CHAPTER III
UNDERSTANDING THE SOCIETY AND CULTURE OF THE HILL SAORAS

The present chapter aims at furnishing an overall understanding about the society and culture of the Hill Saoras. Before studying any aspects of a community the understanding of its society and culture at the outset is essential. This is genuinely necessary to endow with many interrelated ideas and informations about the society, based on which the objectives of the study can be better examined. It is very important in case of the study of a traditional or adivasi community whose life style is interrelated with every aspect of society. The present study is based on the Hill Saoras, the most primitive section of the main Saora of Gunupur Block of Rayagada District, Orissa.

3.1 ETHNICITY AND IDENTITY OF THE SAORAS

Ethnicity is a sense of ethnic identity which can be defined in terms of objective attributes, with reference to subjective feelings and in relation to behaviour. Ethnicity of any group is not given; it is constituted and constructed through historical forces. Each tribal group is a separate and autonomous ethnic entity. Its society has shared values, style of life, exclusive symbol of identity, and consciousness of kind. It has its own ethnic and social profile with a historical specificity. However, the Saora, as a collection of sub-

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3 Ibid, p. 144.
groups, has been surviving with its own historicity and identity. Besides, each of its sub-groups has a distinct identity and character develops over the period of time.

3.1.1 The Saora: A Collection of Sub-Groups

The Saora is one among many other Adivasis of Orissa, residing in the southern part of the State. They are known by various names such as Savara, Shabar, Saura, Sora, etc., which constitute one of the most primitive tribal communities of India showing their racial affinity to the Proto-Austroloid group. Linguistically, they are akin to the Mundari branch of Austric language. Their language is very much poetic in expression that varies from place to place. In the southern region of Orissa Saora is one of the most numerous groups. The Saora is divided into a number of sub-tribes, such as Kapu, Jati, Sudha Sabar, Jadu, Jara, Arsi, Duara or Muli, Kindal, Kumbe, Basu, Lanjia, etc. Out of these, Lanjia Saora (to whom we prefer to call Hill Saora) is the most primitive and Shudha or Sarda Saora, the much acculturated one. The present study is deals with the Hill Saoras.

To the outsider, Saora community is understood mainly as the Lanjia Saora, but those who are associated with the study of tribal communities it may mean differently. Presently, Hill Saora is the only remnant of the Saora community, when other sub-groups of the same community have become more or less mingled with the mainstream of Indian population.

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The ethnic and cultural identity of the Saora both in tribal and non-tribal version has different connotations. The Saora is one of the oldest known tribes of India. For Patnaik, the term Saora appears to have two connotations— one derived from Sagories, the Scythian word for axe and the other from Saba Roye, the Sanskrit term for carrying the dead body. Both of them are fit with their habit of carrying an axe always on their shoulders with their primitive occupation of hunting and living on spoils of chase. There are so many accounts given by the scholars, British officials turn ethnographers and Indian scholars of tribal interests in this regard.

3.1.2 The Saora in Literature

Being an ancient community of India, the Saoras find mention in Sanskrit literatures, the epics, the puranas and other religious texts. In Mahabharata the Saoras find mentioned as Jara Savar and in Amarkosh: they were referred as Antebasi, which means the inhabitants of the peripheral regions who lived by hunting and food gathering. The name of Saora fowler, Vasu or Vishwabasu is mentioned in the legend of the Sanskrit writer to refer his god Vasudeva or because he is the typical aboriginal dweller in the land throughout the story. The word is also used as a name for Vishnu, which the writer of the legend may mean that the aboriginal fowler was himself Vishnu in an earlier form. The Lord Jaganath of Puri, Orissa is associated with the Saoras or Savaras, who is found reference as the worshipper of the deity Jaganath in its earliest form in the jungle. There are so many accounts given by the scholars—the British officials, ethnographers, missionaries, census

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8 ibid, p. 2.
9 ibid.
operators, and pre and post independent Indian ethnographers to trace the
ethnicity and identity of Saoras, as an indigenous socio-cultural category. The
scholars working on ancient and traditional literature have no consensus view
on the origin and identity of the Saoras. The accounts given by foreign
missionaries studying the Saoras are also rallying with variations.

Verrier Elwin, for instance, while describing the ethnicity and identity
of the Saoras mentioned that “it is possible that the Saora (Savara, Sabara), or
something like it, was used in ancient times much as people in India today
used the words ‘aboriginal’, ‘Bhumijan’, or ‘Adivasi’ for it seems to have been
synonymous with such names as Matanga, Kirata, Janangana, Pulinda, Bhilla
and can hardly have been employed in any ethnographic sense.” 11

Cunningham holds the view that “in early times, where the name of
Savara is used it probably covers all the divisions of the Kols, as they are now
called, including Kurkus and Bhils in the west, with Santals and Bhuiyas,
Mundas and Hos, Bhumij and Juangs in the east. In later times, when Samadeva
wrote Katha Sarita Sagara, the name of Savara is used as synonymous with
Pulinda and Bhilla, and, therefore means only a man of an aboriginal tribe. 12 In
a critique to Samadeva he remarked that the writer knew little about the
identity of Saoras except by hearsay, proves in his writings.

In the observation of Elwin, “the persistent recurrence of the name
Saoras suggests that they were an important and widely scattered tribe.
Perhaps, the confusion about the name is due to the fact that from the earliest
period the Saoras were broken up into different sections; certainly today,

12 Cunningham, 1884, p. 139, quoted in Verrier Elwin’s, 1955, p. 1.
many of them have lost their language and have been assimilated in culture and religion to their neighbours."\(^{13}\)

Many communities referred and claimed their ancestry to the great Savara is observed by many scholars. Cunningham reasons that the Savaras were the dominant branch of great Kolarian family. Majumdar observe the same by saying that ‘all the Kolarians are but branches of the Savara people’. In 1872 census the Bendekars who lived between Singhbum and Keonjhar described themselves as Saoras included in the section Savara by Risley. S.C. Roy traced the ancestry of Hill Kharias of Mayurbhanj to a branch of great Savara. For Hutton, there can be little doubt that the Sawaras of the Orissa and Maliahs of Chhattisgarh, the Saoras of Sagar, Damoh and Bundelkhand, and the Saharia caste of Malwa and Gwalior all belong to the same original stock.\(^{14}\) The Kharias of Mayurbhanj lend their descendants from Basu Savara.\(^{15}\)

Cunningham divided the tribesmen who called themselves by the name Saoras into two great divisions-the western and the eastern. During his tour from Allahabad he came across some Saoras in the districts of Damoh, Sagar and Bhilsa. He traced them in the hill tracts of south of Lalitpur and as far as Gwalior, in the vicinity of which they were called Sabarias and were known as charcoal-burners. They all spoke Hindi dialect. They were active and vigorous foresters’. Cunningham also noticed small number of Saoras living in south of Shahabad and Bihar called Sui, Suirai in Allahabad district, Sarhia in Ghazipur and eastern Oudh.\(^{16}\) However, by comparing various census figures Elwin has observed that the western Saoras have almost

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\(^{13}\) Elwin, 1955, op. cit., p. 1.
entirely disappeared as a separate community, many of them adopted Hindu way and have been fully assimilated by their neighbours that they have even lost their distinctive name.\textsuperscript{17}

The eastern Saoras, Cunningham mentioned, were separated from their brethren, extended from Allahabad to Jabalpur in one direction and from Betwa River to Mahanadi in other. From Mahanadi they extended in scattered groups across Chhattisgarh, through Sambalpur and down to Ganjam and Koraput. However, the Saoras of all the other parts of India, except perhaps those of the Vizagapatnam Agency, show few signs of the affinity with the Hill Saoras of Ganjam and Koraput. In many cases their assimilation with local population, language adaptation, dress, manners and its gods are greatly observed.\textsuperscript{18}

The people who are identified themselves with Saoras are not only different but also sharp contrast to the Hill Saoras. For instance, Russel and Hira Lal have reported existence of totemic exogamous divisions among the Laria and Uriya Saoras who were worshipping deities such as Bhavani and Dulha Deo. This is in sharp contrast to tradition of Hill Saora. Risley’s Bankura Saoras had exogamous totemic septs; Brahmins served them as priests and forbade widow remarriage also do contrast with the customs of Hill Saoras.

The art of interpretation and reinterpretation, articulation and manipulation, links and missing links, omissions and commissions etc., to establish the identity of Saoras by several writers in due course have created ambiguous accounts. Three important factors are responsible for these variations.

\textsuperscript{17} ibid, p.5.  
\textsuperscript{18} ibid, p.5-6.
First, indigenous or folk societies have no written scripts as well as literature to document their history and culture in textual form. They are based on oral traditions through which information passed down from generation to generation, depends upon the memory of the individuals. The chances of omission and commission of information may occur in the process of transformation of such knowledge. The language articulation among the scholars may be another possible factor for such variations.

Secondly, ancient times the indigenous people in India have been confronted with many cultural communities and situational conditions. Their encounter with many dominant civilizations and rulers forced them to scatter, driven away from their own territory and assimilated with neighbouring communities. Their identity became merged with the mainstream civilisation. Thus, the identity of indigenous people in general and the Saoras in particular have lost certain uniformity.

Third and most important is the question of ethnographic sense in formulating and interpreting the ethnicity and identity of the Saoras. The formation of Savaras or Saoras in ancient Indian literatures is not based on proper ethnographic methods. In ancient Indian scriptures the names of so many communities are mentioned in several places but nothing bare minimum about their life style, origin, cultural practices and livelihood are portrayed except their accidental appearance (encounter) to the outsiders, as the passive actors in the play. The scholars who have documented the identity of the Saoras lack uniformity, because they have not employed proper ethnographic methods. The census reports have also confusing. Hence, to record a community's identity and culture a proper ethnographic methodology is inevitable.
In his study, Elwin has extensively reviewed and analysed almost all the literature to trace the ethnicity and identity of Saoras as well as Hill Saoras. Due to his painstaking effort and extensive exploration of Saora religion, the Saoras are known to the ethnographic and academic communities all over the world. To avoid contradiction and confusion Elwin has finally stated that “where a name covers such diverse populations that it has come to mean little more than ‘aboriginal’ it is necessary to make very clear to whom exactly I refer when I use the word ‘Saora’ in this book. I mean the Hill Saoras of the Agency tracts of the Ganjam and Koraput Districts of Orissa and I shall normally call them simply Saoras for convenience.”\(^\text{19}\) This shows that being a pioneer working on the Saoras his expression admits the variable accounts given on the identity of the Saoras as a collection of sub-groups.

### 3.2 ETHNIC AND CULTURAL IDENTITY OF THE HILL SAORAS

In his ethnographic account Elwin has mentioned certain cultural traits of Hill Saoras, which makes them a distinct category of main Saora. He states, “The Saora live along long streets where they built little shrines. They erect menhirs and sacrifice buffalo for their dead. Male and female shamans serve their religious needs. They engage both in terrace and shifting cultivation. Their men wear a long, brightly-coloured loin-cloth and their women a hand-woven, brown-bordered skirt and usually nothing else. The women enlarge the lobes of their ears and have a characteristic tattoo mark down the middle of the forehead. Most importantly, the Hill Saora retain their own language and many of them can speak no other.”\(^\text{20}\) Elwin’s account is completely based on fieldwork is still visible today, although some changes have already

\(^{19}\) Elwin, 1955, op. cit., p. 6.

underway. No scholar till now has explored and hopefully may not be able explore more than Verrier Elwin. However, in some few places some information in his book seems to be the incorporation of Sarda Saora's (the plain Lander).

To draw the ethnic and cultural identity of Hill Saoras as a distinct social category confusion and variations are unavoidable but can surely be minimized. The present work does attempt to minimize the confusion to draw the identity of Hill Saoras rather than inter-mingled with many of the sub-groups of main Saoras.

The Hill Saoras who are commonly known as Lanjia Saora constitute the most primitive section of the great Saora tribe in Orissa. They are famous for their expertise in terrace and shifting cultivation, elaborate religious life-style, artistic skills for producing beautiful wall paintings, pictograms, popularly known as icons and their traditional male dress-style in which the ends of the loin-cloth hang like a tail at the back. The term ‘Lanjia’ means ‘having a tail’ has bestowed upon them by their neighbours referring to the fashion of wearing long-tailed loin-cloth by their male folk.21

The Hill Saoras are popularly known as Lanjia Saora both by government accounts as well as their neighbours. The term Lanjia Saora is an Oriya origin. But like Elwin we also prefer to call them Hill Saoras with two important reasons: First, their habitat on highland and isolated forest eco-system, which exclusively choose to build their settlement on highland forested areas isolated from mainstream world. Second argument is based on the emergence of new identity consciousness with the spread of Christianity

and education. Their contact with the outside world has also developed some kind of awareness and understanding about their identity. We have interviewed most of the youth and aged converts who feel uncomfortable with their traditional name as Lanjia Saora, who explain that the word Lanjia Saora means the ‘person having tail’. Sarata, a convert explains that “in early days our fore fathers were wearing a loin-cloth (Lanjia). The both ends of the cloth usually hang in back and front like a tail. While moving and working inside the forests the loin clothed Saora looks like monkeys. When the outsiders saw our Saora in the tailed cloths they called them Lanjia Saora.” The present generation is aware and realising, though not revolting, the insulted meaning of Lanjia. Although the term Hill Saora does not give much dignified expression its preference may slightly better than the former one. Why we do not prefer to call simply Saora is the fact that it may mix up or overlap with other sub-sections. To identify and maintain the Hill Saoras as a distinct category among the Saoras this selection seems more appropriate. However, detailed description needs to be given about the identity of Hill Saora as an indigenous cultural category.

3.2.1 The myth

Referring to the myth of origin of Hill Saoras-Kureitung Katabir (the story of bottle gourd), the fundamental source of their oral literature, it states that the first Sora man took origin from Kureitung (bottle gourd) and after that, they dispersed in the forests and hills and made their settlement. Kureitung is derived from the Kurpal (bottle gourd) and Tung refers to the hollowed fruit of the bottle gourd. The story teller Laxmi Karji states that “the human life was hidden inside the hollow bottle gourd (Lagenaria vulgaris). It was heavy rain and water was flooded in everywhere. There was no earth. The first
Kureitung men came out after the search of earth by the eagle and subsequently grass was planted by a beer. They were four persons inside the gourd: husband, wife, a son, and a daughter. After their emergence out of Kureitung they started wandering here and there. Their number got increased. They were living by gathering roots and fruits from the forests. One day all the people decided to go for mass hunting. They went to forests, killed several animals and gathered huge meat. While the meats were distributed an old man who emerged from Kureitung was observing the distribution of meat among the participants. The first person who took two shares in tying the meat in either end of a napkin with a stick became higher class/castes. The person carried the meat in a cloth (jikale) became Gamsimar or lower class Harijans (Doms). Those carried meat in leaves and moved towards Jaitan (lower plain land) called Sudha Sabar or Sarda Saora. Finally, the persons who took the meat by piercing the pieces of meats in Sindiole (stick of date palm tree) which looked like a garland and moved towards cave or upper hills became Jadu Maranji and were later called Lanjia Saora or Hill Saoras. Even today the Hill Saoras people carry the extra meat from the ritual places by piercing with the stick of date tree.

3.2.2 The legend

The term ‘Sora’ signifies the identity of Hill Saoras. It is derived from ‘So’ means hidden and ‘ara’ means tree. The etymological meaning of the term ‘Sora’ refers to those people who have been living inside the forests. Forest is the collection of trees and Hill Saoras build their settlement surrounded by thick forests. Covered with the dense forests their settlement does not appear

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*Tambesaal (carrier of toddy pot):* A Hill Saoras old man of Sagaad with his typical dress and style moving ahead to his daily work.
to outside and looks hidden even from a small distance. That gives the
evidence about the people who have been living inside the forest in isolation
and recognized as the forests dwelling community and very rarely appeared
to the outside world.

3.2.3 The language

The language or more accurately the dialect people speak is called Sora.
Lanjia Saora is otherwise called as Arsi Saora. Arsi in Saora refers to monkey.
They also show their ancestry to monkey. On the other sense, their identity
also refers to the dress they wear. While the male folk of the Lanjia Saora
wears the loin-cloth, which appears like a monkey, as shown in image no-8,
for which the outsiders called them Lanjia Saora. Lanjia in neighbouring Oriya
language refers to the ‘person who bears the tail’. Thus, the mainstream Oriya
population called them Lanjia Saora. They are also called Malia Saora by the
Oriya neighbour because while they go any where either to participate in
socio-cultural events or rituals or for the field to work they walk in a line
which is called Mala (garland) in Oriya language.

3.2.4 The dress

The dress used by the Hill Saoras in traditional times gives an
important idea about their identity. The male folk used the dress that is called
Ulliakap and by female, Gatungkap. The women were by and large, not
covering their top in early days. The men were using the loin cloth and rarely
a turban on the head while they were going for work. Ullia means tail and kap
means cloth, which etymologically means tailed cloth. Ulliakap is a loin-cloth
about six feet long and ten inches breadth which is tied around the hips and
waist hangs down in two strips looks like tail. The older generations are still
using these dresses. Ekep is standing in front of a traditional house with his loin cloth (Ulliakap) shown in image no-6 and image no-7 shows a group of men and women with their traditional dress on Borai hill. Hence, they are called *Lanjia Saora* by outsiders.

### 3.2.5 The physical features

Vitebsky has given a slight description on the physical features of the Hill *Saoras*. He states "the Hill *Saoras* have shorter bodies, some times with a light reddish-brown skin, round faces, no beard growth, and very little body hair." The women bear tattoo marks in their body especially in their cheeks and forehead. The women also wear a unique round ornament made of wood called *Tanagrulu* in cutting their ear lobes especially in festive and ceremonial occasions.

In the flow of time Hill *Saoras* have been in constant contact with many outside forces and influenced by ‘other cultures.’ Two important forces: (i) migration to Assam and (ii) Christianisation has major impact that changes the dress pattern of the Hill *Saoras*. Now the men are using shorts and pants, and women uses sari. The younger women are using blouse and modern dress purchasing from the market. The aged women are wearing lungi (skirt), blouse, and shirts which are old and rarely cleaned. All the married women are using lungi and blouse as their casual wear when they are working in the fields or at home. But the younger women basically the Christianised wear sari and blouse like the ordinary mainstream women. The present dress pattern will hardly make any distinction to identify them with their non-*adivasis* neighbours.

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Ekep in his traditional dress *Ulliakap* in front of a typical Saora house at *Dungdungar.*

A group of traditional men and women with their natural costumes.
From the foregoing discussion it is clear that changes in the features of cultural identity of Hill Saoras are already underway, although, there are certain features still remain identical. Christianity has made a major inroad into the society of Hill Saoras. It has been accepted as a new way of life and culture. It emerged as an identity within the identity. In this situation, the population need re-categorization. Therefore, from cultural point of view the Hill Saoras can be divided into two categories: (i) Traditional and (ii) Christianised or non-traditional. Besides the above, the constitution provision for reservation in jobs, education, leadership, etc. have also created a new identity consciousness among the Hill Saoras.

3.3 SETTLEMENT PATTERN

The settlement pattern of any indigenous society gives a supportive evidence of its life style and cultural identity. The habitat is one important feature of the peoples' identity.

3.3.1 Villages of the Hill Saora

The villages of Hill Saoras are situated in the inaccessible area, although there is some Kachcha road making the area little accessible, and in many cases lie hidden in forest clad and hills making it difficult to reach them except through some zig-zag steep hill paths. The hills are covered with remnants of forest patches, which are cut down for swiddening, while the valley floors have been terraced into paddy fields. Sometimes it has to climb high up out of the valley and reach at the swidden fields.

The houses are built in a long row. The rows are often arranged face to face with a broad street between. In some villages, the houses are faced towards one side i.e. towards bottom of the hills. Sometimes there are several
rows of houses with streets in between two rows, crossing each other at right angles. Sometimes the houses are arranged in rows one above the other like terrace and all the rows face to the same view. The villages of Hill Saoras are usually situated on the hill slopes facing towards bottom of the hill with plenty of paddy lands and water facilities for the necessity of human survival. Some village habitats are also found in the plains at the bottom of the hills. Some villages are still found on hill tops. The criteria of having sufficient lands-swidden and paddy land, and water facilities, for building a settlement are mainly considered by the Hill Saoras while establishing their habitat. It has been informed that in the past the village habitat of the Hill Saoras were preferably made on the top of the hills and gradually due to the increasing pressure of population and search for a settled life they came down to the hill slopes, which must be nearby bottom of the hills. The movement towards bottom of the hills was intended to fulfil the increasing need of the food to be extracted from the settled paddy cultivation.

The Hill Saoras usually prefer to build their settlement on high lands and hill slopes which are free from chances of flooding and water logging. The other considerations for selecting a site for settlement are close distance to the forest and water stream. Due to the irregular and zigzag nature of hill slopes terrace is first made and house is built on it. The funeral sites (Genuar) and cremation grounds (Kintlo) are located near to or just outside the village. The temple of Manduasum is situated inside the village. It is a deity who protects the village from the attack of wild animals and epidemics. The offering is made near this temple to several deities and spirits. It is an ersee (taboo) strictly observed by the people to eat the crops before celebrating the new/first eating festivals (abdur) such as Raganabdur (red gram new eating) and Udanabdur (Mango new eating festivals). This offering is made to
Manduasum along with Sandisum (a temple deity situated inside villages) who indeed, for the Saoras, take care of the safety and security of the villages from many fronts. Judisum is another co-deity of male and female, situated in the border between two villages to protect the life and property of villages (men and animals) from the attack of malevolent spirits and jungle deities who causes diseases of epidemic in nature and damages property of the villages. Offering is made during all the harvesting festivals. That was the only occasion where the whole villagers participated in the rituals and offered their crops to the above deities collectively.

The villages of the Hill Saoras are located mostly along the line where a forested slope meets the more level paddy land and always near a water supply or stream. The size of the villages are now varies from about 5 to 6 households in a small villages to more than 80 households in a big village.

In the past, the villages of the Hill Saoras were unilateral. The numbers of households were very limited with only one or two families. In course of time, other lineage members came and settled there. The houses are built in a row and in most of the cases belong to a single Birinda.

3.3.2 The Houses of Hill Saora

The term house is called Sing in Sora. The traditional house of the Hill Saora is a single roomed, which is rectangular in shape and fairly high. The plinth of the house is made high but the roof is kept proportionately low. The Hill Saora house is a thatched hut small in size with earthen walls and pillars, posts, beams and rafters of un-sized timber. The walls of the houses are made of stone pieces set in mud which look reddish because the plastering is done in the locally available red earth. The image no-9 shows the traditional house.
A typical traditional House of the Hill Saoras at Sagaad

Storing left (Maadaa) in traditional Saora house where all the crops, seeds and food
of the Hill Saoras. The houses are thatched with wild grass called Aallang (Themda arundinacea) available on the up hill rocky terrains. The small branches and timbers of Sal (Sargia) tree (Shorea robusta) are preferred to be used in construction of houses by the Hill Saoras. The other raw materials used for house building are bamboo (ureng), fibre of Siali (Laayal) and red sorrel (Sunsunab) as rope.

The house of the Hill Saoras gives very beautiful and aesthetic appearance. The smearing of the floor and polishing of the veranda with red soil and black colour (made of ashes mixed with mud) respectively, in artistic design by women and young girls adds to the cleanness and beauty of the Saora house. The wall above the veranda also smeared with red soil, which also gives a very artistic and beautiful look.

Almost all the houses have a single door but rarely have a small back door which remains in line with front door. The space inside the house is divided mainly into two parts: Diaising and Alungsing respectively refer to darken and lighted portions of the house. But practically very little light enter into the house. The one room house is used for cooking, sleeping and storing. There is no window in the house for which the house remains smoky, moist and generally dark throughout the day. Patnaik has asserted that the Hill Saora prefer dark interiors for fear of the ghosts and spirits. It is also believed that the ghosts and the spirits remain out of sight and the darkness can safeguard evil eyes. All the members of the family sleep at one house including unmarried adults. But it is a common practice observed that immediately after marriage the newly married couple have to build a separate house for their independent living. Another unique feature found among the

Hill Saora is that a person having more than one wife prefer to build separate houses for each wife and her children to avoid quarrel among them.

The very typical houses of the Hill Saoras are not only made for human habitation but also shared by pet animals and birds particularly pigs and fowls. In one corner (immediately after the entrance) of the house there are shelters built for pigs and fowls to protect them from wild animals which is called Gungusing. It does exist even now, though among a very few traditional and poor Saora households. With the common wall sharing with other household, Saora houses are made with high plinth. Gungusing is also built in with the plinth, which looks like a cave, to shelter their pigs and fowls.

A loft (Maadaa) is made upon the wall covering more than half of the space to keep the household belongings and valuables like cloths, ornaments, money, agricultural products, seeds, food materials, and almost all other household items; as seen in image no-1. Rest of the space kept open to get access to the Maadaa. It has not only had physical importance but also religious importance. There is a Sonnum (god) in charge of this loft, which is named after Maadaasum. It is believed that a newly married wife without performance of Gaading or preliminary ritual to the ancestral spirits can not be allowed to climb the loft and to have access of goods or properties kept over it. A central pillar in the middle of the house divides the house into two different parts. There is a ladder attached with the pillar connected to the roof top, which has high ritual importance during the mortuary rites.

Small agricultural implements and household weapons are just inserted below the roof as in image no-1. In the opposite left of the entrance and below the Maadaa the space is used for kitchen purposes. The hearth is made at one end adjoining to the wall. Above the hearth and under the
Maada there is a bamboo shelf hanging in the rope called Raandaa, used for drying many food items like leaves, maize, rice, etc. as is shown in image no-12. The sacrificial meets left from the rituals are also hanging over the hearth to dry by the heat generated from the hearth. The traditional Saara house is full of smoke. A fire is kept in all the times mostly all the year round. It is informed that there are very rare chances of getting mosquitoes inside the house due to the continuous smoke produced out of kitchen. Moreover, it is believed that the seeds kept on the Maada are protected and preserved from insects with the effects of regular smoke from the hearth. The household utensils are kept near the hearth. A number of objects such as baskets, gourd vessels, clothes and umbrellas are hanged from the roof.

Inside the house just about two three feet distance from the main door there remains a pounding hole called Anaalam. It is used for husking of paddy and other food crops for preparation of food. Besides, it has strong religious significance. Immediately after death of a person its dead body is kept on it and preliminary rituals are performed. Many in-house religious performances especially related to funerary rites and healing rituals (tedung) are performed. There is a strong belief that Anaalam makes connections and communication to the underworld with the living world through invocation by the shaman. Even among the Christianised Saora the dead bodies are kept on the Anaalan before taking it to the burial ground and messaged with turmeric paste and given bath in turmeric water.

3.3.3 Changing Pattern of the House

In due course of time when modernisation crept into the Saora territory through Christianisation and frequent contact with the neighbouring population changes has undergone in the housing pattern of the Hill Saoras.
Inside the house the bones of the sacrificial animals are hanging to be used in lean season for curry.

The Kitchen Space: A hanging shelf (Raandaar) above the hearth is used for drying food items. The ritual meats are tied in it to dry and preserve for cooking during lean period.
Christianity has brought a lot of awareness about the modern and mainstream way of life. Hence, the converts are basically following a modern way of life by imitating the life style of their mainstream (Hindu) neighbours. Their houses are much clean, hygienic and sophisticated and comparatively much better and developed than the traditional people. They build more than one room with modern design and raw materials. The houses constructed now are roofed with asbestos and plastered with cement or mud. But by and large the designs of the houses in present time are mostly following the pattern of local neighbouring population. The kitchens are made separately outside the house. The well to do family is building more rooms as per their capacity. No more shelter for pet animals and birds are built inside the houses. But the fowls are still kept inside the house by hanging from the roof even in some households of the converted Saoras. The pigs are no more sharing the rooms with human. The goods and commodities are kept on Maadaa, which is now made of with wooden shield, the design of which is different to the previous one. Rather than single room some of the able families are making more than one rooms. Anaalam has still its existence. Almost all the Christianised families and few of the well to do traditional families are using furniture like chairs, tables, cots and plastic and wooden chairs in their houses which earlier were not familiar to the Saoras. Use of tape recorder and radio are popular among youths. However, the impact of the life style of converts on the life style of the traditional Saoras is clearly visible.

The housing design and patterns of the Hill Saora is also undergoing change due to the impact of development projects such as Indira Awas Yojana and other schemes administered under Panchayat Raj and the micro-project (LSDA). Through these schemes the asbestos and Pakka houses are constructed. Now most of the houses of the converted Saoras are decorated
with posters of Jesus Christ, film actors and actresses, paintings, and other decorative antiques and flowers purchased from the market.

3.4 SOCIAL ORGANISATION

The social organisation of the indigenous community would consist of the interrelations between particular types of group, namely those groups which make social life possible. In order to meet the basic needs like food shelter and social needs like companionship, recreation, religious activities, play etc. man develop a channel or mechanism to fulfil these needs which may be called social organisations. All the community life involves methods of grouping and grading people for an effective carrying out of the various types of activities demanded by the common existence.25

The social life of the Hill Saoras is intertwined around harmonious relationship with the living as well as dead and there is a continuous process of reciprocation. The process is manifested in different social organisations and the community life is pregnant with this ideal. The ceremonies and festivals of the Saoras are the occasions when the social bonds are commended.

3.4.1 The Lineage

A group of families having a common ancestor combine to form a lineage. Lowie states that “the lineage is made up exclusively of provable blood relations, i.e., all members are demonstrably descended from a common ancestor or ancestress.”26 Lineage is the basic unit of social organization among the Hill Saora is called Birinda. The agnatic lineage system-birinda is an

exogamous unit, which refers to the extended family descended from a common male ancestor. The membership of birinda is based on birth. It is based on common blood and patrilineage.

The Hill Saoras have no clan or totemic division, no phratries and no moieties. The lineage is the only important unit of organisation on which the whole kinship structure of the Hill Saora is based on. Acharya and Mohanty in this context observed that “the most striking features of their (read Lanjia Saora) culture is that the absence of clan organisation, totemic cult and powerful presence of non-totemic agnatic lineage group called Birinda.” In traditional society a well maintained Birinda relation is viewed on the occasions of birth, marriage and death with the active participation of its members.

3.4.2 The Role of Birinda in Life Cycle Processes of the Hill Saora

The birinda has a greater role in life-cycle processes and rituals of the Hill Saora. The entire social structure is based on birinda relations. Its vital functions in rites de passage are unique to them. It has a pivotal role in the process of social interaction and cultural performance. During these occasions all the Birinda members participate and contribute proportionately or as per their will to share the financial burden of the individual family. This shows the mutual reciprocity and cooperative life among the members of the Birinda in socio-cultural occasions. In this context Seeland et. al., observed that “in the traditional society a well maintained Birinda relations is viewed in the occasions of birth, marriage, and death rites, where all the Birinda members participate and contribute proportionately or as per their will for the expenses

in the processes. This shows a form of mutual interest among all families in a Birinda who help each other and participate with each other in different social events, thus maintaining a unity.” However, the more detailed elaboration of the different stages of life cycle events is needed to understand the holistic role of Birinda as a fundamental base of social organisation.

Name giving ceremony:

The birinda has an important role to play in name giving ceremony of the Hill Saoras. The name giving ceremony is called Aanyimun, which starts only after a newborn first fall in sick. So that it can be understood that the ancestral parents have caused that illness and the time has come to name the child. All the members of the lineage participate in the ceremony. In the Hill Saora tradition the name of the grand father is given to the grand son. This is what the dead demands through the symptoms of fever (Assu) that the time has came to name the child after him. Only one child can bear the name of a grand father, if the grand father already died, not of all. The ancestral name is given to the new born baby is not only for remembering the ancestors and lineage but also to show a very close and affectionate relationships even for the dead. It shows that the birinda relationship is not only very close between the members of the ‘living world’ but also between living and the other world. This was also one of the ways to remember the name of the ancestors and count the genealogy in early days.

Worship is given to Uyungsum (the sun deity) and Ajorasum (the stream/ water deity) in this occasion, although all the ancestors are invoked and offered sacrificial worships. The baby is kept on the back of the sacrificial animals by the shaman or the father of the baby. The animal then is made to move around for some minutes and teased by the gatherings with music.
during that period. Finally the sacrifice is given in the name of the ancestors. In early days cow was preferred as the sacrificial animals but now-a-days buffalo has been popularly accepted for the purpose.

The marriage

Being an exogamous unit marriage relation within the members of same Birinda is prohibited. Intra-Birinda marriage relationship is absolutely avoided. Therefore, having sexual relationships within the members of the same Birinda is regarded as incestuous taboo (Erssee in Sora) and violation of the rule is a serious offence, invites punishment. The punishments are both supernatural and practical-legal, which are categorised into three.

First, the legal and material punishment. The role of senior birinda members is very important who first decide the matter as has been informed in many cases. If the matter is not solved by them it then is referred to the Gamang's court. The offender has to pay fine in terms of cash and an animal as generally decided by the traditional village decision making body headed by Gamang. The fine charged were only spent on common feasts among the villagers and decision-makers including the parties. In some cases the fined amount were paid to the victim.

Second, the supernatural punishment. This is the punishment not rewarded by the human power but by the supernatural and ancestral spirits (Sonnums). Supernatural and ancestral spirits guides the socio-religious norms and sanctions. Disobedience of which is a taboo (Erssee). The breach of taboo in relation to sex invites the wrath and anger of Sonnums, who causes illness to the offenders as a form of punishment. This needs supernatural way of paying the fines to the angry Sonnums in the form of ritual sacrifices.
The third category of punishment though, not popularly practiced now, were observed in earlier days. This is called social isolation. Non-obedience of the verdict of Gamang's court demands this kind of punishment. Boycott in terms of social intercourse in which the whole villagers reward non-cooperation in each and every affair. This kind of practice is found uncommon to Hill Saoras.

However, among the three categories of punishments the first is commonly acceptable and popularly practiced while the third one is very occasional. Both of these are secular punishment. The second is completely depends upon the mercy of ancestral and supernatural spirits therefore, got religious explanation.

To have physical relationships by a man with many women is not socially approved but is not regarded as taboo (Erssee) provided the women involved are not belongs to the same lineage. Pre-marital and extra-marital sexual relation outside ones own Birinda, although, is not regarded as taboo is not allowed in practice. However, there are several of such incidents of extra and pre-marital affairs found now-a-days in the villages. If marriage could not materialise within that relationships the cases of inter-Birinda tension arises. Consequently, leads the matter to the village decision making body. The fine imposed on the offenders is not necessarily supernatural but only social-material and legal.

The institution of marriage is managed and controlled by the lineage. Marriage within the same Birinda is not allowed and the breach of this principle is regarded as incestuous taboo. A partner can be chosen outside own social class and in no circumstances can marry from their own lineage. The lineage generally counts upto four to five generations. Before selection of
the partner the genealogy of both the bride and groom are explored and then can be preceded for the negotiation. The people usually prefer to choose their partners from different villages, because in early days a village was inhabited by a single Birinda.

One of the interesting and unique facts noticed among the Hill Saoras, which is exception to many other indigenous communities in India, is that the birinda of a woman always retains with her father’s lineage and does not change even after marriage and death. After death her bones and ashes are carried to her father’s village by her brothers or Birinda relatives where a menhir is erected and funerary rites are performed.

Keeping in view of the lineage principles and marriage, Elwin has critically observed that “theoretically a man should be able to marry his maternal grand-mother, his mother’s sister, a widowed daughter-in-law, his wife’s brother’s wife, and his father’s elder brother’s wife, his wife’s elder sister, his mother-in-law, his younger brother’s wife, and his father’s elder brother’s wife. But in practice this was not allowed.”29 It seems not only Birinda exogamy is the sole criteria but there are some other factors like age, affinal kin, and socio-ethical principles matters to rule the institution of marriage for social control and to maintain order in society.

The moral and ethical perception matters very much in the marriage tradition of Hill Saora. There are instances which are socially acceptable and practiced among the Hill Saoras, are not regarded as taboo. For example, marrying wife’s younger sister, elder brother’s widow and widow who does not belong to his consanguineal kin, are allowed. Of course, that needs a ritual

formality called *Gaading*, which means 'making friendship' with the spirit of the underworld wife of her present husband by offering a sacrificial worship.

**The funerary rites**

The *birinda* has a key role in and control over the funerary rites. There are separate cremation grounds (*Kintlo*) for each lineage in the villages. No other *birinda* is allowed to cremate the dead body other than who owned it. The menhirs were erected by each *birinda* in the past in a village because in early days each village was inhabited by the members of only one *birinda*. However, the menhir sites are now shared mostly in common by other *birinda* of the village. The site owned by the *Gamang* is seen in image no-13 is used by other families but the site of *Buya birinda* is not shared by any one as seen in image no-14. The *Genuar* is a stone planting site where all the mortuary rites are performed and stones are erected in the name of deceased.

The funerary rites of a person are performed by its own blood kins in his/her own village and the expenditures are shared by other families of his *birinda* on reciprocal basis. They take active part in the processes. If it is a female her body is demanded by her consanguineal kins for cremation, since she retains her affiliation with the lineage of her birth or father’s lineage. If the body is being cremated by her husband the expenditure for the rituals is shared by her father’s lineage. Her father’s *birinda* may also take the dead body to their village to perform her mortuary rites. She maintains her social position in her parents’ family even after marriage; therefore, share in the ceremonial pollution\(^30\) if anyone dies in her father’s *birinda*.

\(^30\) This is not the perception of the Hill *Saoras* like the traditional Hindu concept of pollution.
Genuar- the Menhir site belongs to Sagaad Gamang Birinda has been used by the whole villagers.

The Genuar site only meant for Buya Birinda at Sagaad. Sarat Buya, now a convert, is standing near the site.
In the mortuary rites of both the cases - male and female, the expenditure shared by the lineage members are of both in cash and kind. The contributions are basically meant for sharing the financial burden of the deceased’s family as a symbol of cooperative and communal life, include Runku (husked rice), Ragan (red gram), other small items like chilli, salt, turmeric powder, fuel wood, cash, etc., are mainly for the purpose of ritual expenditure.

The participation of all the relatives in the ritual feasts is compulsory and a mark of respect to the ‘soul’ (Puradan) of deceased. Besides, many relatives of both consanguineal and affinal kins, bring buffaloes for sacrifice in the honour of the dead and share in the feast, though, in a separate group. The group is called Panangsing/ Dayaling, which include the relatives of married daughter, married sister and many other affinal kin and friends, who may desire to participate in the ritual to show their respect to the dead. It is informed that before one decade about 30-35 sacrifices of buffaloes (Bungtel) were made in the Guar (the second) and the Karja (third) mortuary rites of the Hill Saoras depending upon the financial and social status and popularity of a person in the community. Even the persons having no consanguineal relationships bring buffalo for sacrifice because the deceased had very good friendship while he was alive, as a mark of respect towards the deceased. For instance, while Kidaba Gamang a Kudan (shaman) of Gudada died many people of the nearby Saora villages had participated in his funerals and offered buffalo sacrifice as the token of friendship. Kidaba was a Ward Member and was the traditional head of the village had good name in the areas. He was a very favourite of the villagers, generous and cooperative at the time of need and a humorous and peace loving person.
In the performance of funerary rituals the role of acolyte to the main shaman (Guarkumar/boi) is very essential. The acolyte is named, as Idai can be both male and female, which usually performed and trained for his/ her own lineage must be the member of same lineage. The role of Idai is restricted to the name giving ceremony (aannyimin), mortuary rites and Lajjap. In his observation on the Idaimaran Elwin states that as the profession (Idai) usually runs in the family and most of them are sons and grandsons of Idaimaran. The role of Idai is hereditary and limited to the family only and is trained in sitting beside the senior shaman and Idai of the Birinda. Another person who is technically expert to cremate the dead body and work as an occasional shaman is called Sigamar. The role of Sigamar is very crucial in funeral rites and rituals. This position is hereditary.

The birinda also organizes and controls certain sacrifices and rituals exclusively. The participation of all the members in almost all the rituals is common custom, though not compulsory in all. However, it is reported that all the members of Birinda have actively participated in healing rituals at least one member from a family. The Doripur for malaria like fever, Ajorapur and Atnangdakansumpur etc., are organised and participated only by the lineage members. The participation of Birinda members in each and every life cycle rituals is compulsory.

*Birinda and the Rules of Inheritance*

The role of lineage is crucial in the inheritance and distribution of property among the Hill Saoras. It is not only important for distribution of property but more importantly to authorise the inheritor to perform the socio-cultural duties like Guar and Karja after the death of his father or brother. A
case study of Agina of village Kereba having dialogue with his deceased father in the Under-world needs to be cited here.

Agina did not perform Karja for his father and delayed even after the completion of three years, the prescribed time period to perform this ritual, despite having good cropping and financial condition. One day his eight-year son got high fever. After consulting a shamanin it was found that the spirit of his father is the cause of illness. While Agina asked his father's spirit, possessed by the shamanin, about the reason of illness he (the spirit) angrily replied that: “You have everything all right at your hand. You have enjoyed good crops and all my property I left. In spite of being prosper and well up from my land and property you have not performed my Karja. Now I will take your son so that no one will be there to perform your Karja and you will be forsaken like me.” However, by realising his carelessness Agina sacrificed a pig and apologized to his father's spirit. He convinced and committed to perform the ritual in the next season and then it was said that Agina's son got well. It is evident from the case study that violation of socio-cultural obligations invites punishment. The spirit world is always there to check and balance.

The property, especially lands, is owned by the male members of the family own. Women have no share of parental property. If she is unmarried and living separately she get some share to manage her own livelihood. Only thing she gets, otherwise, is the ornament of her mother or grandmother. The lands are distributed equally among the male members of the family. The ownership can only be transferred to the next generation after the death of an oldest male member in whose name the properties are owned. However, after marriage a son has to live in a separate household and has to cultivate some
area of land separately or can work together in the field of his father for his survival. The crops produced are shared mutually or according to one's necessity.

In case of a compound family having more than one wife the lands (swidden and paddy) are distributed for cultivation among the number of wives. In that case no matter how many male child one has or not. The wife, who has no son only have daughters, either can, live together with her children or can enjoy equal share unto her death. After death her property generally distributed among other members of her husband's Birinda. In case a man is unmarried his property goes to the nearest male kin who takes the responsibility to perform all the funerary rites unto Karja after his death.

The rules of inheritance have been clearly prescribed and elaborated among the Hill Saoras to avoid any kind of conflicts and violence, which may hamper the cooperative life of the people. However, sometimes rules have been violated and conflict arose inside lineage. To challenge the conflicting situation a senior Birinda members are contacted to interfere. If it is not solved then the matter is decided by the village decision-making body where all the traditional rules of inheritance is followed to make the decision and not by arbitrary principles. There are very few cases of conflicts over the distribution of property observed among the Hill Saoras.

Another unique and effective role played by the organization of Birinda is its participation in cooperative and reciprocal activities in the economic aspects of the Hill Saoras, which will be discussed in the successive chapter.

The conclusion drawn from the above discussions is that Birinda as an important unit of social organisation plays vital role from birth, marriage and
death to the inheritance and distribution of property. With it’s traditionally
prescribed unwritten norms and principles Birinda performs a central role in
establishing order and discipline in the society. It acts as an important agency
of social control through its norms and taboo in different family or lineage
rituals and socio-cultural events.

The discussions are made on Birinda and its importance as a traditional
agnatic lineage system among the traditional group of the Hill Saoras. It
would be incomplete unless we compare its role, importance and change
among the Christianised sections of Saoras.

3.4.3 Changing System of Birinda

The system of Birinda has undergone marked changes in its
organisational rules and functions. The responsible factors are
Christianisation, modernisation, the influence of modern political system and
mainstream world out of which the major factors are Christianisation and
Panchayat Raj system.

Christianisation as an ongoing process has brought about many
changes in the indigenous society and culture of the Hill Saoras. A sizeable
population of Hill Saoras have accepted Christianity as a new form of
knowledge worldview and a way of life. As a result the traditional social and
institutional structures of the indigenous society get affected. The birinda as a
basic unit of social organisations also get affected.

The Christianised Saoras are highly motivated towards the modern
mainstream world. They see their traditional society as superstitious and
inferior. They don’t participate in any of their traditional rituals from life-
cycle to the agricultural, from ritual healing to other socio-cultural events, and
are completely prohibited by the church. They do not share in the sacrificial feasts of the traditional Saora. However, some the exceptions are observed in two different Guar ceremonies one at Kereba and the other at Sagaad (Guddaada). Some Christianised Saora participate in the funerary ritual as the mark of respect. For instance, a middle aged woman from Pangrung of Gumma Block (Gajapati) came to attend the funeral with the Panangsing party as she is the sister of the deceased. She has brought the buffalo in the honour of her elder sister and cooperated in the sacrifice of buffalo by holding its leg for skinning as seen in the image no-33 and 34. She is also enjoying the ritual dance with the Kerenideb (funeral music). However, she neither took wine nor ate the ritual food.

Another example is Paringa Sabar (Raika), a convert of 1987, who has participated in the ritual by giving a buffalo for sacrifice in the honour of dead. The woman who died was his aunt (his father’s elder brother’s wife). The researcher had a good friendship with Paringa and participated in the ritual along with him. Paringa has participated in the ritual sacrifice till the end. Meanwhile, Paringa arranged a cock and cooked through her sister (the deceased’s daughter) separately for the researcher as well as for him. In the earlier interaction he knew that the researcher does not eat buffalo meat. At the end of the Guar ceremony both of us ate together and Paringa could not eat the sacrificial meat of buffalo.

The interesting feature of the Hill Saora family is that in several families the younger generations are converted to Christianity and the older members are in tradition. Even the younger generations are not sharing the food in family rituals as has been restricted by the village Christian Mandali. Although they are living in the same family and houses their interference in
Panangsing sacrificing the buffalo in the name of deceased

Panangsing from Pangrung village sacrificing the buffalo for the dead-ancestor.
each other’s affairs does not concern much. Rarely there are some interactions
and persuasions between both the aged and their younger children to
participate in one’s own faith together and giving up the other. In fact, the
traditional Saoras, though, feeling little uncomfortable, do not conflict with
each other in this matter with their Christianised children.

The name giving ceremony of Christianised Saoras is completely
different. They do not observe the rules of Birinda strictly in naming
ceremony. The name given to the child is not ancestral but biblical. No name
of grand parents is given to a child. Only the Birinda name does exist as
surname. The shamanic practices are completely absent. The local Christian
priest presided over the ceremony named the child in Christian tradition in
the presence of the other members of the village Christian Mandalli. The child
is blessed by reading the verse of the Bible and collective prayer. This
ceremony is undertaken after twenty-one days of the birth of a child. All the
Birinda relatives including traditional Saoras are invited and share the
ceremonial feast. No sacrificial feasts are organised.

Both the groups reciprocate their relationship by contributing on the
occasion in terms of cash and kind. However, the Christianised, though,
contribute to the family celebrating traditional naming ceremony do not
participate and eat the sacrificial ritual food. This gives an indication that
even after conversion the reciprocal relationships among the birinda still alive,
although in different form.

The traditional role and relationship of birinda with the institution of
marriage has undergone change with the impact of Christianity. The
Christian Saora undertakes no traditional rites and performances in their
marriage. The only form of marriage is followed and allowed among them is
Garboisirung. It is the combination of three words; Garbiran means prayer, boi refers to the woman or here bride and sirung means marriage, which etymologically means marriage through prayer or accepting a bride by faith.

Two types of methods adopted for the selection of partner in this form of marriage. First, selection by the bride and groom themselves by mutual consent or through writing letters. Their desire to marry is conveyed to the Mandali- the organisation of the village Church and then the members and office bearers of Mandali play a leading role for negotiation and betrothal. The role of Birinda members is not so important like the traditional forms and pattern of marriage. But, the traditional principle of Birinda exogamy is still dominant and strictly followed. The second method of selection involves the proposal of parents either from bride or groom's side. In this process Mandali does not play any major role for negotiation but certainly in betrothal and performance of marriage ceremony. A remarkable change has been observed that unlike the lineage status of woman in the traditional society, a woman becomes the member of her husband's birinda among the converts.

The rules of exogamy is strictly followed, having sexual relations or committing adultery within ones own lineage is a serious sin, which attract punishment from the Christian Mandali if the case comes to its notice. The punishment given to the offenders is a public confession in the church or suspension of membership of the church.

The participation and sharing life of birinda members in the marriage ceremony and community feasts are cooperative in nature. Irrespective of their religious background all contribute and share the burden of the expenditure of family in terms of kind and if necessary cash too in the marriage feast. The ceremonial food of the Christianised sections is shared by
the traditional Saoras but not vice versa. The Christianised family also does not share the burdens of sacrificial rituals of the traditional Saoras because they want to discourage these practices.

Major changes have been observed in the role and importance of Birinda in the death and funerary rites of the Hill Saoras. Christianised groups have their own and completely different concepts of funerary rites. They do not observe ceremonial pollution. Unlike traditional Saoras participation of all the Birinda members in funerary rituals is not compulsory. There are no lengthy and sacrificial rituals like Guar and Karja which continue till the completion of three years from death. The village priests give the burial to the dead body.

With the implementation of Panchayat Raj system the role of birinda is gradually changing. Previously the intra-birinda family conflicts were decided first by the senior members of the birinda. If the cases were not decided then they were referred to the court of Gamang. But today the role of Ward Member in the village level became more important. The role of Sarapanch or Member of Panchayat Samiti is also seen in the higher level. However, in lower level the role of birinda is still having some importance to decide the intra-birinda affairs.

3.5 MARRIAGE AS A SOCIAL INSTITUTION

Marriage is one of the most important social institutions, which a Hill Saora perceives; an individual's life has to pass through. It is the inevitable aspects of life cycle processes of an individual. The concept of marriage has a distinct perception among Hill Saoras. It is understood as Sirung in Sora. An adult has given marriage not only for his biological (procreation) necessity
but also to make him to live a self-sustained and independent life. Besides, a 
son is necessary to take care of his parents in the old age and more 
importantly to perform the mortuary rites after the death of his father.

Women as the chief in-put of labour and contribute major share to the 
family economy of the Hill Saora. Marrying a woman contribute a strong 
social bond and a good helping hand to make the family economy prosper. 
Economic and social considerations are important in the Hill Saoras 
understanding of marriage, from which polygynous form of marriage took 
origin. Having more wives means having more property.

The prevalence of polygyny has been popularly practiced, although 
reducing now, among the Hill Saoras tradition of marriage. In many cases a 
person marries his wife’s younger sister (sorrorate). The father-in-law does 
not protest rather agrees with the proposal with bride price. There are no 
routines involved except in the first marriage.

Bride price is common custom in marriage. Giving a daughter for 
marrige means loosing a vital source of economy hence, the father demands 
bride price. Today the concept of bride price has gone as there is no 
customary form of marriage.

The practice of many wives comes from the nature and types of 
livelhood opportunities people have in their surrounding milieu. The Hill 
Saoras are popularly known as shifting cultivator on the hill slopes for their 
survival. To work on the hill slopes one need to work hard and needs more 
helping hands. As women are the chief input of labour and major contributor 
of family economy marrying more wives have been the common instances for 
a person who possessed more lands. The village headmen-Gamangs are
traditionally in control more land than the other household of the village. Hence, marrying more than one wife to work and look after their land.

Christianisation has brought about radical change in the institution of marriage. Reference has already been made in the preceding section in detail. Monogamy is the common and accepted type of marriage practiced by the Christianised Saora. Polygamy is strictly forbidden unlike the traditional Saoras. However, there are many cases of suspension of membership from the church due to the acceptance of second or in some cases more than two wives. It shows that in spite of conversion the traditional attitude of accepting more than one wife as a cultural practice still exist.

Marriage is a social institution has two important dimensions in the Hill Saora society-socio-cultural and economic. In the traditional perception both the dimensions have equal importance and are integrative rather than the converted group. One more important thing is observed that irrespective of their religious background, the principle of birinda exogamy is still operational. The traditional kinship character of birinda is still exists except some of the minor changes in its operational principles. Hence, the Hill Saoras are going by the customs of ‘go by blood’ while making any relationships through marriage.

3.5.1 Selection of Partner

The methods of selection of a partner by both groups of the Hill Saoras are broadly divided into two ways. First, selection by the parents and Birinda relatives. In this process it is generally observed that the parents and relatives from the groom’s side take the selection initiatives. In the past importance
was given on the bride’s skills on agriculture and household works and the
criteria of behaviour and beauty added latter.

Secondly, selection by self-choice. The youth, both male and female,
enjoys complete independence to choose his/her marriage partner and no
interference is made by anybody unless and otherwise it violates the lineage
and customary norms of the community. This method of mate selection has
been widely prevailing today. The place of selection of a partner are weekly
market place, swidden fields, working places, agricultural fields, while
moving on the roads, villages and other socio-cultural events like dance and
recreational groups. Both the traditional and christianised youth enjoy their
independence in selection of marriage partner. However, in both the cases of
selection of partner birinda exogamy is the fundamental principle followed by
the Hill Saoras.

3.5.2 Forms of Marriage

To understand the concept of marriage among the Hill Saoras it is
necessary to discuss various forms of marriage among the traditional and
Christianised Saoras. Following are the forms of marriage:

Akui sirung is the traditional and preferential form of marriage having
wider acceptance in the society. Now this form of marriage is rarely practised
because many of the younger generations are Christianised and chosen to be
married in their own tradition. Due to the impact of modernisation, education
and contact with mainstream world many youth do not prefer to marry by the
elaborate negotiations in giving wine to the bride’s father. Akui sirung is
regarded as marriage by negotiation. It involves several phases of
negotiations which start after a girl is preferred in the mind of the bride or of
his parents. *Pankui* the first step starts with the groom’s father taking a pitcher of toddy of Sago palm (*Caryota urens*) and hangs in the roof of the house of the girl’s house without the knowledge of any body. That is understood to the family of the girl that some one is interested to ask and negotiates to marry his daughter. If bride’s father desires to proceed he will drink the wine and if not can ignore it or through the pot of wine in nearest place so that the boy’s father gets the message of their unwillingness. In exceptional cases, if the girl is very impressive and have exceptional qualities, several (two to three) chances are taken to convince her father or family.

Second phase of negotiation proceeds after knowing that the wine was drunk by the bride’s father which signals the willingness for negotiation. If the visiting party goes with some *Birinda* relatives and a wine pot openly kept on the rice pounding hole (*analam*). This time if the wine is consumed together, negotiation progress further and the father of the bride demands more wine for final betrothal.

Here, an observation is made on the importance of *analam* and keeping of wine pot on it. In the religious tradition of Hill *Saora* it is a place which demands maximum respect. It is believed that through this hole the connection is made to the *Kinnaraidesa* (Underworld) and *Sargadesa* (Above world or heaven). Immediately after death the body of a person is kept on the pounding hole and invocation made to know the responsible spirit who taken away the deceased’s soul. During *Karja* a bamboo ladder is kept on the hole which touches to the roof of the house meaning thereby, to give passage to the ancestral spirits from the ‘Underworld’ to the ‘Above’. The sense of keeping wine pots on the pounding hole for negotiation means to settle the matter peacefully in a place of supernatural importance. The Hill *Saoras* therefore,
pursue and follow negotiations on customarily with respect and witness to their ancestors.

The third phase of negotiation is called *Rukudang Pankui*. On this date all the *Birinda* members of the bride and some relatives of the groom who brought huge pots of toddy enjoy the drink with the *Gamang* of bride’s village. The day of marriage (*akuidina*) fixed on that day. Betrothal is made on this day.

Fourth is the phase of celebration of marriage ceremony with dance and feast. On *akuidina* the *Birinda* relatives and friends of the boy came with bridal dress and ornaments. They also bring wine, rice and other necessary things for ceremonial feast and musical drums and instruments for enjoyment of dance and music with song. Unlike all other occasions marriage ceremony in Hill *Saora* tradition has no religious affiliation. It is secular and even the ceremony is marked as tentative or provisional in character. There is no role of Shaman and spirit. In the words of Vitebsky it is the only ceremony in life-cycle in which shamans and *Sonnums* usually play no part.\(^31\) Finally a dance party of bride’s relatives escorted to the newly married bride and groom to the groom’s house with music and dance.

*Daritap sirung* refers to love marriage or marriage by elopement. The nearest English term for *Dari* means affairs or love, primarily perceived as physical involvement of a boy and a girl through attraction towards each other. This form of selection of partner has wider existence today and practiced by more people than earlier after the spread of education and Christianity. Several instances, of both the boys and girls eloped/LEFT the villages and migrated to Assam with a hope to get a work their. Because,

\(^{31}\) P. Vitebsky, 1993, op. cit., p. 49.
large number of population of Saoras have been frequented as labourer in tea
garden even before Independence and those eloped migrated secretly with an
expectation to get a job and settled their life. However, if they return after
some days or month they are accepted in the family without much concern.
There is no ceremony and no bride price involved in this. Sometimes the
wealthy nature of the girl’s father demands arranged marriage, although with
the same boy, demands Paang-sal (taking wine) and bride price.\textsuperscript{32} However,
this form of marriage is a common practice among a good number of
Christianised Saora, although prohibited by their faith.

\textit{Dingdingboi sirung} is presently found non-existent. This is called
marriage by capture or force. The boy with the help of his friends adopted
this method for his strong infatuation for a girl to marry, in spite of the girl’s
refusal or unwillingness. She is generally captured in the market place, while
moving on the road alone or working in the swidden field and taken away in
a secrete place. It sometimes led to violent conflicts and interference of village
headman-the Gamang, to sort out the matter. After a girl stay with the boy for
some days and cohabited, she generally got married to the same boy because
no other in the locality may accept her. However, bride price was to be paid in
this form of marriage.

\textit{Pasei sirung} like Dingdingboi is almost vanished today. It is a form of
child marriage. This was generally negotiated between two affinal friends to
perpetuate their good friendship by giving marriage to each other’s children.
The father of the boy takes a pot of wine and hangs it on the roof of the girl’s
house like Pangsal. If the girls father drink that wine means proposal is agreed
to give his daughter marriage after she reaches puberty or marriageable age.

\textsuperscript{32} ibid, p. 48.
There was customs of bride price. In case the girl chosen to marry another person that person has to pay the fine to the boy’s father who had already settled the marriage in their childhood.

*Joar sirung* refers to widow remarriage. It does not involve much elaborate process and is only decided between the widow and the man of her choice. The widow usually brought to her husband’s home and a *Ganding* is performed to appease the ancestral spirits, especially to her deceased husband. *Ganding* means ‘making friendship’ with the spirit of her deceased husband. This is the only form of marriage, which involves a little religious performance. Second, without performing *Gaading* she can not be allowed to climb upon the *Maadaa* (the loft, where food crops, seeds and household properties are stored) and to have access to family property. She also can not be allowed to participate in the religious events of the family without *Gaading*.

*Gandamna sirung* is another form of marriage also have been practiced by a sizeable number of population of the Hill *Saoras*-both Christianised and traditional. It is another form of love marriage in which a girl played a major role. After some preliminary interaction a girl is motivated and fascinated towards the boy and suddenly comes and lives with the boy. If the boy is not willing to keep her as his wife he has to avoid or remove the girl from his house and if desired so, a *Gaading* has to be performed on behalf of the girl. No formal marriage ceremony is there. No bride price is given because of the voluntary initiative from the girl’s side. However, this is another common trend found today among the Hill *Saoras*.

*Garboi sirung* is a customary form of marriage followed among the converted group of Hill *Saoras*. The term *Garboi* is derived from *Garbiran* meaning prayer and *boi* is used as suffix for female, which etymologically
means accepting or choosing of a wife through prayer. It is a modified form of *Akui sirung*. Marriage ceremony is presided over by the Pastor among Baptists and Father among the Catholic. The ceremony of ring exchange is hardly different to the mainstream Christian marriage. A *Garboi sirung* is observed at *Guddaadaa* as shown in the image no-15. There is no concept of bride price rather the groom is given some gifts both in cash or kind by bride's family. However, either Christianised or traditional the sharing of common feasts, singing and dancing are the part of entertainment in the accepted forms of marriage ceremonies.

From the above discussion one interesting and remarkable change found in the institution of marriage and kinship that in the Christian *Saara* tradition is that after marriage the *Birinda* of a woman changed to his husband's *Birinda*, unlike the traditional *Saoras*. After her death her funerary rites are performed by the husband's lineage.

The customs of marriage among the traditional *Saora* is secular in character that involves no shaman, no spirit and no sacrifice except in case of *Gaading*. *Akui* was the most acceptable and customary type is very rarely found today. The changes occur not only because of the impact of Christianity but also due to the spread of modern education and their contact and socialization with other mainstream societies. The traditional process of elaborate negotiations by giving wine is felt as inferior by the *Saora* youth. Secondly, there has been a common tendency toward *Dariboi sirung*, *Gandamna sirung* and *Garboi sirung*. Most of these reduces and ignores the role of parents, who are leading traditional way of life. Hence, *Akui sirung* is seriously degenerated. Widow Remarriage is rarely seen today.
Garboisirung (Marriage by prayer): A marriage in Christianised tradition at Guddaada.
There are some contradictions found in some cases while studying the institution of marriage among the Hill Saoras, especially while comparing between the traditional and christianised population. There are strict rules of marriage prescribed in each sections of the society but the violation of rules is not uncommon.

First, polygyny was a common practice among the traditional group of Saora on economic consideration. But the same is regarded as a greater sin by the Christianised and prohibited in principle. The contradiction starts while many of the first and second generation converts maintaining polygynous life and many of them have been suspended from the Church membership after accepting second wives. There seems a tendency of traditional way of perceiving a social life is still in its existence.

Second observation goes on about the age at marriage. Previously, although child marriage was a practice, it was very occasionally practising. The ideal age of marriage at Elwin’s time was sixteen or seventeen for the boy and fifteen or sixteen for the girl.33 We have observed many examples of marriages in which the age of women are more than that of the men. The age of marriage has been reduced to thirteen or fourteen for girls and sixteen or seventeen for the boys. However, these are mostly found in case of love affairs leading to marriage. Susanta Gamango of Angara has a good observation to be cited. Susanta states that “most of the boys and girls are developing affairs in early age say 13 to 14 years of age. This is very common among the school going, especially from seventh or eighth class onwards. This teen-age affairs/infatuation distracted them from keeping concentration on their study, which consequently led to marriage in immature age and faced difficulties in

33 Elwin, 1955, op. cit., p.54.
managing their family life. Many of them migrate in search of jobs outside the State.” Susanta also observed that “besides school going children, village Church is also the meeting place where this kind of affairs developed and now there is large-scale practice of Daribo sirung. But church in principle has prohibited these practices.”

Third, there is another reason for the fact that education awareness among the Hill Saoras is much better now than earlier. Especially, the awareness among the parents to send their children to school is quite satisfactory. The educational trend of girl child is very positive today. But the most disheartening factor is that almost majority of them have been unable to go beyond high school. That is because of the poor quality of education and teaching environment most of them could not pass tenth examination. This in fact blocked their road for higher education and may consequently cease the path of bringing the Hill Saoras into the mainstream national development. However, it has been a surprising fact that in spite of some degree of education awareness the age of marriage has been reducing especially among those adults who have been socialized with a Christian way of life. It is also noticed that most of the Christianised and school going children have rarely had the interest to work in their swidden land and paddy land. They youths who left their study before tenth are feeling inferior and shy to work with their parents in the agricultural field. However, their involvement in love making and developing affairs in the villages out of nothing has been a common trend today, is the explanation given by many older generation Saoras.
3.6 FAMILY AS A BASIC UNIT OF SOCIAL ORGANISATION

Family is the most fundamental social unity in every society. In indigenous society the role of family is very important for its economic and socializing role. It is vital for the agriculture and other economic activities for a forest dwelling society. All the members including men, women, and their growing children work together in agricultural field to maintain their subsistence. Unlike the modern mainstream society family is the most vital institution to play multiple roles. Socialisation, learning of ritual performance, agriculture practice, socio-cultural norms and so on.

The children are socialised in participating in the agricultural and collection activities with their parents and elders. They imbibe the knowledge and techno-cultural efficiency through practical observation and involvement in the work process. The Hill Saora mother is fond of her child and always carries her child in her cradle wherever she goes to work as shown in image no-16. As the child grows she or he gets socialise with the work tradition and techno-cultural know-how. The role of a woman in the Saora family is evidently more important than a man. She works both for the household and agricultural and other economic activities.

Detailed mention has already been made on lineage—the extended family, and its role in different life-cycle processes. The role of Birinda as most vital to regulate different institutions and socio-cultural events through its customs and taboos has already been explained. However, the concept of family as a small and fundamental unit of social organization in Hill Saora society and its typologies needs to be mentioned.
Mothers Love for Baby: A Saora mother always carry her baby in her cradle wherever she goes.
The near synonym of the term family is Kutumi. Which derived from 'kudu' means give birth or coming into being and 'tum' means reciprocity or cooperation. The etymological meaning of the term Kutumi is that the living together of male and female with reciprocal relationships for the purposes of procreation in a permanent social bond. Many scholars see Birinda (lineage) as synonym of family. But what we have found is different. The birinda is known as extended family means a collection of families which is not synonym of family. Family is understood by the local Sora as Kutumi. They are conceptually different and understood by the Hill Saoras differently.

Kutumi is perceived as the union of male and female with the aim to perform certain social duties, the members of which form a single household, living under one hearth and share their food in a common kitchen. Hence, making Birinda (lineage) similar to Kutumi (family) by Elwin, Vitebsky, Sitapati, Bhupinder Singh, and Acharya and Mohanty is seemingly ambiguous.

The nature of family is patrilocal, patriarchal and patrilineal. Jujukukud is the nearest term for patriarchal that means the lineage is descended from an oldest male ancestor. Juju means grandfather which means the lineage of the family, which counts from grandfather’s generation.

3.6.1 Types of Family

The nearest Sora word for nuclear family is Abakuku or Abasing. Aba means single or one and kuku means division or separation and sing means house. The meaning is thereby refers to a division of separate unit from the main family. The most numerically dominant form of family is nuclear type. This type of family has been the common existence among both the
Christianised and traditional Saoras. There has been a common custom that after marriage a son has to build his own house and live in a separate household. There is no cause of quarrel or coercion for separation with the parents or brothers. This shows the Hill Saora culture of making an adult, after marriage, to live an independent and self-sustained life.

Unlike the dominant culture like Hinduism, Islam or Christianity the uniqueness of nuclear family among the Saoras is that it originated not from quarrel or conflicts over property or for the motive of accumulation and private property. To make an adult to be able to manage his livelihood and social responsibility in a self-sufficient manner is the fundamental perception of nuclear family. He is therefore, given marriage after being capable of managing all the agricultural works for his own survival.

The system of joint family is very rarely found today. Even in the past the system of joint family was not customary and hardly existing. The choice of nuclear family was automatic and a tradition. Hardly two to three joint families are found in a big village.

The very popular form of family found among the Hill Saora in the early days was compound family. Even today, this type of family is found in some extent. The Christianised Saora though restricted for this practice, indeed accepting more than one spouse as has been evident from their suspension of membership from the church.

The compound family has been very popular among the traditional group in which a single male having many spouses; each spouse lives with her own children in a separate house. The lineage is controlled in the name of single male household in this system of family. The economic importance it
had earlier has lost its importance today and now practiced only for pleasure and developing extra-marital love affairs. The case studies in this context are many. The case study of the life of Saliman Raika is given by Junesha Sabar of Sagada bears importance to mention. Saliman is a 45 years old convert, working as Secretary, Sagada G.P. Out of seven wives, presently; he is possessing five wives each of them living separately. Two of them left him earlier. Besides, this he has lots of extra marital affairs in the areas. He is always mobile and frequently visited not only the Saora villages of his own G. P. but also other Saora villages of Gunupur Block. He is a humorous but very romantic person, as has been told by many as well as personal observation through long friendly interaction with him during 1994-95 and recently, 2002, October -January. For this reason he has been suspended from Sagaad Baptist Church and now participating in traditional rituals and claiming himself as a traditional Saora or a 'Hindu'. Although his late father had some land, he was not a person from Gamang lineage—the economically rich family. Economy is not at all a criterion in this case.

3.6.2 Socialisation

The Hill Saoras are the lovers of children observed in their family and social life. The parents have very strong psychological attachment with their children. They can not tolerate the illness of their children and can go to any extent to cure them, either a small sacrifice or a big one. They carry their children in the cradle from swidden field to the ritual gathering. However, with the increase of age the children get socialise in the agricultural and allied works by directly imitating to their parents and seniors. Learning, in traditional Saora usage, through direct observation and imitation by the
children from the family is the meaning of education and socialisation for them. Two instances have been observed are mentioned below.

First, Samanti, a small girl aged three and half years of village Manengool while playing with her peer group was pretended to made the action of husking rice with a stick in making a pounding hole in the village street. While she was asked 'what are you doing Sumanti?' she shied away but replied that, I am husking Kamboor to cook gruel (Uabkul). She also wrapped a towel around her waist as sometimes the young women have wrapped the sari while they are husking the rice or anything of that sort. Thus, the socialization of the girl child goes in the way of imitation of behaviour and work tradition in her family and living surrounding.

Second, Janemi a six years old girl of Gudada, who was pretending like to invoke or perform a ritual of curing disease. She was sitting by stretching the legs straight saying some thing like invocation of names. While asked through Ilsu, a man from Sagada, the action of the girl was interpreted as healing rituals and she was invoking the Sonnums to get her peer friend cure from fever. This is the process socialisation of a child goes on.

The Hill Saoras do not have any dormitory like institution like the Juangs, Gonds and Dongria Kondhs, the role of which can be vital in the process of socialisation of the adults and youths. The socialisation of the Saora child starts from the family. The socialisation of the children starts from the agricultural fields as they are most frequently carried by their parents to the swidden fields. They also learn the ritual activities when their mother or father is carrying them to the ritual sites where common gatherings and participation takes place. As the child grows he or she imitate and learn from the activities of her/ his father, mother or family members or anyone within
the family. The grown of boys or girls take care of the infant or small baby while her mother or father is out of home or went to the field. The small girls learn the cooking work and cleaning of utensils and house from her mother or elder sister.

3.7 OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY

The term property in Sora is understood as Biti, which includes all kinds of property. In traditional usage property mainly refers to landed property namely swidden plots, terrace and paddy land. The lands can not be divided or ownership can not be transferred before the death of the father. Of course, that can be cultivated and shared among the households. The lands are distributed equally among the brothers after the death of their father.

The ownership of property always goes to the male members of the family. Women do not get the share of father’s property although they are chief contributors of family economy. If a person has no son and having only daughter his property will go to the next male of his Birinda after his death or after the marriage of his daughters which ever is latest. Therefore, a perception of social life is that a son is preferred in the family who will inherit the parental property and will undertake their Guar and Karja ceremony after death.

A unique and exceptional principle of inheritance is found among the Hill Saoras. That in case of a person having many wives the properties is distributed equally among wives but not among the number of male children individually, although the common rules of inheritance prescribe male ownership, after death of their husband. Of course, the ownership is temporarily given to the wives. It does not consider how many male children
one has. The woman who has only girl child can retain her share until the marriage of all her daughters. The property will then be distributed among other Birinda members. Women are not entitled to get the share of father’s property. The only thing they have the right (customary) is the ornaments and metal objects of their mother.

With the development of market economy and modernisation the new income (Tanartum) options for the Hill Saoras families has been created. The individualistic and accumulative attitude of property has taken a front stage. Although the concept of individual ownership of property has already entered into the Saora society, the communal or cooperative feature of their economy has still have some existence if one observes the life style of the community carefully. The cooperative system of labour still exists in its original form. The sharing and caring life among the Saoras is unique like many other tribal communities in India. However, the conflicts over the property occurs in a very rare occasions.

3.8 DEATH RITES: DIFFERENT PHASES

As soon as a person dies a gun shots fire, if available, and an orchestra of drums and oboes is assembled to play the ‘death beat’ (Kerenid-deb). People immediately gather leaving all their works once they hear the unique sound of music and gun shots. Members of Birinda prepare for the cremation. The Birinda and neighbouring women massage the dead body with turmeric paste and Karanja (Pongamia glabra) oil and washed in cooling turmeric water. The dead body is dressed in new or clean clothes. The massaging of the corpse is generally done from head to toe but not vice versa. Massaging from toe to head is believed to be a taboo (Erssee). The Hill Saora believes that the ‘life force’ (Ji’en) of a person’s body leaves through the toe. So to give oil massage
to the corpse from the head to the toe is to give a smooth passage of the spirits of the dead to live in Underworld (Kinnaraidesha).

The corpse is taken to the cremation ground (Kintlo) of the lineage. The wood collected for burning of the dead body are preferably Karanja (Pongamia glabra) and Mango (Mangifera indica) including any other trees but never the Janda tree. It is believed that if Janda wood is used for burning the corpse the spirit can never come back at the events of ritual worships from the Underworld. However, Karanja is the most favourite tree for the ancestral spirits; it is the abode of ancestral spirits. In the Menhir (Genuar) sites, therefore, Karanja trees are found in many numbers. Its oil is used as body oil, for massaging ailments, bone setting and other medicinal purposes. The oil is also used as fuel in the sacred lamp during the Guar and Karja ceremony.

The dead body is set fire by the ‘pyre-lighter’ (Siga) who is technically expert in the art of burning the corpse. In the next morning women pour the water on the ashes to ‘cool the soul’.\textsuperscript{34} The ashes and bones are buried in the cremation ground.

Death ritual among the Hill Saora is a very elaborate affair. The mortuary rites are followed in three steps, which take three years for the final step. The dead never takes immediate farewell from its living kin, therefore, attachment sustains for about three years until the final death ritual. The three steps of mortuary rites are named after three rituals: Abguite, Guar and Karja.

\textit{Abguite} is the ritual performed immediately after death. The dead body is taken to and kept over the pounding hole (Analam) strait and flat and the head facing towards the door. The ritual starts by the shaman/ shamanin

\textsuperscript{34} Vitebsky, 1993, op. cit., p. 49.
before taking the corpse for cremation to know the cause of death and the
spirit who is responsible for the death. *Idai* (the assistant to funerary shaman)
with the help of *Guarkum* (funerary shaman) invokes the spirit by using Bel
leaves (*Aegle marmelos*) to know about the cause of death. The ritual is
completely in-house performance, basically on the mortar hole. The
*Guarkomboi* in the next day of cremation lead the soul of the dead to his or her
house. After reaching the deceased house she enters trance and the soul of the
dead passes into her body. She is interrogated by bystanders about the
circumstances and causes of his death.

The term *Guar* is derived from ‘*Gu*’ means planting or burying and
‘*Aar*’ a contraction of ‘*arangan*’ means stone, which combinely means the
planting of stone or erection of menhir. The primary feature of the ritual is to
plant a long flattened stone in the name of deceased and to admit its soul into
the Underworld. A flatten stone is escorted by an acolyte at *Sagad* is seen in
image no-27 before the day of *Guar* and in the image no-28 the relatives are
making leaf cups for the next day. The ceremony continues for two days both
inside and outside the house.

The *Guar* is the most important ceremony which needs an elaborate
performance and heavy sacrifice of animals. This involves heavy financial
burden on the economy of the Hill *Saora*. It is the second mortuary rites in
which the shade (*Kulban*) of the deceased is admitted into the ancestral spirits
(*Sonnums*) and given the freedom of Under World.

The *Guar* ceremony needs heavy sacrifice of buffaloes, the number
sometimes vary according to the economic status and popular relations of the
person in the society as has already given in the case of *Kidaba*. Even during
1994-95 this researcher has observed about 20 buffaloes were sacrificed in
Idaimar-the acolyte escorting the stone to Genuar site with Kerenideb before the day of Guar ceremony at Sagaad.

Sharing the drink and making of leaf cups with all the Birinda members for next day celebration.
Debdingmar (the music party) escorted the Guar stone enjoying toddy at Genura site.

Escorting all the belongings of the deceased with customary dance and music.
Funeral site (Genuar) at Sagaad where the Guar ceremony is celebrated. The shaman and acolyte are initiating invocation.

Sacrifice of buffalo in the name of deceased
several villages of the study area in each mortuary rites. It has recorded that the village Dungdungar witnessed seventeen buffaloes sacrificed in a Guar ceremony in 23rd February 1995. The Guar ceremony of Ananta Gamang of Kereba held on 12th January 2002 was followed with the sacrifice of six buffalos, which shows the reducing number of sacrifices. The image no-17 to 26 shows different steps followed during Guar at Kereba and image no-29 to 34 showing Guar and sacrifices offered at Sagaad.

In case of the death of a woman the mortuary rites is performed by the relatives of father's Birinda as she is the member of her father's Birinda but not of her husband. If it is celebrated in her husband’s house the same expenditure has to be bear by her father’s birinda. Thus, there is no escape from this religious expenditure and impoverishment the

The Karja, the last major mortuary rites of the dead and marks the end of death ritual cycle. The ceremony observed continuously for three days and three nights. It is organised by the villagers once in three years generally after the harvest is over and plenty of food and other agricultural products are gathered to meet the expenditure.

The suitable time for commemoration of Guar is from January to March. It is organised for a particular mass of spirits, of those who died in the last three years. In comparison to Guar, Karja ceremony is the most elaborate which involves huge sacrifices of buffaloes that needed hefty expenditure. This also involves largest participation of Birinda relatives and friends for longer duration say continuously for 3 days but it takes 15 to 20 days from preparation to end of ritual.
Nuni, Gamang of Kereba- a Guarkumboi (Guar shamanin) invoking and performing the first step of her husband Ananta’s Guar ceremony in the first day.

Kerenideb: A special music played in all the funerary rites is now playing in the Guar ceremony of Ananta Gamang at Kereba.
Sacrificing the buffalo in the name of Ancestors and preparing the meet for ritual feast.

Genuar site at Kereba where the Guar is performed.
Cooking food separately for the Ancestors in Guar ceremony.

Nuni weeping and sharing the sorrow and sufferings before the Ancestor-husband in his Guar ceremony.
Sharing Equal: Distributing the meat of all qualities equally as the norm of the society.

Panangsing: Praying and offering of food to the Ancestors before eating.
Biding Farewell from the Ancestor: Age and sex has no bar in ritual dance. At the end of ritual the Panangsing taking farewell with feasting and merry making.

Panangsing from Patili taking farewell after end of the Guar ceremony at Kereba.
The animals that are sacrificed are procured from local scheduled caste community (Doms). During 1994 February 26th a Karja festival was organised in the village Manengool where 21 buffaloes were sacrificed in the name of deceased (Dalima Dalbehera). Birinda relatives and Panangsing (the relatives living in other village) gathered those sacrificial animals. This huge sacrifice of buffaloes gives the people heavy financial burden and they have to face with economic exploitation from the buffalo trading Dom. Many of the converted Saoras, who are no more following this tradition argued that the huge sacrifice of animals in each and every occasion as unnecessary and burdensome which created poverty and weaken the backbone of their already poor economy. But one thing is clearly observed that in each occasion other family and relatives of the Birinda in terms of cash and kind share the financial burden of the household. This shows the cooperative and communal life of the Hill Saoras as a unique symbol of their culture.

The Lajjap: This ritual is very much associated with agriculture. Although it is not the part of funerary rituals it is performed (immediately) after Karja to seek the goodwill of the ancestors as they are appeased in the Karja according to their wishes. While the Sonnums are happy it is high time to take a chance and seek their help and good wishes for good cropping. The Idaikum shaman basically performs this ritual. He invokes the ancestral spirits especially, for whom the last Karja was performed to seek their blessing or good ‘eyes’ for good cropping and harvesting in agriculture. This ritual is arranged by each family and conducted by their family shaman-Idaikum. The Lajjap is not performed for the purpose of swidden cultivation but limited to cultivation of paddy.
The sacrifice is made partly inside the house near the icon (Idital) and partly at the paddy field that must belong to a leading member of the lineage. The field must be owned by the person in whose family any death has occurred during the preceding two years. A small clearing is made amidst the growing or nearly ripened rice and ritual is offered to the Labosum (the earth deity) and ancestral spirits on that place. In village Guddaadaa Lajjap was organised on 18th November 2002 in the field of late Kidaba. The Idaikum stated invoking by saying that: “we have taken all cares to make you happy; we have done everything for your pleasure; we have given everything at your Karja, from wine to buffaloes, from rice to cock we have given to you and fulfil all your need and desire. Oh Kittung, oh Sonnum, oh Buyangji, oh Jujungji now we are praying you to see our happiness. To watch our crops and give us good productivity and protects those from evil eyes and insects. Ripen our paddy properly so that we will harvest it and feed our hungry children.” It gives the idea that good agriculture can depend upon the happiness of supernatural entity. In other words, the material life can be achieved not only by the physical effort but also by the blessings of the ancestral and supernatural spirits. Therefore, the economic prosperity of the Hill Saora involves the knowledge of both physical or technical and supernatural or non-technical in totality.

3.9 POLITICAL SYSTEM AND DECISION MAKING BODY

Before the emergence of mainstream and modern political system every traditional societies were ruled by their ‘homo-politicus’ organisations to maintain discipline and manage law and order for the peaceful living in the society. That can better be said as indigenous political system or traditional or people’s Panchayat.
The homogenous Hill Saora village is an independent, autonomous and self-sufficient socio-political unit with remarkable cohesion and continuity. The village organisation also possesses, a well-defined territory, a hierarchy of responsible and respectable aristocracy and leadership and traditional village council composed of family heads.

The Hill Saora as an indigenous community has its own political system and decision-making body at village level. Although this society is by and large non-hierarchical, its political system shows a hierarchical structure that is headed by an 'aristocratic' family chief. Singh has argued that "one of the main characteristics of the rank society is that positions of valued status are limited,"35 which conforms to the Hill Saora society as rank society. The chiefs are known by various names the most common being the Gamang. In some villages Buya is the chief and Dalbehera in some other villages. The Gamang Birinda is not found in all the villages. Buya, although, in early days was the religious head, has today lost its importance completely. He was a priest, in his secular capacity, the head of a separate quarter in a village.

The headman holds considerable powers in the maintenance of law and order and peace and good government in the village. Although he is the man of great influence and wields authority and power, he is not authoritarian in his decisions on problems concerning the village affairs. Every decision is taken by consensus in consultation with village elders and not by majority vote: The Gamang and Buya are not very different from the common people of the village except for their headship in secular and religious matters. Like any other person they too work hard to make their livelihood.

The position of Gamang or headman-ship in the villages is hereditary. The word Gamang in Sora means economically rich and socially important man who is regarded as Sudabisaramar (chief decision maker). It always chose the senior most male members of the lineage. Though the eldest son has the right to succeed the position yet in case he does not have the necessary ability to perform these functions, he can be disentitled from occupying his post and the same may be offered to his younger brother. Gamang is the supreme decision-maker Dalbehera is the second having supportive role to the Gamang as a second chief. Karji, the third, who gives information to the villagers and to his senior, Dalbehera, works as a messenger. But in some villages Dalbehera acts as the head because of the absence of the Gamang irinda. However, all the positions in the hierarchy were ascriptive in character.

The political system in the village of Hill Saara plays a very crucial role in conflict resolutions and making decisions over the disputes. There are cases of disputes over landed property and inter Birinda social conflicts which solved in the court of Gamang. Dispute related to marriage or extra marital or illicit relations are also decided by the Gamang's court. Gamang was respected not only because of his political power and headmanship but for his possession of land and economically dominant position in the society.

During British period the government had recognized the post of Gamang as Chief of the villages who were acting as the intermediary between people and government. In Gunupur sub-division there were some powerful Gamangs who had received turban from the government. They were recognized and respected as the local Kings. The Gamangs of Patili, Rebjingtal and Sagaad were the powerful amongst whom Sridhar Gamang of Sagaad was the most powerful. Sridhar was not only influential in Sagad area but also in
the whole Hill Saora pockets of Gunupur taluk. The people carried him in palanquin to meet the then Maharaja of Jaipur. Manasi Raika of Sagad told that those people who could not pay the fine as an offender in any matter were working as a bonded labour (khambari) in the field of Sridhar Gamang in exchange he paid the fine amount in cash and kind to the villagers. The punishment given for various offences consists of levy of fines in the form of toddy (sap of Caryota urens) or Mahua (Madhuca longifolia) liquor, goat and buffalo, which were offered to the village deities and a feast was prepared in which all people of the village take part. The community feast serves the purpose of preserving village solidarity.

3.10 CHANGES IN POLITICAL SYSTEM AND DECISION MAKING BODY

The traditional system of governance has lost its importance in recent days, although was found functional during eighties. The traditional role of Gamang has been marginalised. The influence of Christianisation, Panchayati Raj system and modern legal system are the major causative factors that enforced large scale impact on this traditional institution and decision making system.

The involvement of Church in the process of decision-making and conflict resolution plays a very important role among the Christian Saoras. In departure from the traditional the converts have their own judicial and management mechanism to maintain order and peace in their socio-political life. They do not respect traditional system of Gamangism, rather go to church where the matters are settled amicably without fine peacefully by 'faith'. The participants are senior Mandali members and office bearers of the village Church. But that is limited to the church and its converts only. No
participation of the traditional group is allowed their and the matters which concerns the affairs of whole villagers have a different mechanism to work. Panchayat Raj is playing a better role. The Ward Members resolve many disputes in village level and Sarapanch in G.P. Of course the senior Birinda member of Gamang still invited to participate in all the occasion of decision making as a symbol of traditional respect to the Gamang family. Although any one can participate in the election majority of the representatives are from the Gamang lineage holding the position of Sarapanch, Ward Members and Member of Panchayat Samiti; may be because of their more participation in the process.

3.11 RELIGIOUS LIFE OF THE HILL SAORA

Religion is the most important and inevitable item of Hill Saora society. Without understanding their religion one can not understand any other aspects of Saora life. Every aspects of their life are interrelated with religion. They believe in supernatural and ancestral spirits, which they called Sonnums. However, the English concept God is not ostensibly similar to the Hill Saora concept of Sonnum.

There is some ambiguity among the scholars on the existence of Supreme God/ deity among the Hill Saoras. Elwin in his study has reported that although there variations of supreme gods and spirits, there is a common deities i.e., Sun deity (Uyungsum), Angaisum (Moon deity), Gadjangsum and Daramasum who are regarded as supreme in the Saora religious culture. The Kittung is the near synonym of the concept of God used by the Hill Saora. In different parts (locality) different deities are considered supreme. Even from village to village these variations are observed. Moreover, there can be no
standard catalogue for these Gods, for its composition continually changes as new ones are introduced and old ones are forgotten.36

The religion of the Hill Saora is a very expensive affair. Every ritual must be followed by a sacrifice. The supernatural and ancestral spirits are the cause and cure of disease.

The Sonnum is the common name used for the Saora deities and spirits—both ancestral and supernatural. It is used as suffix against the name of each deity. There is wide range practice of shamanism. The numbers of female shamans are more popular than male. The Saora religious events and rituals are always followed by dialogue with the spirits. The shamans are the medium of conversation between the under world and the living world. The happiness and sorrow of Saora family depends upon the mercy of ancestral and supernatural spirits.

Christianity as a new way of life entered into the Saora territory before Independence. Initially its impact on the Hill Saoras was very negligible even after long time. The last two decades have shown a major shift from traditional faith to the Christianised perception of life. Many of the younger generation of the Hill Saoras are converted to Christianity. They have their own religious institutions and way of the life. More detailed are discussed else where in this thesis.

3.12 THE SAORA ICON AS THE ABODE OF SPIRITS

The religious philosophy and worldview of the Hill Saora is strongly reflected in their wall painting icon/art. The icon is called Iditaal or Itaalan, which means writing or painting. The wall facing the door in almost all the

36 Das: 1968, Adibasi, p.16.
houses has a sacred and ritual icon. *Iditaal* is the home of the spirits and deities. The art has depicted the images of ancestors and gods in different levels and according to the hierarchy of positions. The objects and images drawn in the *Iditaal* are *Sonnums* in the form of human, different animals like elephants, horses, dogs, snakes, trees, guns, archers, gunmen, even vehicles such as by-cycle, car, etc., are having the mythical and religious linkages within the traditions of Hill *Saora*. The birds especially peacock (*Maaraa*) is frequently seen in this ritual art. There is also a sacred pot called *Daanki* hanging before the icon is used for keeping rice, pulses and other crops with the meaning to give food for the ancestors and gods. The pot is called *Sonnumdang* which means food pot of the *Sonnums* (ancestral and supernatural spirits). Many in-house rituals are performed near the icon out of which first harvesting festivals of *Raganabdur* (red-gram) and *Udaanabdur* (mango) are compulsory to perform near the *Iditaal*. In Dungdungar Putti is performing *Raganabdur* is seen in image no-35. The person who usually draw this icon has a professional position in the society is called *Itaalmaar*. The art is regarded as sacred in *Saora* religion which represents the house of deities and spirits.

Changes have taken place in the housing pattern of the people due to the impact of development projects such as housing scheme in Indira Awas Yojana and other schemes administered under Panchayat Raj and the micro-project development plan. The changing housing pattern mostly following their mainstream neighbour. Now in most of the houses one will find the film posters, photographs and other decorative objects in the outer wall of the family. The painting of new icon (*Iditaal*) is hardly seen. The traditional artists those were drawing the icon are no more seem to be doing these profession.
The Saora icon: the abode of spirits and deities is worshipped by a shamanin on the occasion of first harvesting festival of red gram (*Raganabdur*).
With the change of culture and belief system especially among the younger generation this traditional ritual painting has undergone serious decline.

3.13 SPECIALISTS OF HILL SAORAS

The Hill Saora society has many specialists whose roles are very important and essential in different socio-cultural and political events. The role of shamans, especially female shaman is very common and popular. She mostly performs the magico-religious practices through spirit trance. Both the shaman and shamanin have several sub-categories divided according to the performance of rituals. The shaman is known as Kudan in which the suffix mar and boi are used for male and female respectively. The male shaman is known as Kudanmar, who perform the rituals with possession of the spirits (except Guar and Karja). A few of them perform without possession of spirits who have no tutelary in supernatural (other) world. The shamans are qualified to perform great rituals mostly the devil or powerful malevolent (comparatively) spirits like Rratusum (ghost spirit), Labosum (earth deity), Jadasum (stream deity), Judisum (border deity of the village) Mandusum (village deity), Mardisum (deity of cholera), etc. The Tanaikumar is entitled to perform witch worship in healing the victim of sorcery. The Regammar is known as the medicine man who gives herbal medicines to cure the diseases. The name of Regamars also referred according to the kind of diseases they are specialised. For instance, a witch medicine man is called by the name of Tanairegamar who is an herbalist but not a witch shaman. The Sigamar is an expert in cremation of the dead and an associate to perform the funeral rites along with the other main funerary shaman. Idaimar is an acolyte who assists in the funerary rituals is basically the member of the same Birinda. Italmar or Idimar is a person who is specialised in painting the ritual icon in the Saora
houses called Idital. The role of Italmar is culturally very important. Buya is the traditional priest who officiates over the collective village ceremony such as offering of seed before sowing and harvesting festivals. The position of Buya is hereditary. Gamang was the political head, specialists in decision making and governing the affairs of a village. He was the secular head with great social and cultural importance. The specialists of the Hill Saoras are the bearer of esoteric knowledge and are very much crucial in the functioning and services of the society. All these positions are non-hereditary except the Buya priest, Gamang headman and Sigamar, a corpse cremation specialist.

3.14 AESTHETIC AND RECREATIONAL LIFE

The aesthetic and recreational lives play a very important role in the socio-cultural and philosophical life of the Hill Saoras. The festivals and ceremonies are important part of it, mostly celebrated during and immediately after harvesting season. This is the period in which people get a bit of leisure as well as financial support from the harvesting of crops to celebrate the rituals and happiness. Therefore, all the Guar and Karja festivals of the Hill Saoras, which needs huge expenditure of money and time, are undertaken usually from January to March. The first harvesting festival of red-gram (Raganabdur) celebrated in the month of December. During leisure time Saora visits friends and relatives and enjoy their company with feasting and drinking. Hospitality of guest has a special place in their socio-cultural traditions.

For recreational and aesthetic pleasure Hill Saora does not see any specific time. Whole the year, as Saora says, work keep continue and does not leave them completely free. They are always busy in one thing or the other. They enjoy the dance and singing while working in the field or coming back
to the home in the evening. The sounds of flute and Gagerai are expected from the forest clad at any time of the day from the cattle grazer. During the dark night the sounds of the enchanting music comes from the top hills accompanied with songs and dance. In the chilli winter night near the burning fire close to temporary hut of the swidden plots Saora enjoy dancing, singing by playing musical instruments like drums, Gagerai, Tretepe, Jambungrai, etc. to forget the loneliness and tiring labour of the day. It is believed that drinking toddy is the inevitable part of recreation and entertainment without which the spirit of the Saora cannot be recharged. No music, dance and song can go without drink. The sap of Salap tree (Caryota urens) is not only intoxicate the body and mind of the Saoras rather stimulate the accuracy and harmonise the rhythm between song kinan) and music in which the surrounding environment of forest clad get enthralled and romanticised.

In the night at swidden huts (Ansing) both men and women share their leisure. The women basically sing and dance but the music is led by men only. The image no-36 shows Turdang and Parsanti are enjoying the charm of music and song at their watch-hut in swidden field at Kulusing. This fantastic music of jambungrai is recorded by the researcher.

Music is the part of cultural and aesthetic life. There are so many varieties of musical instruments made of by the Hill Saoras. The instruments are quit sophisticated which includes Memerajan, Jambungrai, Gagerai, Tretepe, Tirudipe, flute, etc., are made by the Saoras in their own technology and knowledge. The raw-materials are basically available from their own locality. One will be surprised and definitely fall in love with the beautiful sounds and enchanting music produced in those instruments. We never finds the music
The Life and Leisure in the Asing (swidden watch-hut): Turdang playing Jambungrai (an instrument) with him Parsanti is singing traditional songs in a calm night at Kulusingi.

Reliving exhaustion of the day at Garusal amid music and song. Researcher is in the group.
produced in those instruments are in no way inferior to some of the modern classical instruments. Thanks to their expertise and rich artistic knowledge.

With the flow of time some new flavours have been added into the aesthetic life of the Hill Saora. The impact of external agencies like Christianity, migration and contact of the people with modern mainstream culture are some of the factors responsible for this change. Christianisation as a new way of life brought a new aesthetic sense of life and recreation. The converted youths sit together in the Mandali in the evening and sing the gospel songs and spend their leisure after tiring labour of the day. During X-mass (Kissi Missi in Sora), New Year and some of their religiously important occasions they enjoy with music and dance and share their recreational time with their friends, relatives and guests. The traditional musical instruments which have been basically used for aesthetic and recreational purposes becomes more popular among the Christianised Saora besides adding some of the new instruments like Mridanga, Dholak and harmonium, which are used in religious and festive occasions. The traditional instruments used by the Christianised Saoras like Memerajan, Jambungrai, Gagerai, Flute, Tretepe, etc. are used in the Church. One of the noteworthy changes found in the Saora villages is that in the early morning (crow of the cock) the loud speaker in the Church starts playing the gospel song like the Gayatri Mantra played in the temple or the houses of mainstream Hindus. The songs are mainly in Sora language followed by Oriya and Hindi. The aim was to give people a fresh and peaceful (spiritual) mind before people leave the bed.

Through migration the Hill Saora people have came in contact with different linguistic and cultural communities at Assam such as Assamese, Dopra and other tribal communities of India. They learn Assamese and Hindi
and use the later some times as the medium of communication. It will be great
surprise to see that a Saora woman can not speak local Oriya but can
communicate in Hindi and Assamese. Thus the impact and attraction of Hindi
language have fascinated the Hill Saoras towards Hindi songs and films. Now
the tape recorders and radios are well visible in many of the houses of Hill
Saoras. Especially the youths are very much attracted towards modern music
and songs. In the critical observation of the life style and leisure of the youths
some traditional and aged Christianised Saoras states that the youths are
scared of doing hard work. They just enjoy their time at home sitting lazy,
roaming here and there, playing tape recorders (Teeban) and making affairs
with the girls (Dariboi). This shows that the Hill Saora youths are attracted
towards the modern ways of spending leisure and recreation.

3.15 COSTUMES AND ORNAMENTS

The Hill Saora has its own concept of beauty and splendour, the
essential part of which is costumes and ornaments. In different socio-cultural
events, festivals and ceremonies both men and women are seen wearing
traditional ornaments and costumes. The beautiful woman is called Langiboi.
The ornaments which the Saora women wear include a few necklaces of
beads, round wooden plugs, spiral rings of metal used in the ear-lobes, hair
pins of bell metal, rings made of brass, bell-metal or aluminium, used in the
fingers and toes, little rings in the alae of nose, metal bangles and metal
anklets. Most of these ornaments are purchased from the local market.

In festive occasions, besides, the ritual events of Guar and Karja a
typical traditional rounded ornament made of Karanja (Pongamia glabra) wood
called Tanangrulu, used in the earlobes. The Anangrululu, a spiral rings made
of silver also used in earlobes by women in substituting Tanangrulu.
Dratdang is a fork like ornaments made of brace used as hair clipping the upper part of the rod is beautifully designed. Other ornaments used by the women are Pirpiria (small ear rings) and Kadumi (nose ring) made of silver, Sunda (hair clip) and Engsee (finger ring) made of aluminium, brace or silver. During the dance party especially in mortuary rites a ring type necklace called Paguada (for male) and Dagra (for female) are used. Now-a-days the traditional ornament are only found among the traditional and older generations and most of the ornaments are used by the Saaras are purchased from the market. The image no-38, 39 and 40 have shown the traditional costumes and ornaments used by the women.

Traditionally Saora use Karanja (Pongamia glabra) oil as body oil which they extract with the help of their traditional technology. The oil has many medicinal values for the Saoras. They believe that the cold and cough of the body can be kept away from the body if Karanja oil is used regularly. It protects the body from various types of skin disease and infections. It is used as the cosmetic oil too. But with the regular contact with the mainstream market so many types of hair oils like Coconut, Keokarpin, Dabur Amla, Banphool and so on are used by the Hill Saoras. Other cosmetics like perfumes, creams, powders, soaps, etc that are used by their mainstream neighbours are also appear to be used by them.

3.16 SOURCES OF SURVIVAL

As an indigenous forest dwelling community Hill Saora has been living amidst the hills and forests. The economy of the Hill Saora is based on forests even, after several changes have taken place in the structure of their ecosystem and economic pursuits. The main source of their livelihood is shifting cultivation supported by paddy cultivation in the terrace land and
An older Saora woman with her Costumes and Ornaments
An elderly woman in her traditional costumes and ornaments.
Putti Dalbehera, a shamanin in her traditional dress and ear rings.
collection of minor forest produces. However, before adopting paddy
cultivation and minor forest produce collection as the source of livelihood
they were dependent on hunting and food gathering mode of economy. The
life then was nomadic in nature. Due to the increasing pressure of population
the demand for food became inevitable. As a result, alternative sources of
earning a livelihood became realised. In the study area the scope of wage
earning is very limited as a result there has been frequent migration to Assam
before Independence, and later to Arunachal Pradesh for wage earning.
Besides, many younger generations are moving toward Mumbai, Hyderabad,
Surat, Bangalore, and other cities. In search of labour in construction and
industrial works. Horticulture and cultivation of vegetables are also now
added to the economy of Hill Saoras.

3.17 FOOD PATTERN

The most important staple food of Hill Saora is Uabkul. The Uabkul is
the gruel prepared from rice or sorghum or millets mixed with different types
of green leaves. The green leaves are called Uab which in local Oriya is called
Saaga and Sag in Hindi. It has many varieties such as Sunsunab (red sorrel),
Baradap, Arangdap, Urabangdap, Mandadungdap, Kukudusendap, Gurudiap,
Sangtangap, Kumapdrap and so on. Out of the above Sunsunab is widely used
and preferred in preparing Uabkul because the taste of the gruel must be
sourly. Without Sunsunab Saora does not enjoy the better and actual taste of
the gruel. Other leaves are occasionally used. Rice is considered ideal for this
purpose but sorghum is also used frequently because the paddy harvested by
an average Saora family hardly last for 3 to 4 months. Now-a-days, people
prefer to use rice due to the availability of rice, comparatively in cheaper price
than the market, through Public Distribution System (PDS). The leaves are
available in the forest, swidden fields, and homestead lands but Sunsunab is specially cultivated widely in homestead and swidden lands.

The Uabkul is moistened rice taken frequently in a small quantity about five to six times daily. The gruel once prepared can be taken unto two to three days. It is often taken with chilli and salt. It is said that Saora would not be fully contented if he/she has not taken Uabkul despite having plenty of meat and wine.

The traditional Saora get sufficient animal protein from their frequent ritual sacrifices and offerings. Every ritual must be followed by sacrifices which offer a delicious meal to the Saora. Other sources of animal protein like rats, snakes, rabbits, wild birds and very rarely monkey, and so on are occasionally available in the Saoras kitchen. Besides, they eat dry fish (Aaya) purchased from the Doms and Telugu Kampu traders from the market or from the Domb women at their own door step.

As a forest dwelling and shifting cultivator community the Hill Saora get so many varieties of roots, tubers, fruits, vegetables from the forests and swidden fields in different seasons of the year. Varieties of mushrooms are available during rainy season are added to their diet. They are also cultivating vegetables in the kitchen garden and homestead lands to support their diet.

The food patterns of the Hill Saoras have undergone changes visible change. There are several factors accountable for this are: Impact of the life style of the Christianised Saora, Education (school going children do not prefer Uabkul or gruel but rice, dal, vegetables etc.), Migration, Economic development, Changing pattern of agriculture and swidden cultivation, impact of horticulture, etc are the responsible factors.
3.18 EVERYDAY LIFE

The work in the Saora villages usually begins with the crow of the cock, even before that, at around 4-4:30 a.m. in summer and 5-5:30 a.m. during winter. The women and the grown up girls start husking the rice, ragi or sorghum depending upon the availability and menu of the family. The kitchen utensils are washed and water carried from the stream, wells or tube wells to keep everything ready for cooking. The women cooked the most staple and favourite food Uaabkul, which is prepared with rice or ragi or sorghum, mixed with the leaves of Sun (red sorrel-Hibiscus sabdarifa) in winter. The dried powder prepared from its flowers stored to be used intermittently for long time when the season of availability of the green leaves is over. The women after cooking packed up their food and move toward the working field either swidden or any other agricultural and non-agricultural work. Then men follow them to join in the work depending on the work in which male usually do need to participate.

The male folk get up from the bed with the crowing of the cock and straightway go to the Gaaraasaal (toddy drinking place) to drink the sap of Salap (Caryota urens) tree to recharge their energy for the day to work in the field. They also carry some toddy to their home for the women. The women don’t go to Gaaraasaal in the morning but occasionally visit the place in the evening and sit aside the circle of male where someone can pass on the Dumuni/ Danki (toddy drinking pot) to the women. Generally the elderly woman visits the Gaaraasaal in the evening. Before second half of the work people again recharge their energy for work. This is the common habits seen in image no-41 and 43. In image no-42 Pasito is seen collecting toddy in the evening. As it is said that without drinking toddy (Alin) they cannot do any
Recharging the Energy: Hill Saoras recharging their strength for the afternoon work in the after the end of the first half of the work.

Pasito collecting toddy from Sago palm (*Caryota urens*) tree.
Turdang recharging the strength with toddy for afternoon work
physical work because the toddy provides good source of energy. It is consumed by all irrespective of age and gender.

Although the daily routine and time of work is mostly similar some variations are seen according to the seasons. In observation of their livelihood pattern the Hill Sauras are always engaged in work for some thing or the other over the year. But the busiest period of the year are monsoon (rainy) and winter season.

The Saura back home from their working fields in the evening at around 4 p.m. After coming back from the field they prefer to go for bath. In early days it was not the common habit of the Sauras to have daily bath. Now-a-days, due to impact of Christianity, education and modern life styles almost all the Saura take bath daily, except some traditional older generations. In recent times, during their busy schedule of work people usually take bath in the evening after coming back from the field and in other days they do it in the day time or in the morning.

In the evening the women prepared for cooking food and men go to Gaaransaal. The male folk return from the Gaaraasaal at around 7:30 to 8 p.m. and immediately take their food. As the Hill Sauras are hard working engaged in the activities since early morning they go to bed immediately after food. Besides these, the Hill Sauras enjoy their aesthetic pleasure (singing, playing musical instruments) occasionally during night either in watch hut in swidden or at their home during pre-harvesting and harvesting periods.

3.19 DIVISION OF LABOUR AND STATUS OF WOMEN

The division of labour is not rigid among the Hill Sauras like complex societies. Both men and women contribute their labour in the work processes
and socio-cultural traditions. Although the works are divided on the basis of gender, majority of the works are done by women in comparison to men. The women in Saora society are not only confined to rearing children but also burdened with agriculture, household, and almost all other economic activities. The researcher never saw any work without the major participation of women. Like any other indigenous society Saora women are always engaged in hard work from the ‘crow of the cock’ to the late evening. They are very hard working and chief economic backbone of Saora family. From household to agricultural, from collection of forest produce to wage earning, from marketing to taking the children to hospital and sometimes to accompany them to the schools after vacation, everything is seen as the major responsibility performed by women.

A Saora woman is very hardworking than her male counterpart. She is inner to hard work from childhood. Her usefulness to the family starts even earlier. She assists the mother and sisters in carrying utensils to the spring, for cleaning, in fetching water, in collecting fuel and edible roots and herbs. When a girl is even 5 years old, she is kept in charge of the small baby so that the mother and elder sisters are free to attend the work. She is seasoned by hard out-door work more than a boy of her age. She can carry heavy loads on her head.

The Saora woman is not fond of gossiping and wastage of time. She is always busy in her work round the year. The collection of minor forest produce and fuel wood is almost done by the women. She can plough the land; slash the tree to prepare the field for swidden. She cooks the food, takes care of the children. She performs most of the rituals, which is evident in their popular practice of female shamanism, as well as the role of an acolyte.
in funerary and name giving ceremony. She is a medicine practitioner
(Regamboi). No work is impossible and left by her. Her contribution to the
family economy and labour is far ahead than her male folk. Therefore, a Saora
woman is well respected. She is given independence to choose her own
partner or reject him. She selects a male who is younger in age if the choice is
left to her. Unlike the mainstream modern society a good thing is observed in
the Hill Saora family is the absence of wife beating, torture or harassment.

Although a woman is the prime contributor of Saora economy and
manages all the expenses and economic affairs of the family, she neither
enjoys the ownership rights of her father’s property nor of her husband. She
can not participate in decision making process and has no role in the political
hierarchy. She belongs to her father’s Birinda even after marriage and death.
However, she has a special status in the family of her birth.

In Christianity a woman can participate in decision making of the
Mandali (Girja). She teaches the gospel from the Bible and share the dais with
her male counterpart. The converted Saoras are sending their girls to school
besides their boys. They are taught Roman alphabet in the church and many
of them are now able to read and write letters in Sora besides well verse in
reading the Bible.

3.20 THE INTERFACE OF HILL SAORAS WITH THEIR NON-
ADIVASI NEIGHBOUR

As a community, the life of Hill Saora is very much influenced by the
surrounding neighbours. The immediate neighbours of the Hill Saora of
Sagada and Puttasingi region are Paikas, Doms, Kumutis and a very few other
households of upper castes Hindus. The Kumutis are numerically in third
position, involved in business like stationary, grocery, collection of Saora
products in the weekly market from the Saoras and Doms and supply them to the Gunupur market for greater profit. A Kumuti woman is exchanging her tobacco with paddy to the elder Saora women as seen in image no-57, 58, and 59. The Doms or Panos, a scheduled caste community, are numerically second after the Hill Saoras mostly engaged in petty business and trading in the Hill Saoras villages and weekly markets. A Dom woman is selling her earthen pot to the Saoras in Puttasingi weekly market as seen in image no-54. Except the government officials all other communities are engaged in business of one kind or the other. They are basically residing in village Puttasingi, 7 kilometres from the Sagaad, where some government institutions and a weekly market are established. The government institutions includes a Police Station, a PHC, a Veterinary Centre, a Forest Department Office, Panchayat Office, a Branch Post Office, Lanjia Saora Development Agency-a micro-project office working for Sagada G. P. and a residential school of H&TW Department upto 10th class. The Paikas, as they are locally called, are the upper caste Hindus who have settled their shops for grocery, stationeries and tea stalls at Puttasingi.

The Doms are the major population in Puttasingi. Almost all of them are Christianised since long. They are the landless community completely depending upon the Saoras for their survival by trading the products from the Saora villages of the areas to Puttasingi and then to Gunupur-the mainstream market, twenty kilometres away downwards the plain land Oriya population. The Doms are earning their survival from tailoring shops, mobile dress shops, vegetables and other household items, prepared food items, pots, etc., mostly from the Saora customers in the weekly market at Puttasingi. The interaction of Doms with Saoras is very frequent and regular because of their trading relations. Early in the morning the Dom men (Saora called Dumbanji) riches at the Saora villages, bargain for the goods from agricultural to the minor and
major forest collections. The Dom woman (for Saora Dumbaboi) visited every the Saora villages and house to house to sell the most required items of the Saoras such as chilli, salt, dry fish, tobacco, Pupu (includes biscuits, chocolate, cake made out of rice flour) etc., and in exchange she collect the products of the Saoras.

The important transactions mostly take place on the roads to the market. Das has described a situation of transaction between The Saoras and Dombs as follows: “on the roads the Dom spread their mats. When the Saora come with baskets of grain they are intercepted. It was the month of January, and the boom period of the land. The crops are harvested. The Saora men and women carry those products for sale. A bargain between the Saora and Dom goes on and very often the bargain is mixed with coercion. But if the Saora is totally dissatisfied he/she would hurriedly move away. But he/she may not move farther. There are other such traders and the rates are slightly adjusted. Then the basket is snatched away and is measured with a unit called Mano quickly and mixed with the already accumulated grain on the mat. One Mano of red gram contains 2.5 to 3kgs. The measure used by the traders is certainly larger than the standard measure. This process leaves no other option for Saora than to accept whatever is paid by the Dom.”

The Doms are actually the agents of the traders from the plains who advance them the required cash to articles on their behalf. They get commission on the purchases. Around the market the traders receives the grain and in the profit Saora has no share. The principal crops are rice, millets, grams and pulses. Tamarind is plucked. All these articles are procured by the

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traders. The most interesting thing is that the Saora scorns at the Dom for he pays him less than the actual price of the commodities. But it seems as if it is Adam's wish that Saora should sell to the Dom. Even if one offers a bigger price he will prefer to deal with the Dom at a lower price. This is duly exploited by the traders and they engage the Doms as middlemen.

The most important and long-standing interaction of the Saora with Dom has been the trading of buffalo in frequent ritual events for sacrificial purposes. The Dom sells his buffalo to the Saora and sometimes gives in the form of loan. In return he collects the amount with interests during the harvesting season in the form of kinds and rarely in cash. In fact, he makes huge profit and exploitation from that. It is said that the Doms are the most cunning and clever community. With their tactical bargaining power the Saoras have been always the victims of exploitation. Although the relationships of Saoras with the Doms are long-standing and frequent, there has been an attitude of mistrust.

The Saoras do not believe to the Doms and always look with suspicion. They are not allowed to enter into the Saora houses easily if so, with suspicious mind. The attitude of Saora in interpreting Dom as a thief or cheat is commonly observed if one sees the informal interaction with the Hill Saoras. Many of the Hill Saoras loosely use this term for the Doms. However, in spite of the feeling of trust and mistrust the Saora very rarely do trading transaction with any one rather than Doms. There has been a kind of interdependency still prevailing between both of them. The relationship of the Hill Saoras with the Doms is symbiotic rather than parasitic.

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38 ibid.
39 ibid.
Today with the change of time the Saoras are adopting new profession. It is found that some of the Saora youth are involve in petty business. The Saoras are selling necessary things and roots and fruits in the market are observed in image no-55 and 56.

3.21 EDUCATION AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Education has a vital role to play in the process of human resources development. The soul of development and empowerment, education is vital for human survival and socialisation. Education is one of the major problems of the Hill Saoras.

The education awareness among the Hill Saoras is much better now than earlier. Christianity has brought the awareness of education among the convert. Besides, the efforts of government especially the micro-project (LSDA) through it school of Gyan Mandir at village level have created some awareness. However, the contribution of missionaries is quite satisfactory and enduring. It is found that the awareness among the parents to send their children to school is quite satisfactory. The education of girl child has been taking positive direction. But the most disheartening factor is that almost majority of them have been unable to go beyond high school. That is because of the poor quality of education and teaching environment most of them could not pass tenth examination. This in fact blocked their road for higher education and may consequently cease the path of bringing the Hill Saoras into the mainstream national development.

The preference for Ashram and Residential School is very high. There are so many education schools available in the villages are only working in

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The earthen pot (Daanki) is sold in Puttasing weekly market by a local Scheduled Caste woman. It is used for the purposes of ritual, cooking and collection of toddy.

Adopting A New Profession: The Saora youths selling dry fish (Aaya), tether for cattle, winnowing fan, and bamboo baskets in the weekly market of Gudangsing.
Saora women and children selling tapioca, sweat potato and papaya in the weekly market.

Bartering Paddy for P'ggaa: The older Saora women exchanging paddy for tobacco with a Telugu Kumuti woman trader.
Bartering Paddy for P'ggaa: The older Saora women exchanging paddy for tobacco with a Telugu Kumuti woman trader
pen and paper. The school buildings are occupied by the livestock. The conditions of the teachers and response of the students are very pathetic. The government mechanism has no accountability for the functioning of education schools in these tribal villages. The attendance of the teachers and their effort to run the schools are really very unfortunate. Moreover, the supervisory role of the education department is completely ineffective.

The people's preference to send their children to Ashrama and residential school has two important arguments given by the people. First, their children will get free food and accommodation. It seems poverty is another constraint of education of the Hill Saora children. Second, if the children stay out of their home they can study better and would not come home frequently. It is understood that when their stay at home they do not study properly. Therefore, it has been widely observed that the people are travelling long distances to keep their children in residential or Ashrama schools, if they are not getting admission in nearby place. It is reported that some people are sending their children to Ashrama and residential schools to far away places, even more than 50 kms.

Although the literacy rate of the Hill Saora is going higher their entry into higher education is negligible. Low quality of education, poverty of parents, self-sustained nature of youth after certain age, etc., are the factors responsible for this. The youths are pressurised to earning a living.

Good number of boys and girls found in every village are undermatric. Many of them are migrating to Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and other Indian cities in search of employment during crucial period of their study. Moreover, most of these youths get married immediately after they leave their study.
Traditional cotton processing technology

Image no-94

Traditional cotton processing technology
Technology for preparation of Mahua (*Madhuca longifolia*) liquor
Wooden Grinder made of Mango wood used for grinding Ganga