboos are associated with these groves. Besides this there is prohibition of extraction of dry woods and produces of trees in these groves. Even the *Baiga* of the village avoid taking produces form these groves. The monitoring by the village functionaries is done as discussed above.

5. Collective choice agreements

The sacred groves is internalised in the local religious system, by arranging its deities in the hierarchy of the tribal worldview. Each village has its own sets of sacred groves associated with the villages economic, security and protection system. These deities residing in the groves are allocated separate common spaces in the village. Collective choice agreement of the village community is to regularly interact with them, through various festivals and rituals linked with various activities of the village community. This interaction, besides providing a common social occasion, also provides opportunity for information sharing and assessment of the status and condition of the groves.

Everyone in the villages is dependent on agriculture for livelihood. The collective choice agreement provides them with information on activities of collective benefits like agriculture and security. This arrangement of regular interaction has created rules system, which specifies the time to begin and end the agriculture season, time for sowing, or harvesting etc. For example the collective interaction in festivals provide approximate information on availability of rain, and assurance through the appeasement of deities that they will take care of the impending problems. This gives the individual confidence that they can proceed with their regular activities, with out fear, as the deities of the groves will protect them.

Second, aspect of collective choice arrangement is associated with the issues of security to village system and protection to human life, crops, and livestock etc. In the vulnerable environment were the impacts of natural calamities or disease are interpreted in the form behaviour of the evil spirit, and protection is sought from village deities against them, is an important psychological arrangement to cope up with uncertain environment at micro-level.

The collective agreement of the village community is linked to the benefits derived by them from these groves, in an environment of unpredictability of nature. It provides them with security to their livelihood system, human and livestock. In reciprocation they regularly offer sacrifice to these deities of *Sarhul, Pat, Kadamara* or *Mahadani* groves. These rituals processes are collective affairs were all the male individuals of the village

participate. Therefore when it comes to management of the groves a collective consensus is built within the village. The various festivals spread out through out the year like *Sarhul,* **Kadleta,** *Hariyari* etc, are collectively celebrated at village level, which reflects the collective choice arrangement of the local system, for the interaction with groves. At every festival, the villager worships village deities residing in these groves.

This behaviour of the resource users is based on a sense of reasonably balanced sharing or reciprocity. Each user has relatively equal access to this resource, sometimes calculated according to means or needs, sharing it with his or her co-owners. Each participating individual is expected to provide assistance and support in managing the systems. In short, access to resources, and the social relation that grew up around them are developed through a collection of reciprocal rights, duties and privileges.

6. Conflict resolution system

For dispute settlement at intra village level, the villages have a traditional council called Panchayat. The work of this panchayat is to resolve the disputes taking place within the village system and maintains a harmonious living environment for the villagers. The nature of the disputes ranges from personal quarrels, familial problems, and marriage related disputes, property disputes, crop destruction by cattle, *Sarna* infringement, land encroachment, inter-community disputes etc. At first the settlement of dispute is tried at family or neighbourhood level. The families try to settle the dispute within the lineage, but if unable to settle at these levels, then it is taken to traditional council i.e. village panchayat. Here the matter is heard at the village level and a collective judgment is delivered. If the conflicting parties do not agree to the judgement given by the panchayat, then they have highest dispute settling body in the form of *Parha* Panchayat. The judgment of *Parha* panchayat is final and taken on the basis of unanimous consensus of the villagers and it becomes binding on the disputant to accept it or face expulsion from the community.

In Baghima village, the traditional panchayat is held under a big **Bargad** *(Ficus* **religosa)** tree in the village on which a village deity called as **Baram** *dev* resides. This place is located in west of the village. In **Komodo** village the community hall of the village is

used to conduct panchayat. The reason given for selecting a sacred site is that *Mukhiya* is considered to be impartial in delivering the judgement, but if he is not, then the deity residing on the tree will punish him and bring disaster to him, family and property. It is essential that at least one male member from every household is present in the panchayat proceedings, this because the judgment is taken on consensus among the village members. It is ensured that representative from every household is present to give his opinion. Only male members of the village are allowed to participate in the panchayat activities. Women can only attend the panchayat when they are disputant and have to put forth their viewpoint.

Generally, an aggrieved person calls for the panchayat. He goes to every individual household and informs them about his problem and seeks their help in settling the dispute through the traditional panchayat. On the basis of severity of the problem villagers decides to call the panchayat. The panchayat begins it's proceeding with the selection of *Mukhiya* i.e. head of the panchayat. Among the assembled persons a learned person with experience is selected as *Mukhiya* or head of the panchayat. Here age is not essential criterion for selection of *Mukhiya.* Instead importance is given to persons capacity and knowledge and analytical skill of dispute resolution, apart from this, he should be well versed with community rules, roles and functioning. He should give high priority to see that harmony exist among the communities and villagers. Finally, it is essential and necessary that both the disputing parties accept the selected *Mukhiya* as adjudicator, and then only the proceedings of the panchayat are carried forward. If not another person of known integrity acceptable every one is identified and selected. It is not necessary that same person may be selected as *Mukhiya* all the time, but there are persons who are selected as *Mukhiya* for their lifetime because of their integrity towards village society. There is no fixed tenure for *Mukhiya;* it can vary from case to case. The general rule of judicial process is that members present from every household is a panch and has to contribute in discussion and give individual opinion on the issue. In general practice the headman of the village belonging to the first settler family acts as the *Mukhiya* of the traditional panchayat.

After selection of the *Mukhiya* (main panch), the proceeding of panchayat begins. The aggrieved party is called to explain his problem or incident and the person against whom the charges are made is also called to put forth his viewpoint. After hearing the viewpoints of both the parties, the panchayat discusses on the issue, participated by all members present in the meeting. After hearing all the members present of the village on the issue, the *Mukhiya* gives the judgment. Before delivering the judgement, the *Mukhiya* calls both the party in the middle and then proclaims his judgment. The party found guilty is given the punishment as per nature of crime, deeds and frequency of activities. The punishments are of two kinds, one is of positive nature i.e. reformist where the individual is asked to give communal feast, and other is negative i.e. penalty were punishment like monetary payment or social ostracising is imposed on the person. In most of the cases monetary punishment is levied on the guilty person. The money is paid to the panchayat, from which half of the money is given to the affected person to meet his loss. Rest half is deposited with the panchayat for it usage. This happen in the case where both the parties accept the judgment, but in case either one of them do not agree to the panchayat decision, then panchayat is called off by referring the matter to higher panchayat called *Parha* Panchayat.

6.1 Parha Panchayat

This region has a system of *Parha* Panchayat, which means that a conglomeration of eight to ten villages, which are socially culturally (close kinship ties), linked together form a bigger unit of association called *Parha.* Each *Parha* has a panchayat, which settles the issues of dispute in its jurisdiction. Each Parha elects its *Parha Panch* through a democratically held election in which only the male members have right to vote. The term of a *Parha panch* is for five years. This position is open to all the individuals within the *Parha* and no discrimination is made on the basis of tribe or clan for the candidate. Secondly a candidate can contest for the post as many number of times as he likes. Women are not allowed to contest or vote for the post of *Parha panch.* Only the men above sixteen are allowed to participate in this panchayat. Members of other castes and communities are allowed to participate in the panchayat, but lower ranked communities like Dhangar, Lohar, Chick are not allowed to participate in discussions process or are eligible for contesting for the post of *Parha Panch.*

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A *Parha Panch* selects one representative in each village to assist him and advice him in the matter of dispute settlement. The assistant is selected in consultation with the village members and in absence of *Parha panch* the assistant adjudicates the matter on his behalf Most of the time the assistant to *Parha panch* is the *Mukhiya* of the traditional village panchayat. *Parha Panch* and assistant *Parha Panch,* along with other village functionaries like *Baiga, Kotwar,. Bhandari* (village messenger) participate in the *Parha* Panchayat. All adult male members of the villages under its jurisdiction attend *Parha* Panchayat. Women are not allowed to participate in the panchayat proceedings. If the matter is related to a woman then she is allowed to attend the panchayat.

The disputant parties along with the *Mukhiya* of the village go to *Parha* Panch's house and explain the total happening in the traditional panchayat on the issue and request him to settle the matter. *Parha Panch* fixes time for the conduction of *Parha* panchayat. The panchayat is held at the earlier place. On the fixed day, all assemble for settlement of the dispute. *Parha Panch* conducts this panchayat. The *Parha panch* again hears the entire case on the issue and finally give his judgment. The judgment in this panchayat is final and it is mandatory for the person or party to accept it or else he or she will be ostracized from the community. If any party disapproves the judgment by the *Parha Panch,* the fine amount is doubled, even then if the decision is challenged, then the person is ostracized from the community and the matter is closed. No such case has occurred in the villages till date and all the decisions have been accepted by the villagers and abided by.

In some cases, *Mukhiya* is not allowed to be the advisor of the *Parha panch.* By doing so the villagers eliminate the possibility of his influencing the decision, where the advisor plays an important role in briefing the *Parha Panch* about the total incident. By keeping the option of random selection of judge, the villagers have provided every individual to seek fairest judgment he or she desires.

Case: **Parha** Panchayat of **Komodo** village

Parha panchayat of Komodo village includes Sarodi, Sarodi **pat,** Duma toil, Dongar, **Pipal** Pat villages in its jurisdiction. There are total of six villages in this *Parha.* Komodo village *Parha Panch* is **Rameswar Nagesia,** who is thirty-four years old and lives in village Sirodi Pat. The advisor of *Parha panch* of Komodo village is Daya Sukara, forty-six years old and belongs to the *Oraon* community. The role of Daya Sukara is to advice *Parha panch* and in absence of *Parha panch* arranges for panchayat, and along with *Mukhiya* to settles the dispute of village. The tenure of the advisor is also for five year. **In** this case the judgment given by assistant to *Parha* panchayat is not mandatory for the disputant to accept it and they will not be penalized from being ostracized from the community if not agreed to it. Instead the matter is further referred to *Parha panch*, who only has the right to ostracize a person from the community.

Case: Parha **Panchayat** of **Ghamhariya** village

The following villages namely **Ghamhariya,** Gadha Ghamhariya, Pandripat, Durkachora, Chopati, Nawatoli, Juhanidand, and Echkela come under this *Parha* panchayat jurisdiction. The *Parha Panch* for this Parha is **Jabaruram** Raoita, who is forty-seven years old and lives in Juhanidand village. He was elected in June 1998. Gadha Ghamhariya village advisor to *Parha panch* is Gahnsyam Chik of age sixty-five; similarly Mohan ram is representative cum advisor of *Parha panch* for the village Echkela, appointed on the collective advice of villagers by the *Parha Panch.* He belongs to the *Raotia* community.

In this process of judgment, generally it is not the conscience of the *Parha* panch that is given importance but the collective will of the villagers present, who are considered as a panch or members, who also participates in the discussion. In most of the cases the panchayat takes a unanimous decision on the issue and advices the *Parha panch.* Based on the collective opinion of the panchayat he announces the judgement. After this both the parties are asked to put forth any grievances or request they have to make regarding the judgment, they can speak to the assembly. After hearing the grievances or the request, amendment is made to the decision and proclaimed by the *Parha Panch.* This way the *Parha* panchayat functions as highest decision-making body in this region.

7. Flexible rules relating to resources use patterns

The taboos associated with groves are a mode of non-interference with the influence zone of the deities of the groves; which is correlated with their respective power and influence. But the villagers have designed certain flexibility in rules relating to use of these groves. These flexibilities are applicable only in a very extreme situation. The flexibility is linked with individual ignorance or village necessity.

According to the villagers of **Ghamhariya,** if any one ignorantly breaks the rules of interaction with the groves, he has to only plead to the deity of the groves on his mistakes. But, if it is not an act of ignorance then the deity punishes him. Then he has to seek the help of the *Baiga* of the village and find the solution to protect himself from wrath of the deity. If any villager is in dire need of a product from grove like dried tree, or poles, then he approaches the *Baiga* of the village, who ask him to perform rituals and make offering to the deity of the village and seek his permission. If the deity agrees, he is allowed to take the wood. This is judged in due course of time, that any untoward incident does not happens to the person, family or property, who had taken the wood. If any thing happens then it is interpreted that deity was against the extraction.

8. Graduated sanctions against violation of management rules

The sanctions are of internal and external type. The internal sanction relates to moral, guilt, curse, wrath of the deities, blessing etc., and external sanctions are punishment, fines, social outcasts, shames etc. Both type of sanctions are used in the management of these groves. In the first case it is experiential. If an individual deviates from the norms prescribed for interaction with the grove, the deity residing in it punishes him, which is exhibited in features like sickness or loss of property or life etc. In such a situation the individual seeks help of Baiga to know the causes and remedy.

Case: Internal sanction

Mohan Oraon (pseudo-name) of **Komodo** had less belief in the deity of the grove. This is because he was employed in a factory in Ranchi. There he came in contact with the Christian missionaries, who influenced him and taught him that his culture and religious practices are primitive and superstitious. Once he returned to the village while wandering near the grove, he saw a dry log in the *Pat Sarna*. He lifted the log and started walking toward village. As he proceeded ahead, he heard a growl of tiger, but when he turned back he could not see any thing. He walked few meters ahead and again he heard the same growl. As he kept on walking, this phenomenon kept happening. After sometime he felt afraid. He threw the log and ran home. Next day he had high fever. The village *Baiga* was called for, to interpret the causes of the fever. After doing initial diagnosis, he said that this is due to anger of the *Pat Devta* and he needs to be appeased for the mistake done by Mohan. Mohan agreed for the rituals to be conducted in the grove and after that his fever was gone. From then onward he never tried to lift any material from the groves.

The level of deviance with respect to external sanction i.e. the rule associated with the management of the groves, is punished on the basis of degree of abuse of the groves and deviance from the rules. Generally in majority of the cases the villagers said that the deity of grove immediately punishes the person for his misconduct. Certain rules if abused, then the matter is taken to the village panchayat and the matter is settled by the traditional panchayat. The village takes the matter relating to the groves seriously and if any person does not abide by it, he can be ostracise from the community. Most of the time the punishment is of conformist nature, were the deviant is required to perform ritual in the grove and give a communal feast. The communal feasting is the process by which the individual makes it known to others the act he had done and to be pardon by them for the said deviation.

The above analysis of sacred groves from the Ostrom design principles shows that it fulfils all the requirements needed for a self organised system to be managed efficiently. It tries to measure the institution sustainability on the scale of success and failure, with the help of the design principles. The design principles only explain that an institution is successful if it meets the above principles but is unable to explain the reason for the decline of the commons, simultaneously leading to degradation in the ecological status of the commons. The other limitation of Ostrom's design principle is that it deals with institutions in a closed sphere, devoid of understanding the effects of external factors on the management of common property resources. Another limitation of this theory is that it treats the resources as a single purpose resource, whereas in the small-scale societies most of the resources are of multiple purposes usage. In order to **further** understand the common property resources management in holistic manner, the external influences and impact of surrounding legal and political system at a macro level has to be taken into account. The anthropologists, who worked on these issues, have come forth with various explanations for the factors that influence the management of commons at micro level.

4.2 Common Property Resources and External Factors

Broomley and Cernea (1989) have argued that the breakdown of the traditional CPRs is due to the externally imposed social changes due to colonialism, nationalisation, marketisation, and modernisation. India was under the British rule for two hundred and fifty years. During colonial period changes in the land management system has taken place in Jaspur region, in 1924, when the first settlement officer complied the land records of rights (Gazetteer of Raigarh District, 1976), which registered all type of land under different categories of ownership. Sacred groves, which earlier were exclusively under the management of micro system of administration, were recorded either as temple land or common land under the control of the state, but the usufruct right rested with the village community. At this time British were not interested in such land and remotness of the area deprived them from exploiting it. But later on after independence these changes effected the management of the sacred groves.

Therefore, there was a shift in the control of natural resources from the micro level to the macro level. The State took over general administration under its control undermining the importance of local autonomy at village level. The state established modern school in order to disseminate secular education. Next, the development of communication system and modernisation generated cross-cultural interaction among the local system and mainstream system i.e. little tradition and great tradition culture.

Gradually these changes effected in the management of sacred groves. There was a portion of land given to the *Baiga* (priest) of the village for the service he provided to the village. This land was under the control of the priest as long as he remained on the post. But once he relinquished the post, it was transferred to the new *Baiga* after his selection. Under the new land record system most of such land was recorded in the name of the existing *Baiga.* This later on created problem, when a *Baiga* relinquished his post, but the ownership of ***Baiga's*** land remained with him. This has created problem in transfer of ***Baiga's*** land and number of litigations relation to land earmarked for Baiga went to court for settlement.

The common was subjected to degradation as well as conservation in process of centralized management. After independence, the administration of natural resources came into the hands of respective specialized departments i.e. Forest department and Revenue department. All the land apart from private land was regarded state property and controlled by the state. In this process these sacred groves where generally seen a common land owned by the state. By this, they over looked the specific and psychological orientation given to the sacred groves by the local system. They generalised it with other commons that existed in the village ecosystem. Therefore the general trend was that for any development work of infrastructure construction, the state chose these groves as a place to initiate a development project like construction of village school, *Anganwari* Centre (Women and Child care centre) or Primary Health Centre etc. Because of this few Biodiversity rich groves in the deep forest area where converted into forest area at the time of demarcation of forest areas.

The recording of sacred grove area as common land has generated conflict over its ownership. For example, in the case of Baghima village, earlier the area of *SarhulSarna* was 2.129 ha (table 4.1) with a water pond adjacent to it (see the map of the village). The state fishery department

took away major portion of *Sarna* land for construction of its fish-breeding centre, leaving 0,021 ha of land for the sacred grove. The justifications given by the official were that the area around the main *Sal* tree where the ritual is held in the *Sarna* is actual *Sarna* and other area did not belong to it. But, the records of Patwari clearly showed the change the revenue department had made in order to provide the land to the fishery department for breeding centre. The project was of 16.35 lakhs rupees. But for the villager it was not a matter of space but also belief associated with it. The villagers took the issue to court for adjudication. Though the villagers won the case, the official, bribed the *Parha* *panch* (who was given the authority by the villagers to take decision on this matter) and took an undertaking from him, that villagers does not have any objection for the project to go on. The villagers got annoyed and removed that particular *Parha* and elected a new one in his place. But the mischief done by him could not be rectified.

Similarly, in the *Sarhul* *Sarna* of Echkela village, the local administration has treated the grove area as common land belonging to the village panchayat. In it they have constructed a school, medical dispensary and an Aganwari centre. The school in **Ghamhariya** village is also built in the *Sarna* area. These incidents have created a conflict in the belief of the communities over the ownership of the sacred grove. Secondly the multiplicities of groves have created confusion between the administrator and the religious faith associated with them.

Christianity was another element that brought social change in this region. The Roman Catholic and Lutheran Christian missionaries working in the Jaspur targeted *Sarna* religion to counter and facilitate the spread of Christianity. The oldest existing Mission in the district is **Kristopal** Ashram Ginabahar in Jaspur Tahsil established in 1921. The Christian missionaries entered this region with a motive to convert the tribal population into Christianity folds. They made a joint assault on the traditional system, one by converting them into Christian, second by educating of the converted population about the norms and values of the Christianity and discouraging their traditional practices. In this process they came into direct confrontation with the traditional religion *of Sarna* (Sahay, 1976), which was a collective phenomena and generic in nature, which governed the social system till external interventions. In the process of expansion of the Christian religion, the British missionaries made use of institution of modern education, which disseminated the knowledge different from the local system and that justified the religion of Christianity and it principles of modernity. The net result was that the population of the converts increased to eighty percent, in 1947. The converts mostly belonged to the *Oraon* community residing in the region of Jaspur.

The conversion of tribal into Christianity forced them to forgo the traditional culture and its impacted on the outlook of them towards the sacred groves and its linkage to the social system. The Christianity looked down upon the culture of *Sarna* as superstitious and primitive belief. It gave emphasis to worship in church and delinked economic activities with the religious activities. The process was not smooth and it showed many patterns of absorption, acculturation and assimilation into the folds of Christianity (Sahay, 1976, Patnaik and Pandey, 1998). Therefore those converted to Christianity fold, gradually lost respect for *Sarna* and fear of the power of *Sarna* deity, that it can cause harm to them if they deviate from the prescribed norms. This affected the harmonious social system and generated conflict between the converts and non-converts. The net result was increase in abuse of sacred groves and resulted in ecological degradation of the groves. Secondly a conflict generated between the traditional community and the convert over the ownership of the grove as who owns it since earlier to conversion it belonged to the whole villages, which collectively owned it.

The Christian missionaries understood the local culture and factors for its sustainability and impacted on it's root i.e. the institution which was central in perpetuation of the sacred grove as well as traditional culture. This was the dormitory system called as *Dumkariya,* where the young children after attaining certain age, were initiated into the dormitory. Here they orally learned the rules of the village community. The Christian missionaries forcefully converted the existing dormitory into modern Christian schools or church, to delink the traditional socialisation process leading to gradual decay in the faith of the *Sarna* culture.

Subsequently after independence the Hindu missionaries entered the region to counter the spread of Christianity, by reconverting the tribal population into Hindu fold. During this time i.e. 1947 a Hindu organisation, named Vanvasi **Kalyan** ashram was established at all India level with its headquarter at Jaspur. It also followed the same procedure of Christians to achieve its objective of reconverting the tribal. They also established educational institute, to educate the tribals of Hindu principles of life and philosophy of religion. This led the second assault on the culture of sacred grove in the region. This organisation tries to justify the culture of sacred grove and link it with Hindu religion. For example deity like *Mahadani* are interpreted as *Mahadev,* a famous Hindu deity, known for his malevolent nature and anger. They started residential school and also conducted number of re-conversion programmes; due to efforts of this organisation, there was a substantial decline in the population of the Christian from about eighty to fifty-nine percent (Census 1961).

Hindu culture interpreted the sacred grove and the traditional culture from the glasses of their own culture. By this they enlarged their horizon to include the traditional population into the fold of Hinduism. Here they conducted mass initiation ceremony called thread ceremony practiced among the Hindu or twice born. But it was totally different from what traditional community practiced. There was a difference in the two missionary approaches, while the Christian despised the traditional belief and association with the sacred groves, in contrary Hindu initiated in revitalisation of *Sarna* religion, which was somehow connected with the grove and its culture. For example an all India association of *Sarna* was formed where the traditional community people participated actively. At present the **Sarhul** festival is celebrated at district level where the villagers from all over the district assemble in Jaspur town and celebrate the festival in the *Sarhul Sarna* of the Jaspur town.

Lastly the establishment of local democratic system of administration in the form of *Panchayati Raj* institution, where by a village is managed by an elected representative for a period of **five** years. This system undermined the traditional management system that was governed by persons who hereditarily transferred right of the post to the subsequent generation.

The centralized control was put into use subjectively on the basis of utilitarian requirement, or else the local system continued with its traditional practice and culture. This occasional interaction between the different administrative set up led to confrontation that who controlled the common and this occasional confrontation upset the believer's faith toward the sacred groves. The affect of the conversion of tribal to other religious fold impacted on the status as well as the use pattern of the common. Prior to conversion the members of the community followed the prohibitive rules strictly. After the conversion it reduced the fear for the wrath of the sacred grove deity and resulted in surreptitious extraction of produce and trees from commons leading to degradation.

4.3 Sacred groves as multiple resources

Most of the studies treat the commons as a single use resource unit, for example, Hardin (1968) grazing land or Ruddle (1994) riparian common or Kurian (1995) on Kerala fishing shore. But it is seen that the commons are put to multiple uses, like using it for fishing as well as bathing, communication etc. Sacred groves **are** commons put to multiple uses by the communities. The

primary use of it is for conducting rituals spread through out the year to propitiate the village deities. But it has other uses like using it as common recreational ground; as it is in the case of *Sarhul Sarna.* Those Sarhul Sarna that are located near the village settlements are used as *Akhara* (Dancing ground) sometime even used for celebration of marriage ceremony. The *Baiga* and other members of the village also collect produces from the trees of these groves as per prescribed norms. The girls and boys of the village use the *Manohar Sarna* of the Gadha Ghamhariya village for celebration of *Karma* festival. The *Mart Ojha* of the village collects herbal species from these groves for treatment of it patient.

4.4 Anthropological Perspectives and Commons Management

Anthropologist challenged the utilitarian view persisting on Common's among the other disciplines. MaCay and Jentoft (1998) considered that the commons like all other property is a social institution rather than an attribute of nature. According to them community is therefore critical to the evolution of viable "common" institution. The community provides normative guidelines and meaning for the collective action. The anthropologists' emphasised for application of thicker approach of study to understand the commons, through the cultural and historical specificity. Secondly they focused on the embeddedness of the economic action into social relationship (Granovetter and Swedberg, 1992). Common property resource is a social phenomenon. Involvement in a common property resource is not an isolated activity. The common property resource is not an entity in itself, but form a part of the overall social system (Petrzelka and Bell, 2000:343-352). Common property resources are sub-system of the larger social system and the participants of the common have multiple forms of involvement in a larger social group i.e. a wider community. Here the perspective of embeddedness is taken to explain the sacred grove in the social system of the studied villages. The embeddedness of sacred grove in the culture of micro level with religious, social, economic and political sphere of the village is analysed below.

Analysing sacred groves from the cultural perspectives shows that the communities have internalised the groves in the cultural system. Sarna is incorporated in the religious system of the village. The Sarna is considered to be a place, where the village deities reside and provide various functions to the community. The deities of these groves are placed third in the

hierarchical order of the community's worldview and worshipped accordingly. These deities are collectively associated with protection and management of the village affairs. Various functions of controlling the unforeseen problems are assigned to them for the well being of the village. For these services they are propitiated at regular interval in the form sacrifice of cock and animals in festivals. The communities have classified the deities residing in the groves on the gender lines. The deity of *Sarhul* *Sarna* is female and deities of *Pat,* *Mahadani*, and *Kadamara* are male. Though they are associated with different functions, but they are collectively worshipped and offered sacrifice at all the festival associated with the common activities linked with village economy and well being.

The economy of the village is primarily agriculture based and rain fed. The agriculture activities begin with the worship of *Sarhul* in the *Sarhul Sarna.* On this occasion all the village deities residing in different groves are offered sacrifice to be satisfied and perform their functions. The agriculture season proceeds with the regular offering to the village deities at various intervals in the form of festival like *Hariayali, Kadleta* and ends with *Nawakhani* festival. This linkage of village economy and religion through rituals in the sacred groves (common) for the well being of various economic activities are reflection of cultural incorporation of commons in the cultural system of the village. For example, the *Nawakhani* festival is celebrated for offering the first produce to the village deities and then the households consume it.

All the communities living in the village participate in sacred groves activities and ritual celebrations. The services providing communities who support the land owning communities are given various roles in carrying out the festival activities at the groves. Like the Lohar provides the knife needed for the sacrifice. The Ghasi plays the drummer at the time of festival celebration. Kumhar provides the pots for the ceremony. Even the caste communities, which have moved into the region lately, have accepted the significance of grove and participate in the ceremonies associated with the groves and make contribution of their share. The services providing communities are paid in kind for their activities. Therefore no activities are either begun or end without worshipping the village deities. The villagers have constant fear of the spirit attack on the village therefore; they worship the deities of *Mahadani, Pat* or *Kadamara* for protection. They even worship and pray to these deities to protect them from natural causes. This

region has constant threat of elephant raid from the adjoining state of Jharkhand and **Orissa.** Nearly every year these villages face a threat of the elephant herds raid. According to them they request grove deity to check the advancing elephants for the same they will sacrifice a buffalo. According to them most of the time the herd stops on the boundary of the village and returns back. They claim that the deity of the grove has forced the elephants to retreat. They make offering to the deity once their request is fulfilled.

The traditional council of the village consists *Mukhiya* or the headman of the village and other functionaries to govern the village. The *Baiga* (priest) forms an important part of this council. The role *of Baiga* is important in sustaining the values of the communities. His views are sought on the issues concerning the village security and protection and reasons for unexplainable phenomena like drought, famine, epidemic etc. Generally solutions for these causes are suggested to be the wrath of the village deities who needs to be appeased in order to set things in order. The mode of payment for the service of the *Baiga* is such that every land owning household gives a fixed amount of grain at the time of harvest. In the matter of conflict resolution the help of sacred groves deities is extensively used. Most of the time the traditional council is held in the groves. The relationship among the villages linked vertically through *Parha* system, plays an important role in the perpetuation of the faith and management of the sacred groves.

Collective management needs elements of social solidarity and trust (Bell, 1998a, 1998b) for social coordination of reciprocal or complementary concerns of each other and normative ties for such coordination. Society seeks to ensure safety and prosperity to the village community as a whole at each new stage in the annual cycle of its simple economic pursuits and the feasting rejoicing and social reunion that marks their successful termination. Secondly, when crisis is safely tided over, the community celebrates its rejoicing and its sense of renewed social solidarity with feasting and drinking and dancing. In the case of sacred groves, the social solidarity and trust is exhibited by the collective celebration of festival and faith in the deities of the groves on different occasions. The communities abide by the taboos ascribed with the management of the groves.

The solidarity is seen in participation of members in celebration of the festival. Everyone attends the ceremony in the groves as per prescribed norms. The women are also involved in this process, by conducting a parallel celebration at the village. The trust and reciprocity is seen in the form decision of festival committee in the matter of contribution to be made for festival by every one. In this meeting the committee decide who will supply the cock and goat. Every household is assigned on rotation to contribute the bird and animal, so that it does not becomes a burden for few particular households. This even distribution of supply of birds has built a trust, among the households and every one follows the system in the contribution. Similarly, every household gets a small quantity of rice at the time of rituals, which is used in making the sanctified food and consumed by all. The unpredictable environment leads to development of trust among its members through religion to act collectively in order to cope up with the situation. The trust and solidarity exists in other affairs of the village, like the faith in the *Parha* system of dispute settlement. The trust and solidarity is built through regular interaction in social affairs like participating in the household events of birth, marriage, death, village festivals and *Jatras.*

4.5 Sacred groves from Social Constructivist Perspectives

Social Constructivist perspective studies the states of affair in an action arena as the out come of interactions between stakeholders, other people and non human entities and assumes that these interaction processes are based on the way actors "socially" construct their every day reality (Stein and Edwards, 1999). The advantage of this approach is that it uses resource users construction and perception of the common property resources and its external environment in understanding the management of the commons. Secondly it lays emphases on explaining the process of common resource management rather than studying it from a predefined perspective of successful collective action.

Sacred groves analysed from this perspective, show that its management is outcome of different stakeholders behaviour and **function,** which has brought change in the management of it from time to time. The stakeholders in sacred groves are individuals of the village, *Baiga,* village headman, village Panchayat, *Parha* panchayat, Christian missionaries, Vanvasi Ashram, political parties and district administration. The primary or internal stakeholders like ***Baiga,*** Village headman, and *Parha* panchayat have been interacting with in the sacred groves culture for long

period time. They were managing these groves with the traditional beliefs, values and norms. The influences of external or secondary stakeholders like Christian missionaries; Hindu missionaries, political parties and district administration at various intervals of time have made the primary stakeholder to act differently. First British rule brought the Christian missionaries, who attacked the *Sarna* religion in order perpetuates, their own religion. They used state power to achieve this objective (Sahay 1976). This effected the perception of the traditional communities regarding their belief on *Sarna.*

Later on the Hindu missionaries, entered the region to counter the effect of Christianity, equated *Sarna* religion with Hindu religion and consider it as a subset religion of Hinduism. In this process they undermined the significance of the grove and equated its deities with deities of Hindu religion, providing symbols and reducing the area of sacred groves into a sacred site, whereas, the community believed that the entire area is deity of the grove. They equated the *Mahadani Sarna* deity with *Mahadev* and *Sarna Bhuria* with *Parvati* the consort of the *Mahadev.* While interacting with the village most of them mention these names when enquired about the name of the deity living in the grove. The result was that there was re-conversion among the community members.

The two major political parties active in the region have seen the importance of the *Sarna* culture in the region and in order to harness support of these communities', they separately celebrate *Sarhul* festival at the district level. On this occasion the important leaders of the political party participate in the celebration to show their solidarity with this culture. The Bhartiya Janta party has the support of the old ruler of the Jaspur estate. All this has helped in increasing the concern for betterment of the groves. Therefore in 1994, the forest department of the district carried out conservation work on about 275 groves, among them the groves of Echkela, Ghamhariya and Komodo village were covered and cattle proof trench around them was dug. But groves of revenue areas only are covered under this scheme and groves lying in the forest areas are left out. Due to this villagers are confused and feel threatened on the status of their groves.

These external stakeholders interpreted the culture of Sarna as per their convenience; sometime this creates problems for the communities and leads to intra or inters conflict between the primary and secondary stakeholders. For example, taking away portion of *Sarhul Sarna* land by the fisheries department for the development work has weakened the confidence of the village

community. They fear that state can take away their religious centre whenever it feels so. Another example of inter culture conflict is that Forest department initiated plantation nursery in the *Mahadani Sarna* of Ghamhariya village. This nursery activity was entrusted to women. It was taken up with an objective to increase the agro-forestry activities in the groves. But there is taboo for women going inside this grove therefore the programme failed to meet its goal. This lack of knowledge of local cultural practice of taboo associated with women entering this grove was due to ignorance and generalist approach adopted by the forest department in implementation of the programme.

The above instances shows that the sacred groves have passed through different phases and interpreting them from the dimension of successful management is not justified as the macro level activities have influenced the outcome of the *Sarna* culture. But the resilience of the traditional communities shows their strength to protect their culture in changing context.

4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter various theories prevalent in context to the common resources management have been discussed. The initial theories to gain prominence were the economic and institution theories. They mainly focused on successful management of common property resources and also determined causes for failure of it. But they all consider the man participating in the management of common is rational and devoid of any cultural and social restriction. Sacred groves assessed from the institutional theories show that it fulfilled all the elements of Ostrom design principles, but it could not explain the changes in belief and groves management. Next, sacred groves were analysed from the perspectives highlighted by the other scholars like the external influences of colonialisation, modernization and market forces to understand the factors for changes in the management of commons. The anthropological scholars considered that all the elements of culture are embedded into one another. Sacred groves culture when seen from this viewpoint showed that the institutions of religion, economy, polity and social units are inter-linked with the sacred groves culture. Finally application of social constructivist approach in understanding the management of sacred groves showed that the interaction among different stakeholders led to diverse behaviours and management changes in course of history of management of sacred groves.

CHAPTER V

TRADTIONAL KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM AND RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

The traditional communities played an important role in generating knowledge based on understanding of their environment, devising mechanisms to conserve and sustain their natural resources and establishing community-based organisation that serve as forum for identifying problem and dealing with them through local-level experimentation, innovation and exchange of information with other societies (Warren, **1992:1**). Observation of nature and through elementary reasoning based on such observation, the communities have accumulated a store of working knowledge concerning the effects of certain elementary mechanical processes, the apparent movements and functions of some of the heavenly bodies, the habits and haunts of animals and birds, the properties of plants, fruits and flowers, barn and roots, the nature and qualities of different kinds of soil and the variations of weather (Roy 1928:4). The communities living in the study villages posses highly detailed and richly complex information about agriculture, agro-forestry, pest management, soil fertilisation, multiple cropping pattern, health care, food preparation and so forth. They recognise both natural and super natural forces and agencies shaping human destiny and seeks to utilize them for their benefits according to their needs.

The traditional knowledge is historically constituted **(emic)** knowledge instrumental in the long-term adaptation of human groups to the biophysical environment (Purecell, 1998). The traditional knowledge of the village communities can be divided into two different domain, one that of cognitive and other that technical relating to livelihood issues. The cognitive knowledge is understood by the worldview of the communities about the society and its relationship with its outside world. The technical knowledge is information relating to understanding generated in past about nature, environment, and soil and exhibited through the practical application of it in fulfilling their livelihood activities.

In this chapter, the knowledge of the village communities on land management, agriculture, forest, livestock and health is discussed. These are generated in the immediate context of the livelihood of people; it is dynamic entity that undergoes constant **modification** as the needs of the communities change (Agarwal **1995:429).**

5.1 Traditional land and Agriculture management Practices

Land is the basis for agriculture, the main economic activity of the communities in the studied villages. They possess elaborate knowledge on the nature of soil and quality of land needed for different types of crops to be grown. The farmers of these villages classify agriculture lands into two types, one is called *Doan* or low land, and other is called *Tarn* land, up land areas or dry land. The *Doan* land is mostly used for rice cultivation. It is low land; the rainwater from adjoining forest during rainy season flows into these lands providing it with lots of nutrients and increases the fertility of the soil. These lands are suitable for rice cultivation, as it needs large quantity of water. The soil type *of Doan* land is mainly ***Kariharmati***, ***Bahal***, or ***Bahara*** and most suitable for rice cultivation. The varieties of rice grown by the villagers are ***Lakshmibhog***, ***Raghubar*** *Makarkam* ***doobrai***, *Jhilipargi*, ***Ramkojar***, *Kanakejar* ***maghai***, ***Jhili***, ***Parewa***, ***Kantha***, ***Sela***, ***Hasle***, *Buikoni* and *Bhurkud.*

The *Tarn* is the upland and dry land area. The soil of these areas is of red laterite and requires long fallow period. This land is used for cultivation of crops of maize, ***gondli***, ***maru***a, and *kapas*. They grow pulses like ***Bodi***, ***Rahar***, ***Bara***i, and ***Urid*** in this land in the season of **Kharif**. They grow crops of leguminous varieties important in the agriculture field on rotation basis to improve the fertility of the soil. In Echkela village on the *Doan* land paddy cultivation is carried out, while the *Tarn* land is used for growing *Til* or *Ramtil* crop. The *Til* grows in short time and is harvested before the harvest of paddy crop that is in the month of September. From *Til,* they extract oil used for cooking purposes by the fanners and also sold in the market. The farmers of the villages only take single crop i.e. in Kharif season and after that fields are left fallow and it becomes a common grazing land for the cattle of the area. The villagers apart from agriculture have no other employment activities.

Generally, farmers plan for the agriculture activities, with the help of knowledge, generated through decades of experiences, like quality of land, soil, rain and pest etc. But some of them fall in the domain of uncertainty like nature of forthcoming rain and pest attack, because of which they plan for plan for future ventures with a caution. In order to psychologically overcome the element of uncertainty and unexplainable domain, they seek the help of village deities and rituals. The agriculture in the region is totally rain fed, and it is difficult to predict the nature of rain. In order to make a prediction of forthcoming rainfall, the community has devised a ritual of

predicting nature of future rain. For the protection of crops, the village deities are propitiated to gain psychological confidence and satisfactions for the communities to cope up with the uncertainty of nature. For this, they have designed rituals and ceremonies for various activities of agriculture management linked with different occasion of the agriculture activities. In course of these ceremonies, the villagers conduct some exercises to make **metrological** predication like rain and future yield.

5.1.2 Rituals associated with Agriculture activities among village community

The village community by the way of precaution employs religious rites in conjunction with the normal activities of agriculture, fishing, collection of NTFP etc in order that the course of such activities may go smoothly. The agriculture season begins immediately after the celebration of *Sarhul* festivals. At the time of *Sarhul* festival, they carry out a rain prediction exercise, in the grove to assess the nature of the rainfall for the coming season. A day before the celebration of *Sarhul* festival, Baiga of the village along with the other elders of the village goes to the nearby stream with four new pots provided by the *Kumhar* of the village. On reaching the stream, *Baiga* cleans the pots and fills all of them, by putting them perpendicularly into water without tilting on any side. When all the four pots are filled, they carry them to the *Sarhul Sarna* quietly. No one speaks to any one or any person whom they meet on the way to the grove. On reaching the grove, the pots are placed on the ground. Baiga cleans a space near the main tree, in the grove. After cleaning he draws line in a shape of a square by a stick, on each corner of the square one pot is kept and it is covered with a lid. Each corner of the square represents a direction i.e. north, or south or east or west. Then all leave for village. Next day in the morning the *Baiga* along the some members of the village come to the grove and checks the level of water in the pots. If there is no change in the water level then it is predicted that there will be excess rain in that particular direction. If the level of water is decreased there will be less rainfall in that particular direction. Based on this prediction the villagers plan their future agriculture activities.

The celebration of *Sarhul* festival is basically marriage of Sun and Earth and *Sarhul* is considered to be the son of both. This festival symbolises that the union two will lead better productivity of agriculture. The villagers stated that after this ceremony, the mother earth is ready for production and then only agriculture work should be initiated.

The agriculture preparation for the coming seasons begins; one month after harvesting of crops is done of the previous season i.e. after *Sarhul* festival. The farmers' plough their agriculture fields and leave it to dry off. After one and half month period the fields are again ploughed. This is termed as *Dubrani* in the local language, which means second or repeat of ploughing. On this occasion straws and other left over twigs and weeds are removed from the fields. The fields are again ploughed third time and it is called *Tibrani* and then it is left over for some times. The explanation given by the farmers for this is that the deeper rays of sun reach in the soil; the better will be the yield in future.

For the well being of the crops the villagers, perform rituals at the field. This depends and varies from family to family and it is exclusively a family affair. The agriculture rituals begin with the performance of *Muthi Chodana* worship, prior to planting of new crop of paddy. For this ritual, the farmer takes a hand full of seed of paddy and Agarbathi (essence smoke sticks), coconut, and flowers and goes to the field along with the plough and the bullocks. They recite the name of *Mahadev* and *Paravati* and leave a hand full of paddy seeds in the field and requests the deities that "today I am beginning my agricultural season by preparing agriculture fields, whose protection is in your hands for which you will be propitiated at the time *Nawakhani* (offering of new grains) festival, therefore it is your total responsibility for the safety and security of the field and its crops". After saying this he releases the seeds in the field and again says to the mother earth "I am putting seeds of paddy in your womb, whose protection and projection or growth is in your hands. Hence, please allow me to split your womb to put these seeds into it". After this ritual, farmers start their agriculture works by ploughing the field and breaking the loams into fine soil and levelled by a leveller *(Patta)*. The field preparation work is completed by the month of May and June; this is generally done prior to coming of rain. Next, *Meand Devta* i.e. the deity of boundary of the field is worshipped to protect the crops. It is believed that this deity protects the crops and makes arrangement that no one causes harm to the growing crops. Generally, villagers consider that if the deity *of Meand* is happy, the yield would be good.

Once the rains arrive, the prepared fields are ready for paddy plantation. At first a small patch of field, is prepared and paddy is sowed in it to germinate. Fifteen days after this when the saplings are ready for transplantation, they are transplanted in the entire area. For the transplantation the family members and close relatives provide labour on the basis of reciprocity. Once the

transplants are fifteen days old, the entire region becomes **green,** since the transplanted paddy has attained 20-25 cm of height. *Hariyali* festival is celebrated at this time, which means that earth has become green. After this the weeding work is carried out. In this family collectively works and removes the weeds. Women do the weeding. The women of family and linage join in the process and complete it. The weeds are used as fodder for the cattle. The season ends with harvesting and thrashing of the paddy. The produce is collected in the storehouses and after offering the new grains to the village deity at *Nawakhani* festival, is brought into households use for eating.

Most of the rituals conducted by the villagers reflect their concern about the production aspect of their crops and have designed different speculative mechanisms to foretell the production in future. For this they conduct a ritual called *Danda Regnala.* After the crop has ripened, it is cut and brought to the *Khalihan* (thrashing ground). The village farmers make use of *Khalihan* for thrashing of the harvested crops. *Khalihan* is a large space cleaned near house and is used for thrashing the paddy and other crops to extract the grains. Each household has their own *Khalihan.* Some times families have *Khalihan* on the basis of lineage and joint family, since the division of house might have taken place and the agriculture fields have not been divided. Therefore they collectively harvest the crop and distribute the produce. Sometime the *Sarhul Sarna* is used as *Khalihan* for thrashing of paddy.

After entire crops are brought from the field to the *Khalihan,* then with the help of ox or wooden stands, the thrashing of the paddy is carried out. A pair of oxen is tied to the wooden pen fixed in the centre of the *Khalihan.* They walk on the paddy spread on the ground. In this process the paddy breaks of from straws, and it is separated from the straw by blowing process using the wind. *Til* is extracted by beating it on a wooden platform. When the entire grains are extracted, two fists full of grain tied in a cloth is tied to the wooden pen in the centre. Then the whole produce is kept in the store, and ritual is offered to the *Meand* deity in the *Khalihan.* A coconut is offered to him. Thereafter the grain tied to the central pen is removed and used in the rituals kept in a safe place and at the time of *Muthi pujan* in the month of April.

5.2 Vegetable Gardens in the studied villages

In Baghima village, only Sukhdev Oraon has vegetable garden, where he grows vegetables and has planted some fruit trees. In Echkela village six people have vegetable gardens, of which one belongs to Sukhura Nagesia and other owners are respectively Ramakishun, Mohan, Jaydev and Bagchand, who belong to the *Raotia* community. In these gardens the owners grow vegetables like potatoes, tomatoes, chilli, Cauliflower, cabbages etc. To irrigate the gardens they have dug wells in the garden, and have installed electric motor to pump out the water from it. The size of these gardens ranges from three quarter of an acre to one acre.

These vegetables are used for household consumption and also sold in the market. Most of the vegetables grown in the garden could not be sold in the market, because they are generally grown in winter season. Due to high altitude zone winter here is very severe, therefore the vegetables are affected by the frost, and are spoiled. This makes them unsuitable for marketing. They also grow vegetables in the summer season, but during this period water level in the wells goes down, and creates problem of irrigation and it results in low yield, the vegetables are only sufficient for household consumption.

5.3 Belief associated with livestock Management in the studied villages

In the Echkela and other villages it was observed that the villagers do not extract milk from the cows and do not give much importance to milk and its product. The calf is allowed to consume all the milk from its mother. General belief is that by consuming all the milk the He-calf will be strong and will be able to take the strain of agriculture work. According to the veterinary doctor of centre in the village, even after series of requests and demonstrations on the benefits of artificial breeding techniques to the villagers and good yield of milk and hybrid quality of young calves, the villagers are not ready for artificial insemination activities. The villagers oppose the artificial insemination programme, with the belief that by this processes will result in substandard quality of calf and they will not be strong enough to take the strain of the agriculture work. The quality of ox is basis for their agriculture work; since they primarily depend on them for agriculture work like ploughing and thrashing. This inhibition prevents them from experimenting with hybridisation process.

5.4 Forest species used in rituals and other activities of the village community

The villagers of the villages consider number of tree species as sacred. They use their parts in the ritual celebration. Besides number of trees are of economic, societal and medicinal values for the community. Certain tree species and its parts play an important role in the rituals and life of the village community. Sal *(Sohrea robusta)* is a tree, which is found to be present in each grove as this is the dominant tree species growing in this region. The sacred site in the grove is mainly located under one such *Sal* tree. Different parts of this tree are used in the ritual of **Sarhul** festival. The branches are used for decorating the places of ritual. Leaves are used for making plates and cups used in offerings made to the deities and later on for distribution of sanctified food. The *Sal* tree is also elaborately used by the villagers in construction of houses, sheds and boundaries of the courtyard. The fruits are collected and sold to the forest department.

Bhelwa *(Semicarpus anacardium)*, tree is used in celebration of **Danda** *Katta* ceremony and *Kadleta* Festival. The twig of this tree is used in warding away of evil eye. The deity of *Mahadani* is believed to reside on the Saja *{Terminalia tomentosa)* tree in the grove of Ghamhariya village and **Semal** *(Semalia malabarica)* in Echkela village. The **Karam** *(Adina cardifolia)*, tree is considered sacred by the villagers and is used in celebration of **Karama** festival of the village. Similarly Pipar *(Ficus religiosa)* tree is considered to be sacred. The woods of these trees are not burnt or otherwise desecrated by the members of the village communities. The tree of Erandi or Castor plant is cut down and is used on *Holi*. The trees like **Bael** *(Aegle marmelos)* Pipar, and Gulaichi *(Plumeria acutifolia)* are planted but are not cut down by the villagers.

The trees of economic importance to the villagers are Mahua *(Madhuca indica)*, Bahera **(Teriminalia** *bellirica),* Tendu or **Kendu** *(Doispyrus meanoxylon)*, Achar **(Bauchenania** *lenzen)*, **Kulu** *(Sterculia wrens)* etc. The produce of these trees like flowers, fruits and leaves are collected and used by the villagers and even sold in the market. The villagers plant number of fruit bearing trees like Mango *{Manginfera indica)*, **Jackfruit**, Karanj **(Pongamia** *pinnata),* Guvua and Jamun **(Syzygium cumini).** The villagers celebrate the marriage of some trees like mango, jackfruit and Karanj on the occasion of their first flowering. They consider that unless this ceremony is

conducted the fruits are not suitable for usage. *Sarhul* festival is celebration of marriage of Earth and Sun symbolising the union of the two resulting in good yield. So also marriage of trees will bears fruits. After the conduction of marriage ritual, the fruits of these trees are consumed. The branches of Bhelwa, Tendu and Sindur *(Vitex Negundo)* are planted in the agriculture fields to ward of evil eye.

The Sindur *(Vitex Negundo)* found in the sacred groves is used at the time of childbirth. This shrub is boiled in water and with that the mother is given bath to prevent here from catching cold. Its leaves are put into the fire to generate smoke to clean the air in the room where the mother and child live.

5.5. Traditional Healers (Holders of traditional knowledge of species use)

The villages have three types of traditional healers. One is called *Mali Ojha* and the other *Nag Ojha* and the third *Ojha.* For illness, the general belief among the members of communities is that they happen due to some misdeed of the past birth. In this region people suffer from heart and cancer problems. The villagers explain that the person who had killed his parents by giving poison in the previous birth suffers from heart problem in the present birth and those who had abused and had kicked their parents and disrespected them in the past birth suffer from different types of cancer in the present birth. These are the diseases, which are incurable, and the person has to pay for his misdeed of past birth, in the present one with such a severity.

In Baghima village, Dhaniram Oraon is the *Mati Ojha* of the village; he is lame with one leg. Whenever any person of the village falls sick, he/she visits the *Ojha* for diagnosis to know the cause of the problem. *Ojha* feels the pulse of the right hand of the patient and from it he is able to diagnose the cause of illness. He comes to conclusion after that whether is it due to illness or ill effect of any spirits. Based on his inferences he suggests the remedy to the person that he should either go to the *Baiga* of the village for warding of the effect of the village spirits or for other spirits. For this generally he has to perform rituals to ward of the effect of evil spirit by sacrificing a cock to the spirit. If it is illness then traditional medicines made of herbs collected from the forest are given to the patient to cure his illness.

Sukhdev Oraon of the **Baghima** village is the *Ojha* of the village. The difference between *Ojha* and *Mati Ojha* is that *Mati Ojha* treats human patient whereas *Ojha* treats the cattle. To cure the animals from illness, the *Ojha* make the cattle drink a *Kadda* (a drink prepared from the herbs collected from the forest). This drink is made up of Neem *{Azadirachta indica)* leaves, bark of the Mahua and Babul *{Acacia **nilotica**)* tree, boiled in a pot. When the solution becomes thick, then it is left to cool, and rinsed and then given to cattle. According to the *Ojha* if animals like cow or buffalo or goat or ox, suffer from **Baydo** disease, then they go to the *Sarna* and offer cock to the *Sarna* deity. Later on the sick animals are made to eat the flesh of the sacrificed cock. They believe that this disease of *Bayado* is related with the high quality spirit. Once the flesh of low animal (pig) is offered, the spirit leaves the cattle body. After this the animal is cured.

The villagers take precautionary measures when they here that a disease of cattle is spreading in any neighbouring village. The villagers take some eggs of hen and bury them on the route by which the cattle go out of the village for grazing. Secondly each animal is made to eat one egg mixed with rice. Simultaneously with the help of Maharajah (Brahmin), they get bow and arrow drawn on a plane white paper and twelve times the name of Arjun (Mythological character of Mahabharat, the Indian epic) written on it. This paper is hung on the door of each cattle shed in the households, from where the cattle come out of the house. The Brahmin does not take any money for this service.

The third *Ojha* is *Nag Ojha,* a person who cures the snakebites. This region is famous for Krait Snake and every year number of persons dies because of snakebite. In Echkela village *Nag Ojha* is Madan, who belongs to the Nagesia community. He lives in Sindhwar toil. When a person is bitten by snake and is brought to the *Nag Ojha* for cure. *Nag Ojha* starts reciting *mantras;* through which he calls the snake that has bitten the person and makes it extract the poison inserted in the person. But if the snakes does not turns up then he takes a cleaned cloth and while reciting mantras starts tearing the cloth into two parts. This is considered to have a sympathetic effect on the snake and which feels being torn into two parts, starting from the tail end. The furtherer the cloth is torn, it has similar effect on the snake. The *Nag Ojha* continues doing this as long as the snake does not turn up to the place where the Nag *Ojha* along with the affected person and other villagers are sitting. The moment the snake reaches the place, the *Nag Ojha* stops tearing the cloth. Then he calls for two utensils filled with approximately five litres of cow

milks in each. The *Nag Ojha* orders the snake to stick to the sick person. If snake does not obey him he then again starts tearing the cloth, by which the snake again starts feeling the pain of being torn up. This forces him to start sticking to the affected person. He keeps his mouth to the places where he had bitten the person and starts sucking the poison out and puts it into one utensil with the milk and washes his mouth in other utensils with the milk and continues the process of sucking the poison out up till the entire poison is extracted out of the affected person. When the snake washes his mouth in the milk it turns into black colour for a short while duration, before again becoming white in colour. After the entire poison is extracted, the person starts regaining his consciousness. At this juncture when the snake washes his mouth in the milk it does not turns black indicating that the entire poison is extracted out of the bitten person.

Thereafter the *Nag Ojha* by means of his mantras again joins the torn up cloth, which has sympathetic affect on the snake. It also feels relieved of the pain of being torn up. Then the snakes drinks stomach full of milk and is made to take an oath of not again biting any person or livestock of the village in future. Once the person is cured, and then *Nag Ojha* takes material required for the rituals from his family and performs the worship to the deity; and distributes the *Prasad* to the gathering. The *Nag Ojha* does not take the Prasad or any material offered to the deity. It is considered that by doing this *Nag Ojha* keeps the deity happy and who has given him knowledge and power to cure. If the *Nag Ojha* eats the *Prasad*, then he will loose the knowledge and power of curing.

Madan *Ohja*, believed that a person in reality does not die due to snakebite. Instead an element of life *(Pran Vayu)* remains in the brain and it remains in the brain for duration of six months. Therefore a knowledgeable *Nag Ojha* can retrieve snake bitten person after a gap of five months. Because of this reason the snake bitten person is not cremated, but is buried in a safe place so that in required time if any competent Ojha is available, then he can be treated. According to the *Nag Ojha*, after burying the dead body inside the earth, the body is secure for a period of one year and does not decay if it does not come in contact with air. Generally decaying takes places when the dead body comes into contact with the air. Because of this the dead person of any age class is buried, if dies of snakebite.

According to the *Ojha*, if the snake bites any cattle or livestock then the animal starts rolling on the back and violently kicks its legs. When it is taken to the *Ojha* for diagnosis, he holds the hair of the tail of the animal; it breaks and comes into his hand by itself. Then he comes to know which snake has bitten the cattle. But, if the hair breaks by pulling it out, then animal is sick due to some other reason and *Ojha* specialized in animals is asked to cure the animal. If snake bites the animal, then *Nag Ojha* called to treat the animal.

A person can become *Ojha*, either learning hereditarily from his Father (The Ojha) or by becoming disciple of the any *Ojha*, who accepts him and imparts the knowledge of the *Ojha*. Generally it is considered that *Ojha* does not impart complete knowledge to his disciple but only a portion of it and keeps some secrets with himself. Such knowledge is being gradually lost due to this tendency.

The villagers consume liquor regularly and also offer it to the deities; on all the rituals they perform. The process of making *Handia* (traditional liquor) in the villages is very elaborate A pot is taken filled with rice and water. It is closed with a cover and sealed. For four to six days, the pot is heated. When this water starts boiling, the vessel is kept aside to cool down. This left for twenty-four hours duration for fermentation. After this duration it is completely fermented and becomes suitable for drinking purpose.

5.6. Dhumkariya: An Institution Lost

The communities of Baghima, Ghamhariya, Komodo and Echkela had an institution called *Dhumkariya,* a youth dormitory, in the past about hundred years ago, where the young unmarried boys and girls used to assemble in the evening and spent the night in the *Dhumkariya.* According to the villagers this institution existed in the past, now it has become defunct, and no longer exists in any village. This was an institution to train the children of the *Oraon* community about their culture, customs, norms, and values.

Dhumkariya was big spacious hut constructed in the centre of the village, which could accommodate all the children of a particular age class. The children of age about seven to eight were initiated to be members of *Dhumkariya*, and were members till they got married and settled

as a couple in the village. The girl and boys used to have common *Dhumkariya.* An old man and woman who had good knowledge about customs, culture and resources of the community managed this institution. These two individuals acted, as instructors of *Dhumkariya.* Their role was to inculcate discipline and train the members about the knowledge of the community.

At the onset of evening, every member after having evening food assembled in *Dhumkariya.* The instructors came there for one to two hours, recited stories, mythology and riddles of *Oraon* community. Along with this they were told about the man and woman relationship, there after they used to leave for their houses. The aim to have such a system was to have collective learning centre, under the guidance of community members about once own culture. This centre also acted a learning centre for sex, where the girls and boys where allowed to spend night together, away from their home. It aimed at training the members, prior to entering the society, about every thing a member supposed to know and to contribute constructively to the community.

All the children of above seven years and until married were allowed to be the members of *Dhumkariya. A* person after marriage had to leave the *Dhumkariya* and stay in the house established by him. Both the girls and boys after the sunset used to reach *Dhumkariya.* This dormitory has a leader based on age and seniority for both girls and boys respectively. The assembled members spent their night in the *Dhumkariya.* The boys and girls were allowed to choose a partner of opposite sex and spent the night together and had freedom to have physical relationship and the community approved this practice. This right was not given to an individual but to members of the institution.

The seniors had binding to teach and instruct their juniors about the relationship of man and woman, values and norms of the community and dormitory. Besides this a hierarchical relationship was built up which lasted through out the life and assisted in the functioning of the society. If any dispute emerged among the members or between the partners, the senior most members had the right to settle the dispute and some times imposed a fine. But if the senior breaks the rules or had dispute on some matter, it was reported to the instructors, who on the basis of their experience and norms for punishment gave the judgment.

Dhumkariya has number of punishments for violation of norms by its members. There are two types of punishments for violation of norms. For breaking a rule or minor violation of norms, the member was punished to be awake for either half night or full night. This called as simple punishment and the violator a boy or a girl has to be awake that night. Secondly, if the nature of violation of rules and norms was of severe nature, then they were punished with expulsion from the *Dhumkariya* for a day or two. The boy or girl was debarred from entering the *Dhumkariya* and also are not allowed by the parents to stay in the home. Mostly they spent the night outside the *Dhumkariya.* This punishment was known as expulsion punishment. If the senior member of the *Dhumkariya* violated norms or rules then the mater was reported to the instructor of the *Dhumkariya,* who only had the right to punish the senior member. The senior of the Dormitory could only give minor punishments like staying awake in night, which was to be given to the members inside the dormitory. The instructor only could give the punishment of expulsion.

In the daytime each member had to assist their family in the household work and agriculture activities and after sunset, they used to assemble in the *Dhumkariya.* Every member used to take food in his or her house; therefore it was necessary to work in one's own house as per instruction of the head of household. *Dhumkariya* was only a residing place for the night for the unmarried children of the village, were they were also taught the rules of the community. The members on rotation basis were assigned duties to keep the *Dhumkariya* clean. They were divided into pairs of boy and girl, who on rotation basis were given the duty of cleaning the *Dhumkariya* and its surroundings. While making units of boy and girl, freedom was given to the members to choose their partners.

If a boy and girl of the *Dhumkariya* decide to marry one another, then both went to the instructor and put forth the proposal to allow them to marry. The instructor then consulted their parents. The parents of the boy and girl after consultation and clarification of the rules of the society, allowed the boy and girl to marry. The instructor performed the marriage ceremony. After marriage they were respectfully given a send off from the *Dhumkariya* and thereafter they were not allowed to enter the *Dhumkariya.* The marriage of this type was called *Dhumkariya* marriage. But if the parents of boy or girl reject the proposal, then marriage was negated and the proposal was dropped.

The *Dhumkariya* of one village did not give membership to the boys and girls of another village. Every village had its own *Dhumkariya* and only the community members by birth had right to be the member after attaining certain age. Non-tribal children were not given admission in the *Dhumkariya.* Only the tribal children were given admission in the dormitory. If the number of the entrants is too large, a new dormitory is established to meet the demand. Simultaneously if the number of members is low then the villagers used to leave them in their relatives places where they had dormitory, and the children were totally at the charge of the relatives. This way the needs of the community was fulfilled and the tradition was kept alive.

Gradually the institution of *Dhumkariya* decayed due to the internal as well as external factors. The internal factors were the increase in numbers of unmarried members in the Dhumkariya. As the custom of choosing partners was prevalent in the dormitory and they were allowed to keep physical relationship, which became intimate. In some cases, even after the marriage the members continued with their physical relationship, which was against the family values and they were not able to sustain a healthy family system. Secondly the families' work was affected, as the youth did not participate in the work of the family and flouted the rules of family. If the *Dhumkariya* marriage proposal was rejected then both the boy and girl remained unmarried and continued to maintain relationship as members of *Dhumkariya.* Sometimes this kind of relationship of unmarried pair *of Dhumkariya* resulted in childbirth, to which the community did not give recognition because of which the couple had to leave the place, and had to go to another place. In some cases they resorted to elopement and getting married, which created rift in the family of the boy and girl. These factors gradually led to community loosing faith in the system and not properly following it. The external factor was the impact of Christianity on this institution. The missionaries were spearheading the mission of spreading the Christianity in the tribal areas of the country. In this area they observed that *Dhumkariya* was an institution, which acted as the heart of the society. This institution was the culture of the community. In order to spread their mission they targeted this institution by converting it into modern school, which imparted the education that benefited in spread of Christianity. Any move to challenge it was suppressed by the help of administration (Sahay, 1976). Gradually the institutions in the region were converted into modern schools were Christianity was taught. This subverted the traditional institution that kept the culture of the community alive.

5.7 Need for Integration of the Formal Management with Traditional Management

The traditional knowledge and management systems are undermined because of pressure of modernisation and cultural **homogenisation,** under the auspices of modern, nation-state and international trade system, threaten lifestyle, practices and culture of nomadic population, small agricultural producers, and indigenous people (Agarwal, **1995:431).** The understanding of traditional practices of resources management and implementation has become a need of the time. The sacred grove of the region are embedded in the culture of the village community. It governs and regulates the economic as well as social system of the village. In the era of rapidly decreasing biodiversity and natural resources, such traditional practices of the communities needs to be acknowledged and integrated into management principles of the formal system.

5.7.1 Conservation of Sacred groves: Local Biodiversity zones

The practise, attitude and interaction of the communities with the groves show the level and frequency its association. The entire protected belief system of the community revolves around the groves. If the groves are lost, it will be a loss of naturally conserved zone, which has many endangered species of plants and insects in other parts of the country as well as in this region (Pushpangadan et al 1998, Chandran et al 1998, Patnaik and Pandey 1998, Tiwari et al 1998). Apart from threat of cultural dissociation of the community after the loss of these groves, it may also create problems in the value system of the community in coping with the uncertainties of the environment. The government most of the time is unable to provide the needed security and protection to the cultural loss. These groves are also natural repository of local biodiversity as they have been conserved for long time with little disturbance. If properly managed, they can act as seed bank for some endangered species as well as for those species, which cannot be grown in nursery.

The diversity of plant species in the groves like *Kadamara*, *Mahadani* and *Pat* is much more than the surrounding areas. This is because of lesser disturbance by peoples and animals owing to social prohibitions and social fencing. The diversity in *Sarhul Sarna* is less as it is used for various social functions and occasions. The sizes of the other three *Sarna* are large and human interface is only on selected occasions. Presently community management approaches are applied in the different parts of the country to the situation were resource degradation is taking

place, to encourage the communities to manage the resources around it. Due to this, the cost of management of the resources by the government has come down and it has resulted in improvement in the quality of resources as well as benefits reaped by the communities. The best examples are in the case of joint forest management and community forest managements. This approach should be extended to the management of sacred groves and the communities interacting with it should be given the· control and clear-cut ownership right over these groves. This empowerment of people will result in better biodiversity conservation and effective management of these groves.

5.7.2 Linking sacred grove culture with **agriculture** management

The culture of *Sarna* has created a whole web of social network and system of management, which is interlinked with their social, economic, political and religious life of the village communities. The *Sarna* is the entity and symbol of social cohesion for these communities. The economic activities are undertaken after the collective choice agreement arrived at, after due consultation and during the celebration of different festivals in the groves. If the agriculture scientists use these occasions of festival celebrations for dissemination of information relating to agriculture management, among the village communities, it will bear good result in transmission of information.

As seen in earlier chapters, that through out the year the community interacts collectively for celebrating various festivals associated with the agriculture activities. These celebrations are used for collective decision making agreement on the procedure and precaution to be taken for carrying out the agriculture works in the forth-coming season. During these occasions, specific information are can be disseminated related to agriculture activities. For example, at the time of *Sarhul* festival, the community can be informed on the metrological prediction about forth coming monsoon, type of seeds the farmers should use for sowing. But here, precaution must be taken that the seeds preferred by the community and suitable for this particular region should only be recommended. At the time of *Hariyali* festival, the issue of pest control and management can be told to the communities. The organic pest control devices prevalent in the communities should be mixed with the advantageous modern ones for better management of the crops. The traditional management practises should not be discarded as they are time tested and

are of low risk inputs. Therefore a judicious mix of the formal knowledge with the traditional knowledge will yield better result for the community. The study shows that the cattle are presently only nurtured for agriculture requirement, but the use of cattle for dairy purposes is missing, the advantages of dairy to supplement the household economy should be harnessed by the villagers.

This region is located on an altitude of 700-900 Mts. The **average** rainfall is **1600** mm, yet it has water shortage and scarcity for irrigation purpose. This region has intermittent rain through out the year. If watershed activities like harvesting of rainwater are initiated through community management efforts, water can be made available for the whole year. This will also generate more fodder as well as fuel wood. The demand for fuel wood is more in this area, if such sustained supply of fuel wood is available from other sources, stress of the natural forest can be reduced.

5.8. Threat concerning protection and management of sacred groves

The sacred groves have been under constant threat from the internal as well as external system operating in the villages and in the surrounding areas. The effects are change of government, education system, impact of great tradition and interest of different stakeholder in area. The protection and management of sacred groves is a gigantic task in such a diverse environment. The threat ranges from the communities living in the villages to policy of government and interest of stakeholders in the region. The threats from communities are due to decreasing forest cover in vicinity and restriction on use of forest, traditional ritual practices, change in outlook due to external influences and government intervention with the traditional management system. Due to decrease in forest cover and restriction on the use of forest, the communities are forced to use the groves for grazing and extraction of NTFP.

The community follows some undesirable practices, while performing rituals in these groves. These practise are burning of the waste materials left over in the grove, after the ritual is over. They leave the place after lighting the **fire** to the waste. The fire lighted destroys the ground cover and spreads to the entire area of the grove and some times even cause damage to the trees in *Mahadani*, *Kadamara* or *Pat Sarna.* The fire lighted in these groves some time extends to forest area and causes extensive damage to the forest. The communities should be informed

about the ill effect of **fire** and encouraged to remain in the grove as long as the **fire** has not extinguished. This will help in protection to the groves trees and ground cover. Conservation ethical values related to sacred habitats and ecosystem need to be capitalised upon for promoting conservation of biodiversity.

The government viewed these groves as a common property under its control. The policy of the government is to construct various **infrastructures** like school, primary health centres or Aganwari centre facilities under different government development schemes in these common lands. This creates confusion in outlook of the communities towards these groves due to difference in approaches of **macro-world** and micro world about the purposes and use of sacred groves. Secondly, theses infrastructures lead to increase in human intervention in these groves, to a large extent, resulting in impact on the diversity of the groves. In future, government should provide land for such works from the other common land of the village, which are not a part of sacred groves. The government should not have uniform policy for the management of commons. It should first study the way common is used by the community then take a decision for any developmental intervention.

The interests of different stakeholders also are a threat to the trees in the sacred groves. The taboos against cutting of trees in the groves are some times violated by offering some sacrifice to the saran deities. In some cases the interested and influential persons connived with the *Baiga* of village and managed to cut few dried trees of Sal. Such incidences provide incentives to other free riders to cause damage to the trees of the groves. The groves located at a distance from village are prone to theft by the outsiders living in town. The trees of these groves are cut and taken away in night. The villagers cannot take any action on such miscreants. The forest department and police only can check this problem.

For effective management of these groves, the community management approach should be brought into implementation. Already the communities are interlinked in the culture of *Sarna*. Revival of the decaying institution will enhance the management of the village and it resources. The recognition of the role of *Baiga* and other functionaries in the management of sacred groves only needs formal approval. Traditionally they are still functioning and are paid for their services by the communities. These villages also have formal institutions like panchayat, functioning in

these villages. These panchayat have various sub committees looking after the management of various development activities at the panchayat level. The integration of traditional and formal institutions will lead to better management of the village social system and disbursement of development benefits to the communities living in the villages. A sub-committee on sacred groves management should be created with the traditional functionaries giving them proper place to play their role in management and conservation of the groves. By this formal recognition of the sacred groves, it will lead to better protection of the sacred groves areas and resources in it. Apart from this, the confusion in the communities over the control on the sacred groves will be clarified, as it will get a formal recognition by the government through the local institution of governance. The integration of the two systems will provide a solution to present day conflict over the management of such resources in the villages.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The traditional communities use natural resources for different purposes; most of them are commonly owned and utilized, for example water bodies, forest, grazing lands etc. The ever-increasing use of these natural resources for economic development brought in the debate on the management of these commons. The debate on common property resources management has made significant ground after Hardin's concern of "tragedy of commons" in 1968. The concern was of miss-management of commons by the communities. Therefore for sustainable manage of it, suggestions were put forth that they either be taken over by the government or privatised. However, a group of researcher emphasised on exploring the community managed institutions in respect to commons. Since then, the scientists from different discipline propounded various theories on collective action in the management of common property resources and suggested different measures for sustainable management of these resources.

The researchers working on management of common pool resources were divided into two groups, when it came to factors for collective action. The first group consisted of those, who supported the principles of rational choice theory, when explaining causes for collective action. It had scientists from three disciplines, namely economics, political science and ecology. This approach applied the dominant, universal theories of economy, political science and ecology to understand factors for collective action. They considered man to be a rational being devoid of cultural values and social restrains. When it comes to taking decisions for cooperation, he mainly takes decisions for maximising one's own gain. They opined that these aspects of individualism has led to degradation of resources, therefore it needs to be curbed and collective action restored through different management regimes or institutionalisation process. The political economists emphasised on resources and power relationship and suggested for crafting institutions similar to bureaucratic type for the management of natural resources and commons. The methodological approaches followed by these researchers were mostly of theoretical and experimental type and lesser of empirically and extensively field researchers micro-tested methods.

However, the second group consisted of anthropologist and sociologists, who emphasised on **the** cultural aspects of resources management. They propounded that the small-scale societies have traditional institutions with in the cultural system to regulate to management of common resources. Their method was empirical studies based on ethnographic approach. According to them generalisation will distort the results due to cultural diversity and cultural variation existing with in and beyond the region. The empirical studies showed that in small-scale society man acts rationally to manage the resources, but his rationality is contextual to his own cultural sphere. Unlike economists, who translate diverse values into a common standard of reference, cultural analysts are more likely to analyse the phenomena in a particular cultural context.

The anthropologists tried to question the issues raised by the other scientists and with the help of empirical evidences challenged their theories. The emphasis was that in the small-scale societies the institution of kinship and religion dominated other institutions. All the institutions and social organization at micro level are embedded in the cultural system, seeing them sectorally will not give a complete picture of resources management rather than will give a distorted scene which, will further complicate the issue of resource management. Therefore the need is to study the resource management problems from holistic perspective and taking the micro level approaches against the macro level approaches. The principles of management of the resources in the small-scale societies can be correlated with the degree of difficulty in management and making use of extreme mode of management i.e. for example sacred resources used for psycho-cultural purposes are managed with the help of sacred symbols and strong taboos and prohibition to restrain the person for deviating from the rules and to make him strictly abide by the norms of the community. On the contrary the economic resources have secular pattern of management, with lesser degree of restriction and control.

The evaluation of development programmes carried out in different parts of the third world countries indicated that programmes designed on the principles of western knowledge (rational man knowledge) alone can not bring improvement in the life of small scale societies. The importance for indigenous knowledge system gained weight and section of development planners started believing that the incorporation of indigenous knowledge (culturally embedded knowledge of small scale man) along with the western knowledge can bear the fruits of development.

Simultaneously the concern for the conservation of Biodiversity and sustainable management of natural resources was gaining importance in the decades of eighties and nineties. At the same time decentralisation of power to the local population for the management of natural resources by means of their traditional practice was initiated under the philosophy of participatory resources management. Therefore the quest to know the traditional practices of community based management system gained importance in resource management area. This generated interest in the scientists of Common Property Resources and Indigenous Knowledge to test their hypotheses on factors and causes for collective management in the traditional communities and paradigm and principles of knowledge system existing in the traditional communities.

Sacred groves being one such traditionally managed resources collectively owned by the community. Anthropologists are already perusing studies to understand the management and culture for explaining the existence of such resources from their own subject perspective of religion and culture. While anthropologists regard sacred groves as a human managed resources from a holistic perspective, where it creates a cultural system in order to manage it, shares it collectively within the social group and with the super natural power with in the social system. Management of these centres or institutions have followed **certain** cultural paradigms and had a linkage with other sub-systems of the village community. Meanwhile the ecologists have analysed sacred groves from utilitarian perspective and considered it as a conservation strategy adopted by communities to protect resources and its biodiversity. According to them in order to do so the communities have created institutions in the social system for the management of sacred grove with regulatory system to check the human interference that causes damage to the resources.

The indigenous knowledge system perspective of sacred grove when looked along with the management of common property resources perspective offers well-sustained and embedded institutions for resources management, which helped in sustenance of the society for long time in history through various cultural upheavals.

In this study the researcher makes use of anthropological approach of holistic perspective to understand the communities (as a collective unit) living with in a village utilising a sacred resources. The emphasis here is that resource management practices are developed and

embedded in socio-cultural system. The social structure of the society takes into account all types of resources available in the village ecosystem from tangible to non-tangible used by the communities for livelihood as well as for social and psychological support. These are patterned into the cultural system at different levels. For the management of these resources, institutions engaged and structures for management of each particular institution evolved. These are embedded in overall structure of social system. The respective roles, rules, incentives and sanctions for management are gradually synthesized, evolved and acquire stability. The culture assigns symbols sacred or profane as per the needs and utility to the social system to the natural ecosystem with which it interacts.

The objectives for the study of sacred groves in the Jaspur district of the Chattisgarh state of India are as follows; understand existing status and culture of sacred grove in the Jaspur region; analysis the management of the sacred groves from the perspective of management of common property resources and analyse factors for the collective action, sustenance and deterioration; delineate the indigenous knowledge system developed and conserved with respect to sacred groves, and the process of transmission; and to assess the threat concerning protection and management of sacred groves.

The method applied for the study was ethnographic approach with participant observation as an important research tool. A schedule was prepared for collection of data on general information at the household level. The schedule consisted of questions ranging from the family details to cultural practices of the people; the village political system, religious system, economic system, social system and interrelation with the outside world. After the general data, specific data regarding the culture was gathered from the interviews with the key persons in the village associated in the management of the groves like *Baiga* (priest), *Kotwar* (watchman) and village Patel or *Mahato* (village traditional chief), who are the custodians of information on the culture of the sacred grove. The information on linkage of sacred grove with the village social system, rituals, place in the worldview, prohibitions and taboos etc., was gathered from the key informants and people.

The selection of villages for the study, was based on the factors of i) the number of groves existed in the village, and ii) dominant communities residing in the village. Purposive selection was done to identify the villages for the study. The criteria for selection of villages were a) heterogeneous composition of the village, and b) accessibility of the villages for fieldwork as the region is having dense forest. Based on these criteria four villages were selected for the fieldwork. The *Oraon* communities dominate these villages and are practicing sacred groves belief system since ages. One village selected has only non-Oraon communities practicing *Sarna* belief system, while the entire Oraon population have converted to **Christianity** fold and no longer practice the Sarna faith. The villages selected for this study were Baghima, **Ghamhariya, Komodo** and Echkela of the Jaspur block.

Sacred groves are religious commons found in the tribal landscape of India. Sacred grove is a patch of forest and believed to be the place where the village deities or spirits reside. The village owns the groves commonly and each household in the village has equal stake in it, through in some villages they have people converted to other religion. It forms the part of religion of the communities practicing faith in it and is well integrated in their cultural system. The studies on commons focused on the economic value of the commons and overlooked those commons, which assisted the communities by providing them the needed psychological and sociological supports in form of belief system to cope up with the uncertainty of nature. This study is an attempt to understand the culture of sacred groves from the perspectives of common property resources theories. It also tried to highlight the traditional knowledge of the communities, its linkages with the culture of sacred groves.

All the studied village had heterogeneous population, consisting of tribal communities namely, *Oraon, Nagesia, Raotia* and caste communities along with the converted Christian. The belief in sacred groves pervade among all without exception. Although Echkela village had all its Oraon population got converted to Christianity long back in the past, yet the culture and practices of *Sarna* religion was found to be equally prevalent in the other traditional communities living in the village. The condition of the grove **of** *Sarna* of this village was good and it had four types of them. From this it can be inferred that the belief in the *Sarna* religion was not **specific** to any one tribal community, but it pervaded all the communities living in this region. In the worldview of

the traditional communities of this region, the sacred groves are allocated for the village deities and all the activities related to them are carried out as collectively. The community belief is that it's an abode of the village deity who protects the village production system and population fiom internal and external threats.

All the villages selected for the study in the Jaspur district, have the sacred groves existing in their boundary and well engrained in the culture and social system. These villages have sacred groves ranging from two to six in number assigned to various village deities residing in them. They are *Sarhul **Sarna**, Pat **Sarna**, **Mahadani Sarna**, Phool Sarna, Manohar Sarna* and ***Kadamara** Sarna.* The deity of *Sarhul Sarna* i.e. *Sarna Bhuria,* is the principle village deity living in it. The deity living in *Pat Sarna* is *Pat **Devta**;* a male deity assigned the **function** of village protector. The spirits residing in *Mahadani Sarna* and *Kadamara Sarna* are *Duhladev* or *Darha Desauli.* The Deity of *Sarhul* is associated with the production system of the village i.e. agriculture activities. All the agriculture activities begin with worship in the grove, and end with ritual and offering of the produces from the agriculture to deity of the groves and then brought into use by the households. The *Pat Devta* is considered to be the protector of the village and *Dulhadev* and *Darha Desauli* are the gatekeepers of the village. The *Sarna* like *Phool Sarna* and *Manohar Sarna* are meant for provisioning of flowers for rituals to be conducted in the groves of the village.

The villagers interact with these groves on the occasion of various rituals and festivals celebrated collectively at the village level. The villagers celebrate number of festivals in the village, namely *Sarhul, Hariyari, Kadeleta, Karma, **Nawakhani**, Holi* etc. At each festival all the deities and spirits residing in these groves are worshipped and offered sacrifices of a cock of a particular colour associated with that particular deity or spirit. The deities/spirits of the groves like *Pat, Mahadani* and *Kadamara* are offered sacrifice of animals like pig, sheep, goat or buffalo at a fixed interval of three to twelve years of time to propitiate the deities/spirits, for the services they provide to the village. Men folk are only allowed to participate in the rituals conducted in the groves and partake the sanctified food (***Prasad***) prepared in the grove. Communities have evolved various taboos and prohibitions of different degree and kind in dealing with the groves

for men and women living in the village. But, there is certain degree of flexibility in the use of the groves in certain situations of crisis management. Certain produce are allowed to be collected from these groves, like dry twigs, NTFP etc but with the permission of the **Baiga**, of the village. Grazing is also allowed in some groves.

The entire agriculture activities like preparation of agriculture fields, sowing, greening of the fields, ripening of the crops, harvesting and eating of the first produce are associated with celebration by the villagers of the area. These villages celebrate Numbers of festivals, principle ones are *Danda Relenga, Hariyari, Kadleta* and *Nawakhani.* The agriculture season begins, immediately after the celebration of **Sarhul** festivals. Initially they perform *Muthi Chodana* worship, prior to planting of new crop of paddy. The *Muthi Chodana* pujan, is the first step for starting the agriculture activities. This is done prior to coming of the monsoon, so that the fields are ready before the first shower of rain. Next, *Hariyali* festival is celebrated, when the entire region looks green due to the plants of paddy, when they reach certain height and ready to be transplanted. This is a collective ritual, celebrated at the village level. *Kadleta* festival is performed after the formation of rice grains and is ready for harvesting. This is generally performed in the month of *Bhado* (August-September). *Nawakhani* is festival is performed to protect the crops from the evil eyes and evil spirits. The agriculture season ends with harvesting and thrashing of the paddy. The produce is collected in the storehouse and after offering the new grains to the village deity on *Nawakhani* festival the paddy is brought into use for eating.

Sacred groves were analysed from the perspective of common property resources management. The application Ostrom design principles showed that it fulfils all the necessary conditions of a self-organised system to be effectively managed by the village community. The common resource has a clear-cut boundary and usufruct right of it rest with the village, but the ownership of these groves is with the state government. Secondly, the benefits to communities from these groves are tangible as well as non-tangible. The village community looks toward to the sacred grove deities for immediate as well as long-term support. The short-term benefits are in the form of support to production system. This is evident from the pattern of association community has developed through regular ritual process for all deities of the groves. The long-term benefits to the communities from sacred groves are in form of protection to human, livestock and production system of the village from the unforeseen incidents. It may be in the form of illness,

natural calamities or epidemic. These incidents make the communities vulnerable and make them collectively solve the problems of distress. They seek solution from the deities of village living in these groves of the village. The mechanism used by them is by paying obeisance to the deities. Therefore, the benefits from these groves are many compared to the cost to manage them collectively.

It has an institution of *Baiga* to manage it and he had number of assistants to assist him. These functionaries held the post hereditarily. The village had a well-established system of selection of *Baiga* and other functionaries in case of crisis or if the post has fell vacant without any successor. Baiga is the person who looks after the management of the groves and he interacts with the deities of the groves on the behalf of the villagers and suggests solution to their problems. The villages have a system of payments for the services provided by these functionaries to the village. The rules for interaction with groves were clearly delineated and a number of taboos and prohibitions prescribed for the villagers. The women and children are tabooed from entering the groves like *Mahadani,* **Kadamara** *and Pat Sarna.*

The villages have system of conflict resolution in the form of two-tier system, one operational at village level other operational at *Parha* level. For dispute settlement at intra village level, the villages have a traditional council called Panchayat. The work of this panchayat is to resolve the disputes taking place within the village system and maintains a harmonious living environment for the villagers. The nature of the disputes ranges from personal quarrels, familial problems, and marriage related disputes, property disputes, crop destruction by cattle, *Sarna* infringement, land encroachment, inter-community disputes etc. At first the settlement of dispute is tried at family or neighbourhood level. If the conflicting parties do not agree to the judgement given by the panchayat, then they have highest dispute settling body in the form of *Parha* Panchayat. The judgment of *Parha* panchayat is final and taken on the basis of unanimous consensus of the villagers and it becomes binding on the disputant to accept it or face expulsion from the community.

This region has a system *of Parha* Panchayat, which means that a conglomeration of eight to ten villages, which are socially culturally (close kinship ties), linked together form a bigger unit of association called *Parha.* Each *Parha* has a panchayat, which settles the issues of dispute in its

jurisdiction. Each *Parha* elects its *Parha* Panch through a democratically held election in which only the male members have right to vote. The term of a *Parha* panch is for five years. This position is open to all the individuals within the *Parha* and no discrimination is made on the basis of tribe or clan for the candidate. Secondly a candidate can contest for the post as many number of times as he likes. Women are not allowed to contest or vote for the post of *Parha* panch. Only the men above sixteen are allowed to participate in this **panchayat.** Members of other castes and communities are allowed to participate in the panchayat, but lower ranked communities like Dhangar, Lohar, Chick are not allowed to participate in discussions process or are eligible for contesting for the post of *Parha* Panch.

The sacred groves is internalised in the local religious system, by arranging its deities in the hierarchy of the tribal worldview. Each village has its own sets of sacred groves associated with the villages economic, security and protection system. These deities residing in the groves are allocated separate common spaces in the village. Collective choice agreement of the village community is to regularly interact with them, through various festivals and rituals linked with various activities of the village community. This interaction, besides providing a common social occasion, also provides opportunity for information sharing and assessment of the status and condition of the groves.

But there were extraneous factors, which led to decay in the culture as well as the institution of sacred groves. These factors were changes in legal and political scenario of the country i.e. advent of British rule and Christian missionaries. The rule and policy of British government disturbed the pre-existing resources management structures, and on it the economic exploitation policy was imposed upon, to extract maximum benefit from the natural resources of India. This was through the land settlement act, which brought changes in the land management system and destabilised the micro level governing structures. The Christian missionaries influenced the religious system by converting the tribal populations, through various means and preaching about the primitiveness of the traditional culture. As sacred groves were part of religious system, the attack by the missionaries was on *Sarna* faith, which formed part of the village belief system.

The taboos associated with groves are a mode of non-interference with the influence zone of the deities of the groves; which is correlated with their respective power and influence. But the villagers have designed certain flexibility in rules relating to use of these groves. These flexibilities are applicable only in a very extreme situation. The flexibility is linked with individual ignorance or village necessity.

The sanctions are of internal and external type. The internal sanction relates to moral, guilt, curse, wrath of the deities, blessing etc., and external sanctions are punishment, fines, social outcasts, shames etc. Both type of sanctions are used in the management of these groves. In the first case it is experiential. If an individual deviates from the norms prescribed for interaction with the grove, the deity residing in it punishes him, which is exhibited in features like sickness or loss of property or life etc. In such a situation the individual seeks help of *Baiga* to know the causes and remedy.

The analysis of sacred groves from the **Ostrom** design principles shows that it fulfils all the requirements needed for a self organised system to be managed efficiently. It tries to measure the institution **sustainability** on the scale of success and failure, with the help of the design principles. The design principles only explain that an institution is successful if it meets the above principles but is unable to explain the reason for the decline of the commons, simultaneously leading to degradation in the ecological status of the commons. The other limitation of **Ostrom's** design principle is that it deals with institutions in a closed sphere, devoid of understanding the effects of external factors on the management of common property resources.

The breakdown of the traditional CPRs is due to the externally imposed social changes due to colonialism, nationalisation, **marketisation,** and modernisation. They influenced the culture of sacred groves to a large extent. These factors also caused the decay of the dormitory system prevalent in the villages. The other factors of change were the continuation of the policy of British after independence and advent of Hindu missionaries in the region for re-conversion of converted Christian into the folds of Hinduism. The conversion of tribal into Christianity forced them to forgo the traditional culture and its impacted on the outlook of them towards the sacred groves and its linkage to the social system. The Christianity looked down upon the culture of *Sarna* as superstitious and primitive belief. It gave emphasis to worship in church and delinked economic activities with the religious activities.

Hindu culture interpreted the sacred grove and the traditional culture from the glasses of **their** own culture. By this they enlarged their horizon to include the traditional population into the fold of Hinduism. Here they conducted mass initiation ceremony called thread ceremony practiced among the Hindu or twice born. But it was totally different from what traditional community practiced. There was a difference in the two missionary approaches, while the Christian despised the traditional belief and association with the sacred groves, in contrary Hindu initiated in revitalisation of *Sarna* religion, which was somehow connected with the grove and its culture. For example an all India association of *Sarna* was formed where the traditional community people participated actively. At present the *Sarhul* festival is celebrated at district level where the villagers from all over the district assemble in Jaspur town and celebrate the festival in the *Sarhul Sarna* of the Jaspur town. Misuse of groves for locating development infrastructure due to different viewpoint held by macro system of administration also affected the size of the groves.

The theory of embeddedness was used for analyses of the interrelationship of culture to sacred groves. It was found that sacred groves are placed in the worldview of the communities and is a form of religion prevalent in the region. All the collective activities of the village are coordinated with the sacred groves and they only begin after celebrating ritual in the grove. The different activities of village economy are linked with festivals namely *Sarhul, Hariyali, Kadleta, Karma,* and *Nawakhani,* associated with agriculture and hunting. The protection of the village from external calamities and spirits is also bestowed in the hands of village deities, for this they are propitiated at regular intervals of time. The village political system and other institutions are embedded into one another. This is evident from the interaction and role played by these functionaries in the management of the sacred groves and village affairs ranging **from** economic activities to protection of the people and resources of the village.

Collective management needs elements of social solidarity and trust for social coordination of reciprocal or complementary concerns of each other and normative ties for such coordination. Society seeks to ensure safety and prosperity to the village community as a whole at each new stage in the annual cycle of its simple economic pursuits and the feasting rejoicing and social reunion that marks their successful termination. Secondly, when crisis is safely tided over, the community celebrates its rejoicing and its sense of renewed social solidarity with feasting and drinking and dancing. In the case of sacred groves, the social solidarity and trust is exhibited by the collective celebration of festival and faith in the deities of the groves on different occasions. The communities abide by the taboos ascribed with the management of the groves.

Analysis from the social constructivist approach showed that the interests of different stakeholders working in the region have influenced the management of sacred groves. The social constructivist perspective studies the management of common property resources from actor's perspectives and sees the multiplicity of resource utilization, while some of the earlier approaches viewed commons as single purposes resources. Secondly, it tries to explain the causes for each effect, whether contributing to the successful management of the common or failure of it. The local administration used its stakes in the area of sacred grove by constructing infrastructure under various development programmes, because as per their interpretation it was a common land, similar to those existed in any other district in the state. The Hindu and Christian missionaries viewed belief in sacred groves differently from the traditional communities. For the latter it was a practice of primitive communities and they needed to be changed and converted, while the former considered it a sub-set of their own religion. The local residents also behaved differently in the scenario of changing context, this is exhibited from the behaviour of the *Parha* panch in the case of *Sarhul Sarna* of Baghima village.

The study villages have developed elaborate knowledge about the resources with which they interacts, through observation in due course of history. The land for agriculture was classified as *Tarn* and *Don* land based on quality of land. They have their own mechanism of interpreting meteorological information like nature of rain. They use of number of tree and plant species in their economic, healing and religious activities. In this context, the understanding of traditional practices of resources management and making use of it has become a need of the time. The sacred groves of the region are embedded in the culture of the village community. They govern and regulate the economic as well as social system of the village. In the era of rapidly decreasing biodiversity and natural resources, such traditional practices of the communities needs to be acknowledged and integrated into the management principles of the formal system. The government most of the time is unable to provide the needed security and protection in the context of cultural losses. These groves are natural repository of local biodiversity as they have been conserved for long time with little disturbance. If properly managed, they can act as seed bank for some endangered species as well as for those species, which cannot be grown in nursery.

The linkage of agriculture and sacred groves is evident from the number of rituals associated with the different stages of agriculture work carried out by the villagers. This opportunity can be utilised by the agriculture extension officers to disseminate information on agriculture related technology and seeds to the villagers. During these occasions, the villagers apart from celebrating ritual take collective decision on the matters concerning agriculture works to be undertaken. The activities like watershed management should be encouraged in this region, as it lies in high altitude areas, where harvesting of ground water is not feasible. The region has rain spread through out the year; therefore watershed management is one of the best options available for solving the water crisis faced by the villagers for agriculture purpose.

For the effective management of these groves it is necessary to have a system of co-management, where in the institutions of the administration work in collaboration of the village institutions so that natural resources are optimally and sustainable managed. This is necessary in the era of rapidly depleting resources and environment. A socially harmonious and value based system needs to be revived in order to check the indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources. Otherwise, this will lead to conflict and stress in communities over resources utilization, since majority of the village communities depends on commons for their economic and cultural needs.

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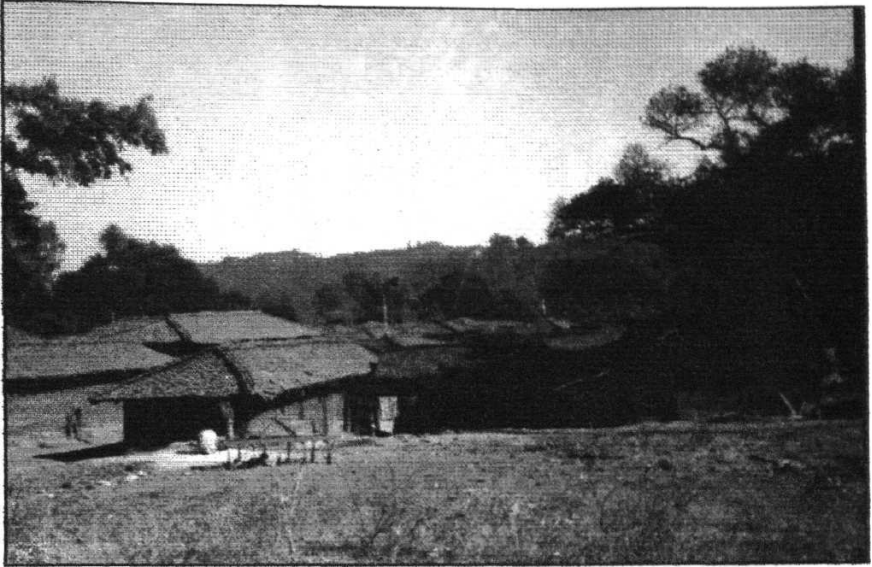
Photographs

1. Sacred grove in natural landscape

2. Baghima Village Sarhul Sarna along with the water pond

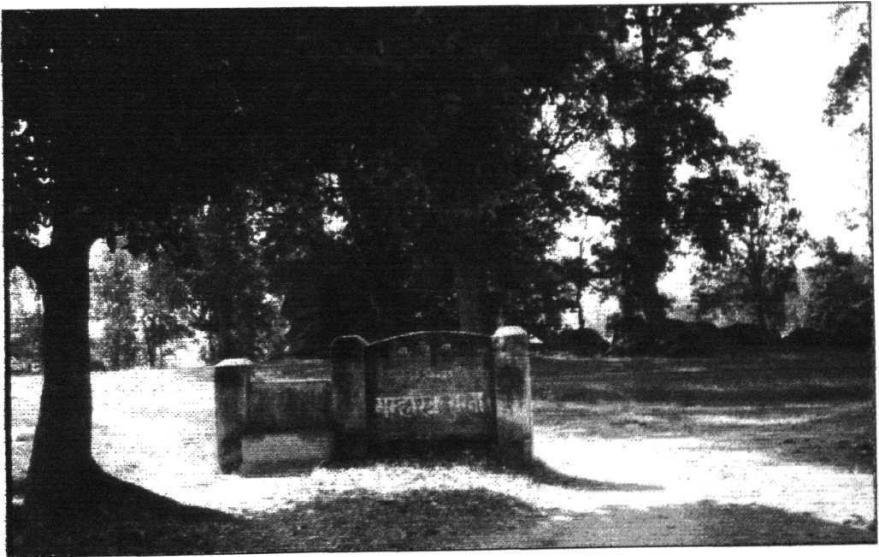# Photographs

3. Komodo Village from a distance

4. Sarhul Sarna of the Komodo village

Photographs

5. Pat Sarna of the Komodo Village

6. Mahadani Sarna of the Ghamhariya Village

Photographs

7. Sarhul Sarna of the Ghamhariya Village

8. Phool Sarna of the Ghamhariya Village
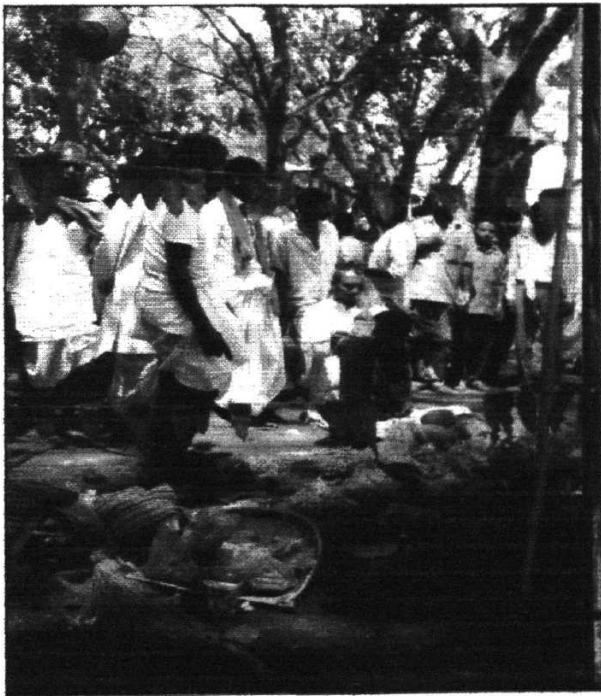
Photographs

9. Kadamara Sarna of the Echkela Village
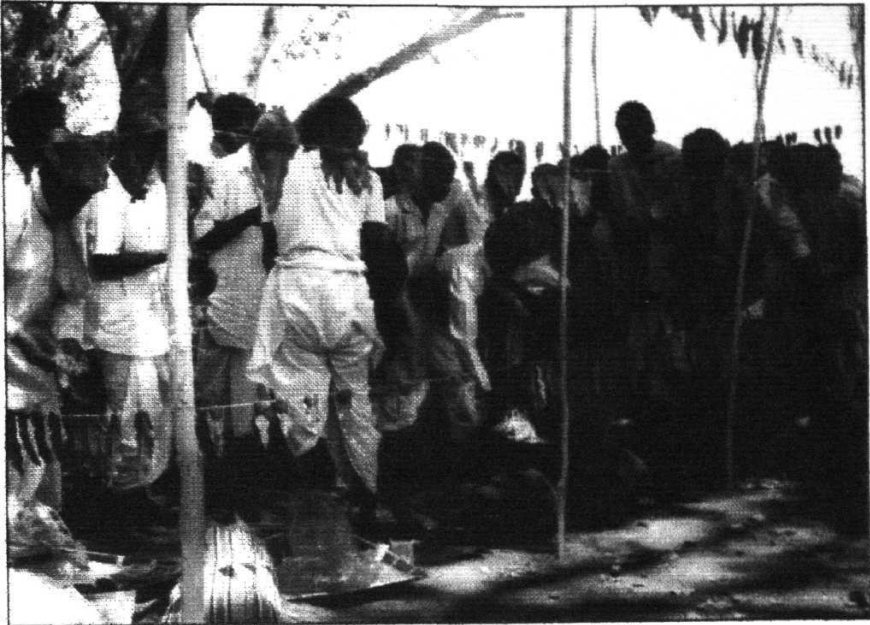

10. Phool Sama of the Echkela Village

Photographs

11. Village Boys with the ritual material for the celebration of Sarhul Festival

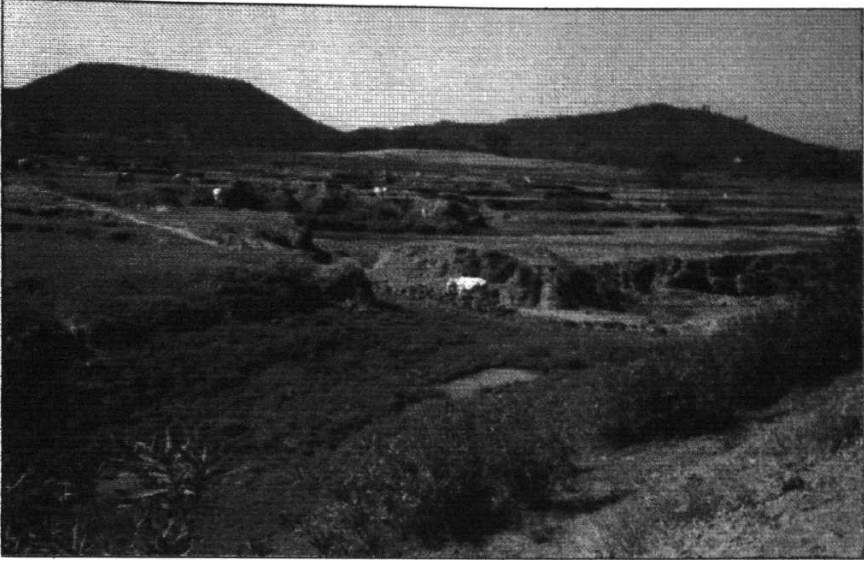12. Sarhul festival rituals offering in progress

13. Baiga is offering Sal flowers as sanctified flowers to the villagers

14. Agncuiture land of the Ghamhariya village

Photographs

15. Agriculture land of the Baghima village

16. Don land where crops like paddy is grown

Photographs

17. Sarhul festival organized by Kalyan Ashram at Jaspur Nagar celebration in progress

18. Fish Breeding center construction under progress in Sarhul Sarna of Baghima village