CHAPTER-III

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF SAORA

Man made environment is very often influenced by the nature. Geographical surrounding imprints its impact on habitat, living pattern, social, political, economic and religious units of the Saoras. Most of the villages inhabited by Soaras are situated on the hill areas. Slope of the hills are used for shifting cultivation and are considered as important landed property of the Saora. But the houses in a village are not concentrated in a particular place, rather they are in dispersed manner. Some are on the hilltops and some are on the slopes. But the villages like Jaltar, Talber are on the river plains of Bansadhara. My base villages like Angada in the Gumma area and Rejingtal, Jongjong, Dungdunger and Kereba in the Puttasing area are on the hilltops. Now-a-days, due to increase in population and shortage of land resources, Saoras prefer to migrate to other hilly areas which are also included in their landed property. However, due to the development of the area with plenty of communication facilities than it was ten years back, the villages are approachable. Though telephone facilities are not available in the ‘Puttasing’ areas but roadways, postal facilities are available to the people. Thus, the Saora villages are now provided with postal, medical, road communication and educational facilities, and the people are coming in frequent contact with other casts such as Dom and Pana, and are visiting the different cities in Orissa and out side. Therefore, Saora tribe is now in the cross road of change and adopting to modern civilization very fast.

3.1 Origin of Saora Tribe

Several historians and socio-cultural anthropologists have long been wrangling over the origin of Saoras. The Saora tribe is mostly found in Gajapati, Rayagada and Koraput districts of
south Orissa. The origin of the name Saora must be sought from outside the language of the Aryans. Cunningham believes that Saoras derive their name from their habit of carrying axe, and that the scythian word Sagaris has been distorted into Savari and then Savara or Saora. But Roy (1927) contradicts to the views of Cunningham. The word has been divided from verb ‘roye’ to carry with a prefix ‘Saba’ a dead body or carcasses, and Savara or Saora means a carrier of carcasses. This root meaning fits in with the primitive occupation of the tribe, which lived entirely on the spoils of chase. The Saoras had the habit of taking the flesh of the dead animals especially those that were thrown on the outskirt of the village.

There are many references to Saora in Hindu mythology, as well as in ancient and medieval literature. The name of this primitive race appears in very early Sanskrit writings and even in the later Vedic periods (Russell and Hiralal, 1916). The word ‘Saora’ implies a mountaineer, barbarian or savage in Sanskrit. The name is also frequently found in the Ramayana and Mahabharata. The king of Kalinga had participated in the Mahabharata war on the side of Duryodhan with his Saora or Savara soldiers. Sarala Das in his Oriya Mahabharata also refers to the striking personality of a Savara/Saora named Ekalabya, a brave warrior and great intellectual. In the Swargarohanah chapter of Mahabharata, there is mention about Jara Savara, their original ancestor who was said to have shot Lord Krishna in the form of a deer.

In connection with the origin of Saoras, a classical story says that the first ancestor of Saoras hails from the Bhill country (Russell and Hiralal, 1916). But the Saora of south Orissa might confirm this community, as their dialect is a curious mixture of sixteen dialects including the Bhill dialect (Tirkey, 1989). Some historians have tried their best to link the Saoras of India with the Sumerians who settled in the bank of the river Tigris and Euphrates, with the south Chaladians and with the Veddas of Ceylone (Chide, 1959).
An interesting and relevant tradition goes among the Saoras of Bundelkhand. In the beginning of creation Mahadeb wished to teach the people how to cultivate the ground, and so he made a plough and took out his bull Nandi to yoke to it. But there was dense forest on earth, so he created a human being that he called Savara/Saora and gave him an axe to clear the forest. In the mean time, Mahadeb went away to get another bullock. The Savara/Saora after clearing the forest felt very hungry, and finding nothing else to eat killed Nandi and ate his flesh on a teak leaf. And for this reason the young teak leaves when rubbed give out sap, which matches with the colour of blood. After sometime Mahadeb returned, and finding the forest well cleared was pleased with the Savara/saora and as a reward endowed him with the knowledge of all edible and medicinal roots and fruits of the forest. But looking around for Nandi he found it lying dead with some of his flesh cut off. The Savara/ Saora pleaded ignorance, but Mahadeb sprinkled a little nectar on Nandi, who came to life again and told what had happened. Then Mahadeb has enraged with the Savara/saora and said, “you shall remain barbarian and dwell for ever in poverty in jungles without enough to eat, scantily clothed, and occupying a servile position for the remainder of your days”(Russell and Hiralal, 1916). So, it can fairly be assessed that the Saoras of South Orissa might be the descendants of the original Saoras of central India.

Saoras say that their ancestors, their deities and their demigods came to the Ganjam and Vizagapatnam Agencies from Odisa (Orissa). The frequent occurrence of the empression “Odisa Maindura”, as the original home of the deities and demigods would probably indicate the way by which they came to their habit, Maindura means peak in their vicinity. As there are no indications along the coast, except a few miles to the North of Mahendra it can be concluded that they did not come by the coastal route. It would seem that the Saoras had followed the more inland route lying to the north west of Ganjam (Census of India,1931,p-201).
Several Sanskrit works of 800 B.C. to 1200 A.D. give evidence that the Saoras are a Munda tribe, and they penetrated into this tract of land, prior to coming of Gonds, another aboriginal tribe of Southern Orissa. This is inferred from the strong influence of the Munda language over that of Saoras (Tirkey, 1989). Sir G. Grieson has classified that the Saoras of Madras presidency speak Mundari or Kolarian language (Russell and Hirahl, 1916). In connection with the Saoras of South Orissa, it can be stated that the tribes were forced to leave their original place by the pressure of the Aryan groups and selected hills and forest region as their habitat.

Reference to Saora history is found in the writings of the Pliny and Ptolemy, and appears from their account that the Saoras were a well-known tribe in the beginning of the Christian era. Between 500 to 600 A.D., Amara Sinha classed the Saoras with such barbarians as Kiratas and Pulindas, and Baraha Mihira spoke of the ‘naked Saoras’ and the ‘Parna Saoras’ as living with the Purikas and Dasamas in the south east, and the Sauris and Kirans as living in the south (Elwin, 1955).

We find the reference of the tribe in the writings of the poet Bana, who has narrated how Harshabardhan, immediately after his accession in 607 A.D., went in search of his sister, Rajyasri, on the wild forests of Vindhay Mountain and was helped by a Saora chief in his mission (Elwin, 1955). According to Korni copper plate grant, Karma Varna, the founder of the Kalinga –Ganga dynasty defeated and killed the previous ruler, Sabaraditya, somewhere to the east of Mount Mahindra in about 720 A.D. In the Udayendiram plates of the 21 years of reign of the Pallava king Nandi Varman Pallavamalla, he is said to have defeated the Saora king Udayana and captured his mirror banner made of peacock feathers in 736 A.D. Kumar and Reddy (2003) suggested that the communities affiliated to the Austro-Asiatic linguistic family are perhaps the
first to settle in India and the palaeo anthropological evidences suggest the earliest settlement probably around 60,000 years BP. One of the hypotheses tracing the migratory routes indicate that the Austro-Asiatic languages speaking tribes probably came from Africa, entered India through western corridor (Nei and Ota 1991; Chu et al. 1998; Majumdar 2001). The alternative hypothesis which is in vogue speculates that these groups have migrated from China into India through north eastern corridor (Ballinger et al. 1992; Gadgil et al. 1998; Diamond, 1997). Neither of these hypotheses however could so far muster adequate and unequivocal empirical support so as to validate any of the competing hypotheses with reasonable confidence. Kumar and Reddy (2003) made regression analysis between observed heterozygosity and distance from the centroid of eight Mundari populations and showed that Lanjia Saora is placed below the regression line and away from the centroid as outliers. To corroborate the results they suggested that Lanjia Saora tribe has migrated to the forest and hills of Koraput and Ganjam districts of Orissa from the plains of Mandasa in the Srikakulam districts of Andhra Pradesh after they were driven away by their kinsmen.

It would thus be apparent from the discussion, made so far, that the Saoras once covered a large tract of territory. There are many references to the principalities and states held by Saoras in and around Orissa. Oram (1788) opines that the Saoras of South Orissa appears to be the aboriginals of the Kalinga division of ancient Orissa. The primitive history of Southern Orissa is related to the history of Proto-autsroloid or otherwise known as Saoras. They were driven from the coastal plains of Kalinga to the hill tracts, some years ago by the more polished and vigorous invaders, the Aryans, from the parts of India called Aryavarta. The Saoras ultimately scattered in different parts of the southern Orissa, Andhra Pradesh and Madhay Pradesh. Accordingly a section of this tribe came and settled in the bank of the river Vansadhara, which is flowing in the
southern border of Ganjam, one of the districts of southern Orissa. The county of the Hill Saoras
must formerly have extended southwards to include the three Taluks of Palakenda, Paralakhemundi and Tekkali (Sitapati, 1938).

3.2 Division of Saora Tribe

Cunningham (1884) divides the Saora people into two great dimensions, the Western and the Eastern. The Eastern Saora separated from their brothers by broad tract of country extending from Allahbad to Jabalpur in one direction and from Betwa River to Mahanadi in the other. The eastern Saoras have main two division called Laria and Uria (Russel and Hiralal, 1916). Originally the aboriginal Saora community was classified into several groups, such as Sudho, Sannapania, Mela, Lodoro, Jara and Lombolanjia. The last group is said to be the descendant of the earliest most Saoras of the Kalinga division (Maltby, 1918). But according to the nature of their settlement, Thurston (1909) divides the Saoras of south Orissa into two division such as hill Saoras or Maliah(kond) Saoras and Saoras of low (plain) county. The hill Saoras are said to be pure Saora tribe as they have restructured themselves to the tracts of hill and jungle covered valleys. Due to apparent amalgamation of the low county with the neighbouring civilized societies on different occasions like weekly markets and festivals, a new hybrid race is born called Oriya Saora, whose appearance and manner differed from the original Saora. This hybrid race lives in the plain areas below the ghats or hill foot, and claimed himself or herself an advanced and civilized group or Suddo or Sudho Savara or Saora tribe. Socially and economically these group are in a better position than the hill Saoras. This civilized Saoras are also named as per the areas they have settled; like Jada Saoras, Boilli Saoras and Tekkali Saoras, which are the names of the different places in south Orissa and Andhra Pradesh respectively.
The hill Saoras are subdivided on the basis of their occupation, like Luara or Muli, Kindal, Kumbi, Juari (Juadi), Kurumbas and Kapu or Baseng Saoras. Luara or Luang or Muli or Lohera Saoras and Comtotra Saoras are the workers of metals; the former preparing with the arrowheads and other articles in iron and the latter preparing with the brass and bell metals. The Saora word kindal means basket, and those who prepare rough baskets for holding grain is called as the kindal Saora. The Saora who make earthen pots are known Kumbi Saora. The Juari, or Juadi are those Saoras who deal with the culture of date palms and the Kurumbas with shifting cultivation. Sometimes the Kapu Saoras are known as kudunga or Baseng, which term has been derived from the Saora word “Basti” means salt. The people of the low county have given this name when they used to come to the market of the low county from the hill tracts to purchase salt (Thurston, 1909). Besides these occupation groups, the Saoras of south Orissa also claim their names by claiming their lineage from the mythological figure like Bhima (Second of the five Pandava brothers of Mahabharata), dress (Male dress), the Arsi (Monkey) or Lombalanja (Long tailed). The Saoras consider the monkey as their ancestors and for their remembrance they use to keep the symbol of tail in their dress (Thurston, 1909).

Further the Jati-Saora has been described as the best among all the groups. They regard themselves as superior to other division and eat the flesh of Buffalo but not of the cow. (Thurston, 1909). The Jati Saoras are further divided into three more social group like Gamango (Secular village headman), Buyya (the priest) and Parajas (the common people). The Gamango and Buyya sections are the office bearers and the two offices are hereditary and the rule of primogeniture is regulating the succession.

On the linguistic ground or other reason, certain authority is inclined to place the tribe amongst the Dravidian group in general and the Kolarian in particular. Cunningham (1884)
regarded Saoras as the main stock of Kolarians. Majumdar (1927) opined that all the Kolarians are branches of Saora people. Thus, not withstanding all the confusing observations and opinions, it may be considered for certain that the Saora represent the main body of an ancient race, an isolated fragment of which still survives in the south Orissa hills.

3.3 Distribution of Saora Tribe

Kumar and Reddy (2003) showed that Lanjia Saora tribes have their geographic distribution in the undivided Ganjam, Koraput and Phulbani districts in Orissa and Srikakulam district in Andhra Pradesh. The Saora are mainly concentrated in the district of Ganjam, Phulbani and Koraput of south Orissa. The total number of Saoras enumerated in India in 1911 was 6,00,000 of which the Oriya county contained about 5,00,000 (Russell and Hiralal, 1916). They lived in a hilly area of 537 square miles of Ganjam district only (Tirkey, 1989). The War-like invading Aryans drove them from the Northern plains into the interior hills and Jungle tracts of southeastern India. The county of Hill Saoras must formerly have extended southwards to include the three Taluks of Palakunda, Parla kimidi (Paralakhemundi) and Tekkali. Ptolemy calls the place Kalinga with the south Orissa comprising the undivided districts of Ganjam, Phulbani and Koraput.

The Paralakhemundi Zamindari, an Estate of Ganjam district in the Madras presidency with an area of 358 square miles out of 972 square miles was thickly inhabited by the Saora tribes. Out of the 348 villages of the Paralakhemundi subdivision, 226 villages were above the Ghats (Eastern range of mountains of India) being populated by the Saoras and the rest 122 below the Ghats with non tribals like Oriyas and Telugus. The Saora population of Paralakhumundi subdivision in 1891 was 52,302 out of total population of 3,31,534 (The Imperial Gazetter of India, 1908 Vol XX, p-4). It was in 1851 A.D. for the first time Colonel...
Campbell, an Agent of the Meriah Agency noticed the aboriginal Saora tribe in the neighbourhood of Gudari in the present Koraput district of south Orissa (Orissa District Gazetteer, Koraput, 1945, p-69).

The tribe was mainly found in many parts in the hill-tracts of Ganjam district. They were seen in the Muthas of Gumma and Ajayagada of Paralakhemundi; the Chandragiri Mutha of Chinna khemundi (Sano-khemundi) and in the Ramagiri, Khajuripada, Keradang Muthas of Peddakhemundi (Bada-khemundi) (Oram, 1788). Further, the Saora inhabitations are found on the hills of East and North East of Gunupur, the more modernized sections are on the Palkonda Hills and the low country; a corner of the then Vizagapatnam district, adjacent to present Koraput district in south Orissa. The Paralakhemundi Maliha was consisted of eleven Bissoyees fort and Muthas almost entirely with Saora settlements and population (Taylor, 1885) and are given below as:

1. Gumma and Gyba
2. Serango
3. Ojjaigada
4. Namanagram
5. Jirangi
6. Koipuram
7. Rayagada
8. Kamalsingi
9. Narayanapuram
10. Ganda hatti
11. Lavanyakota
The combined Muthas of Gumma and Gyba contained 71 Saora communities. Among them the most prominent were the seven ‘Omanyya’ or disobedient villages. The Serango Mutha was a small Mutha consisting of only one Mokhasa (Service Inam Village) in the plains and 23 Saora villages in the hill tracts. Lying between Gumma and Peddakhemidi frontier, the Saoras of this region were loyal to the king of Paralakhemundi. Ten miles away from Serango and under the immediate shadow of Deodangi mountain, is situated the Ojjaigada Mutha having one Mokhasa in plain and 10 Saora villages above the Ghats. The Saora tribe of this Mutha was shy in nature and paid rare visit to the plains. The Namangram Mutha contained 12-hill Saora villages out of 37 villages in the Mutha. The Jurisdiction of the Jirango Bissoyee consisted one Mokhasa in the low country and 36 Saora villages above the Ghats. The lofty hilly range spread from Mahendragiri in the Western direction. The Koipuram Mutha lying west of Jirango in the direction of Mahendragiri consisted of 16 Saora villages. The combined Muthas of Rayagada and Kamalsingi contained 61 villages out of which 22 villages above the Ghats were inhabited by the Savara tribes. The Narayanapuram Mutha that stood at the foot of the direct pass that led from Jirango to Paralakhemundi with 23 villages under its jurisdiction of which the Saoras inhabited 14 villages above the Ghats. The Mutha Gandahatti was comprised of 30 villages out of which 22 villages were inhabited by the hill Saoras (Taylor, 1885).

The Saora hills are remarkably homogeneous. The only other inhabitants were the Doms. In Ganjam district the Paikas who worked for the Bissoyees and Patro overlords lived in their own villages at Pottasingi, Nuagada, Gumma and Serango. In 1941 there were 3,26,236 Saoras in Orissa of which 95,479 wee in the Ganjam Agency and 52,518 in Koraput. The hill Saora population was estimated at about 1,00,000 (Elwin, 1955).
In the Koraput district, there were no landlords in the Saora area and the people paid their taxes to the state. But, the Saora part of the Ganjam district was not only divided into a number of Zamindaris and Malihas, but these were further divided into Muthas under the charge of feudal overlords called Patros and Bissoyees. The Muthajars or the rulers, to whom the Saora villages were framed out, became the sole proprietors and took half of the crops, whatever was raised by the Saoras.

Thus, the Saoras of south Orissa are primitive race, which have a long history of their tradition, culture and belief. They are forced by the civilized people to select the hilly regions, which are their new settlements. Being free from the external danger, the Saoras started a peaceful leaving with the practice of cultivation and hunting. But this peace could not last long as the British Govt. noticed these people in this region and tried to bring them under its administration. Thereby they felt endangered and exploited due to their simplicity. The Saoras of south Orissa tried to preserve their culture and tradition in best possible ways despite the intervention of the new administration and side-by-side enriched the culture of South Orissa as well as India too.

3.4 Distribution of Birinda

Birinda groups are the transactional groups between the kingship and kinship. The Paralakhemundi king simplified his administration by forming different functional groups and assigning them with certain duties to discharge. Perhaps he succeeded in both isolating and identifying the tribal. Since then Birindas are considered as the title groups. Birindas are also considered as functional entities under “Kheja”, “Punja”, and “Kulam”. Villages are named after their mythical stories behind them and each village consists of multiple Birindas. Birindas, which are commonly found, are Gamango, Dalbehera/Mandala, Karji/Buyya and Raita.
Gamango are the rich persons who were given landed property by the king in order to look after the disciplinary functions of the villages. Dalbehera/ Mandala assist Gamango in decision-making. They also report the “Bisois” the representative of the Paralakhemundi King, about the village situation, through the Raitas. Karji/ Buyyas are the religious practitioners of the Saoras. However, in the changing society, the above system is no more functional. But the age-old social system still prevails in the mind of Saoras and manifest in their social activities. In my surveyed base villages, I have found Gamango, Dalbehera, Karji and Raita birindas. In most of the villages there are more than two birindas.

3.5 Distribution of Kin members

A Saora village comprises of all kin members i.e. both consanguineal and affinal, as they prefer their kins within a short distance. However, migration of kin members also occurs on exceptional conditions such as non availability of agricultural lands or living space. The consanguines (Gamango) of village Putta migrated to village Jongjong and village Lade. The affinal kins also extended upto Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh. Some of the villages are observed to have one title group (Birinda) and helps them to find affinal kins in the same village. Therefore Saoras do not follow village exogamy but lineage exogamy. There is no restriction on the people if they wish to either migrate to distance location or settle amicably at a place other than their own village. However, during socio-cultural gatherings and different rituals and functions, kin members congregate and discharge their duties. Several cases of migration are reported in my studied villages, mostly to Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, where hey have settled and married to the tribals there. Ritual kins are found distributed both within and outside the villages.
3.6 Social communication

Social communication is necessary for the smooth execution of different social ceremonies and occasions and also to ensure the social security. Migration of patrilineal kins necessitates keeping the contact with them, particularly regarding the landed property. However, it has been observed that most of them do not want to continue/ keep the social contact that settles in a different territory. But on different rituals and religious occasions like Birth, Initiation, Marriage, Death and other ceremonies like “Guar”, Karjya and new eating (Nuakhia) etc. all the kin members are invited. During agricultural works like ploughing, harvesting etc., the members of Labour Cooperatives are informed to have joint work, and all members unite. Besides, market places are also the place for their interaction, communication and exchange.

The process of invitation of kin members is very peculiar for the ‘karjya’ ceremony. Thus, the geo-ethnic distribution of ‘Saoras’ helps them in regulating the social solidarity and cooperation by striking out antagonism resulting from various disputes and offences. This moulds their life to a great extent.

3.7 Saora political organization

The hierarchical structure reflects the political behavior of this tribe. The ‘Gamango’ is the secular head of the tribe. Next to him the ‘Karji’ / ‘Buuya’ or the ‘Kudan’ who is the village priest/shaman. The Kudan is assisted by somebody from the village of the same birinda. The members of Mandalas/ Dalbeheras actually help the Gamango in various decisions making. Raita people are the poor people and hence have lowest rank. But by doing good works or by proving their abilities at the time of need they could enhance their status (even Gomango post can be offered to him who are called the ‘Paraja Gamango’). The word ‘Gamango’ comes from
two words such as ‘gama’ means to walk at the front and ‘ngo’ means road. So who leads the people is called ‘Gamango’. Similarly ‘Dalbehera /mandalla pertain to a group and the spokes person of that group. He helps the ‘Gamango in his decision-making and also rules at the absence of the ‘Gamango’. ‘Raita’ means ‘poor’ and again there is division such as the ‘badaraita’ and the ‘sanaraita’ depending upon their economic abilities and the social role.

Each birinda is a functional unit, which integrates its members on several occasions particularly the members of one descent group. I could not able to find the members of more than one descent group of same Birinda residing in a village except the village ‘Dungdunger’ where two unilineal groups of ‘Dalbehera’ birinda are sharing. This categorization was made by the then kingship when the responsibility of each village was bestowed upon the ‘bisoies’ appointed by the king. Till now people are relying on the traditional structure of leadership. Generally the Gamango was selected on the basis of his socio-economic status and ability of conflict resolutions. Modern leadership pattern is much more influenced by the traditional and even leaders from Gamango family still dominate the political scenario. It is worth mentioning that one Gamango named “Giridhara Gamango” is in the forefront of politics in Orissa and India. Mr Giridhara Gamango served as the Chief Minister of Orissa, as a minister in the Central cabinet and also as the president of Orissa Pradesh Congress Committee. Thus, the above example elucidates the important role of Gamango family not only in the political organization of Saora but for the whole Orissa state and India. Female members do not participate but they are the silent mobiliser of the decisions particularly the females of the Gamango or the other in the absence of Gamango birinda. However, things have changed now and Mrs Hema Gamango, wife of Mr Giridhar Gamango, is actively involved in the politics and has served as Member of Parliament and member of State Legislative Assembly.
3.8 Saora Family and Kinship

The basic unit of a society formation is the family and no doubt it is the universal realization. But to have an entry to this family one has to follow certain principles, and the most crucial one is the marriage. As in other society, among the Saora tribe, it is also given due importance and permissible ways of acquiring mates.

3.8.1 Marriage Alliance

Marriage is a ubiquitous feature of human kinship and social organization and its development assumed a critical role in the history of social institutions. According to many anthropologists, the regulation of sexual relationships may in itself have formed the basis of all human social orders. Several widely occurring functions of marriage can be associated with notable behavioural universals:

1. Parental responsibility for long term infant nurturing and education,
2. Social regulation of sexual behavior,
3. Organization of gendered divisions of labour,
4. Assignment of individuals to social groups and statuses, and
5. The formation of inter-group alliances and exchanges.

Yet, different cultures have developed as fascinating diversity of regulations and customs concerning prohibitions and preferences for marriage partners as well as expectations between spouses and in-laws. Prominent variations, such as arranged marriages, polygamy, and same-sexed unions provide a rich ethnographic record for speculating about why societies differ. They also challenge our tolerance of different moral conventions at the most basic level.
Marriage is termed as *Pankui* in Saora language which means ‘we give and we bring’ and practically they give sufficient liquor to the bride’s house to satisfy them and in exchange they request for the bride. *Sirung* is another term used for marriage, which is normally practiced among the christianized Saora. This life cycle ritual is usually preceded by the ceremony of ‘*pansal*’ i.e. the engagement of would be husband and wife. This is the most ideal and prestigious type of marriage. But due to financial constraints people hesitate unless they have the capacity. So they adhere to other types of marriages such as

1; *MANABOI*- love marriage,

2; *DUNG DUNG BOI*- marriage by capture,

3; *DUNG ELEGITAL*- marriage by elopement,

4; *GANCLAMNABOI*- marriage by intrusion,

5; *DANDABOI*- elopement of married women

6; *KUNDRA BOI*- widow marriage,

7; *KINNASING*- marriage by service

Apart from the above, levirate, sorrorate, non-sorroral and sorroral polygyny are also prevailing types of acquiring mates. Usually, economically well off persons are found to have more than one wife particularly to manage the lands of shifting cultivation and terrace cultivation. A Saora’s wives will visit one another in day time but will not be allowed to spend the night in another’s house. However, the first wife has the right and discretion to invite other wives in turn to sleep in her house with the husband. The wives usually do not co-operate each other in agricultural work, but work together with the husband in the agricultural field. The yield is equally divided among the wives.
The rules relating to exogamy preclude marriage among persons of the Saora village, except with such as are known to be new comers. According to Elwin (1955) most of the inhabitants of a village are generally considered of one extended family called ‘Birinda’, and hence it is natural for its men to seek wives elsewhere. But it is not always true, as I have got several instances of marriages of inter-birinda. Genealogy of the village Rejingtal shows marriages, which took place between gomango, dalbehera, badaraita and karji though marriage within the descent group is strictly prohibited. My observations agree with Elwin (1955) that one essential unit of Saora is the extended family descended from a common male ancestor, but there are also divisions into aristocracy and proletariat and by villages (Elwin, 1955). Formation of a new Birinda is not observed even after four generations although it has been mentioned in some studies. As per the opinion of the saora people and as it is proved from the genealogies that members of the patrilineage (kheja) remain intact up to seven to eight generations and also include those who have shifted to other areas due to shortage of agricultural land or fear of epidemic.

Generally, the chiefs prefer their sons to marry girls from families of other chiefs-Buyya to Buyya and Mandal-to-Mandal. But there is no objection to a Gamango marrying a Buyya or a Mandal or a Naik, if they are sufficiently well to do (Elwin, 1955).

The Saoras of south Orissa practice different kind of marriages in the society. These are:

1. *Sidrung boi* or marriage by purchase (with the payment of bride price)
2. *Ding-Ding-Boi* (Marriage by capture)
3. Marriage by Service
4. *Gang damma* (marriage by intrusion)
5. Levirate
6. Sorrorate
7. Yayak boi
8. Elopement
9. Divorce marriage

However, Saora of south Orissa practice negotiated marriage (Pankui) and consider it as most suitable and prestigious form of marriage. A Saora who wishes to marry a girl of his own choice, visit the house of the girl with a pot of liquor, arrow and one bras bangle accompanied by one or two of his kinsmen or elderly villagers. The boy puts the liquor and the arrow on the floor. The boy with his party men drinks the liquor. Then the girl’s father ask the boy why he has brought the liquor and the boy then gives the marriage proposal to the girl’s father. The boy then fixes the arrow on the thatched roof of the house just above the wall and goes back to his house along with the empty liquor pot and the accompanied persons. Then the boy visits the girl’s house several times with liquor and exchanges it with the relatives of the girl. After enjoying the liquor the boy’s party return to their village but the boy stays back in the girl’s house for three to four days and helps the girl’s father in various works. Then the boy returns to home and looks for an opportunity to bring the girl to his house. Finally, the girl simply lives with the boy as his wife without any ceremony. After she becomes the wife of the boy, the girl’s mother visits her with a piece of cloth and a brass bangle to present her daughter (Thurston, 1906).

When a Saora boy prefers to marry a girl of his own choice, he uses to place a pot of liquor on the Verandah of the girl without the knowledge of the girl and comes back. After a week again the same act is repeated but with the knowledge of the villagers of the girl. After the second visit, the bride’s father inquires about the suitor to the girl. But when the boy makes the fourth visit and the liquor is placed, the bride’s father throws the pots of liquor angrily. If the boy
makes his fifth visit along with liquor, the bride’s parents assume that the boy genuinely seeks
the hands of the girl. With the willingness of both the parents and girl before the villagers, the
marriage date is fixed and the ceremony is performed with a plenty of liquor, food, dance and
merry-making (Singh, 1967). Both the boy and girl then offer prayer to the God and live as wife
and husband.

Other forms of marriage also prevail in Saora tribe. Saora boy goes to girl’s house and
places pots of liquor. If the girl’s family consumes the liquor, it is considered that the proposal is
accepted. With more liquor the bridegroom convinces the father of the girl and thereafter a date
is fixed to send the girl to boy’s house. One day before the exact day the marriage party
accompanied by the musical party arrives at the girl’s village. Then the event is followed with
heavy drinking, eating and dancing. The Buyya offers prayer to the ancestors and wish the newly
wed couple to live a happy married life without any problem from the ancestors. The gathering
declares the boy and girl as husband and wife from that day. Thereafter, the bridegroom’s party
returns to the boy’s house along with the bride (Maltby, 1918).

At the marriage ceremony of some Kapu Saora, the bride and the bridegroom sit side by
side at the auspicious moment, and partake of boiled rice from green leaf cups, the pair
exchanging leaf cups and the gathering declare them as wife and husband from that moment.
Before the bride groom and his party proceed to their village with the bride, they present the
males and females of the girl’s village with a rupee, which is called Janjulnaglipu or money paid
for taking away the girl (Thurston, 1909).

In another form of Kapu Saora marriage, the would be bridegroom and his party proceed
to the house of the selected bride on an auspicious day and offer betel and tobacco, the
acceptance of which is a sign that the proposal is agreeable to the girl’s parent. On a subsequent
day, a small sum of money (a fixed amount for particular region) is paid as bride price. On the wedding day, the bride is conducted to the home of the bridegroom, where two people lift the contracting couple up, which dances about with them. While the bride enters the house of the bridegroom, the bride also pays a small sum of money as per the demand of the bridegroom's brother, sister or sister-in-law. Inside the house, the officiating Desari ties the ends of the cloths of the bride and bridegroom together, offer prayer to the ancestors and invisible spirits and the couple is declared as husband and wife from that time (Thurston, 1909). Saora consider that the maternal uncle's daughter and his sister's son are of separate Birinda and thus the marriage between them is allowed in Saora society.

Marriage by service also prevails among the Saora tribe. A bridegroom who fails to pay the bride price or the expenses of the customary negotiations, acquires the bride by putting service to her parents for two to three years or more till he wins the confidence of the parents to consider him as their son-in-law. Then by a formal ceremony, the community declares them as married couple. After the ceremony, the boy stays with his wife in the father-in-law's house. Sometimes even economically well-to-do families or families having no son do not like to leave the daughter and seek for the boy to stay at the girl's house (Sharma and Sharma, 1983). So the bridegroom stays in the bride's house and discharge duties or services for two to three years or even more. When the girl's parents are satisfied with the service of the future bridegroom, they inform the parent of the bridegroom to come over and fix the date of marriage of their son at the girl's house. Accordingly, boy's parent and some kinsmen come to the girl's house and celebrate the marriage as per custom. On the marriage occasion they dance, sing and enjoy feast. Next day the boy's party leaves for their home but not the boy. The boy stays in the girl's house life long.
Marriage by capture once upon a time is practiced widely by the Saoras. The causes of the wide acceptance of this system of marriage were mainly financial constraints. First of all, the meager economic condition of the boy bounds him to follow the practice. Secondly, if both the boy and the girl like each other but the opposition comes from the girl’s parents, thirdly, if all the family members except the girl agree with, and fourthly, if the proposal is broken after the usual customary practices (Tirkey, 1989). But the girl sleeps with the would be mother-in-law till her mother pays a visit with some presentation, a cloth and a bangle. If the girl runs away, the boy manages to carry her up to three times, and then he leaves the hope to get her and remain silent losing her forever (Thurston, 1909).

The saora tribe also practices marriage by intrusion. The girl forcibly enters into the house of her lover and stays with him in spite of insults and cruelties meted out to her. If she does not leave the house even after a sufficient time, it is considered that she married the boy and ultimately the boy pays a nominal bride price to the girl’s parent and a small feast to the bride’s kin.

Widow marriage is also prevalent in Saora society. After the death of a man, the widow is bound to marry the younger brother of her deceased husband. This marriage is called as levirate (Sharma and Sharma, 1983). Marriage of the widow of the younger brother with elder brother or wife’s elder sister with the deceased’s husband is not permissible in Saora society. If there is no younger brother, the widow may marry one of the son’s of the deceased’s elder brother (Thurston, 1909). However, marriage between the stepson and a stepmother is possible.

As the Saora woman retains her father’s Kheja even after her marriage, the son of the first wife can marry the stepmother after the death of his father, but performs the required ceremonial offerings. A Buffalo sacrifice is made to satisfy the kulba of his deceased father to
refrain him from his wrath (Thurston, 1909). This form of marriage is called *Yayangboi*. After this ceremony the step mother and stepson are considered by the Saora society as husband and wife. In case the widow refuses to accept the younger brother of her deceased husband and marries according to her own choice, the new husband is to pay a Buffalo or a pig or something equivalent to it, as compensation to the younger brother of the dead man. After the payment of compensation the couple are considered as husband and wife without any further ceremony.

When the wife dies, the husband is supposed to marry one of the unmarried younger sisters of the deceased wife. Such marriage in Saora society is known as *Sorrorate* (Sharma and Sharma, 1983). The marriage of the divorced woman may be accepted in Saora society. But regarding the marriages within the same descent group, the society does not give permission. If such cases happen, then they leave their hearth and home and go to the distant place.

Divorce (*andaman*) is not common among Saora. Divorced wife is called *andamanboi* and divorced man is called *andamanmar*. Divorce is simple, though emphatically disapproved. There is no ceremony; and it is effected by the payment of compensation. But no woman leaves her husband for another woman. (Elwin, 1955). A woman of Saora tribe leaves her husband whenever she feels to do so (Thurston, 1909). The dispossessed husband has the right to follow his wife to her new home and kill and eat any goat or pig he can find there, whether it is property of new husband or not. Thus, when a woman marries a new man after divorcing the first one, the new husband usually gives compensation to the former husband in the form of buffalo, pig or goat. If the refusal for compensation comes from the new husband, the first husband may even kill her second husband (Thurston, 1909). The compensation made when a man married a divorced woman is called *Bayar Danda* (Outside fine). Polygamy prevails in Saora society. A
man can have as many as three to seven wives. A wife caught in adultery will never be retained as a wife.

Parents generally arrange marriages in the Saora society after their children have reached the age of 18 years. Because of the hard work they do, a wife is considered as valuable acquisition for man (Watts, 1970). The Joria Saora considers the marriage of a girl after adolescence as a sin and thus they sometimes perform the marriage of a girl to an arrow before she attains puberty. An arrow is tied to her hand and she goes round a virgin Mohua tree struck on an improvised altar and drinking ghee and oil. The arrow is then thrown into a river to imply that her husband is dead and then her real marriage is socially considered as widow marriage.

However, the chastity of the girl or woman is not taken into account by the Saora society. Pre-nuptial sexual freedom, as long as the rule forbidding clan incest is observed, is very general and no importance is attached to a bride’s chastity (Watts, 1970). This gives way to the polygamy form of marriage in the Saora Society. However the Saoras are clan less society. Regarding endogamy, there are several classes of Saoras, such as the Jadu Saoras, the Luari Saoras and Sudra Saoras, among whom there are no inter marriages. Even no usual ceremonies are observed by the Saoras, no wedding furnishing of turmeric or vermilion, no booth, no circumvallation of a pole or tying the pair together. And there is no bedding of the married pair as among the Bondos, Marias, Murias and Gonds (Elwin, 1955).

But the present day marriages are observed to have under gone slow changes from the traditional marriage system. Christianised Saoras do not follow the traditional Saora marriage. However, other saoras, despite their co-habitation with non-tribals, maintain solidarity of their own. Neither the people from plain area nor the non-tribal communities have significant impact.
on their marriage customs as the Saoras have insulated themselves to avoid exploitation by the non-tribal.

In kinship theory, alliance refers to a view of society, which emphasizes marital interactions (usually repetitive) between descent groups as a basis for social integration and group definition. As Keesing (1975) puts it "a system whereby descent groups or other kin groups are linked by a rule of prescriptive or recurrent marriage so that the groups remain in an affinal relationship to one another across generations".

3.8.2 Childbirth and name giving ceremony

Childbirth is an important social event in all society and so also in Saora society. It increases the societal members and causes fresh alignment in structural relations. Saora are very fond of children. When a Saora woman proves to be barren, the Saora man can marry to another woman. There are few restrictions for a conceived woman in Saora society. The first ceremony starts when the mother completes the first month of pregnancy. It is called "Bara Pirr", the ceremony of the Sunani tree. The Shaman goes to Sunani tree; perform a ceremony with a new earthen pot, a fowl, salt and chilies; then cooks the edibles in that new pot; eats the cooked food and comes back (Sangana, 1963-64). A conceived Shamani (the female priest) may continue her work of divination and sacrifice up to her confinement, performing any rite within three months of delivery is a Taboo for her. The Saoras of south Orissa has no special ceremony at the time of childbirth or there is no Taboo of unclean days for a mother (Maltby, 1918). But they replace all the cooking earthen pots by new ones breaking or throwing out the old ones (Thurston, 1909). At the time of delivery, an experienced elderly lady of the village officiates as midwife. She rubs the abdomen of the pregnant woman with castor oil and this process facilitates easy delivery. As soon as the child is born, the Kaka Pirr or Crow -Ceremony takes place. The midwife with a
sharp edged arrow cuts the umbilical cord. The placenta is then buried in a pit in one corner of the courtyard of the house. Then the mother and the newly born baby take bath in tepid water. The pollution period is observed for seven days (Pattnaik, 1989). Sometimes, they used to give strong liquor to the mother of the new child to drink and occasionally bath the child in the water mixed with liquor (distilled from Mahua flower) with the idea that it ensures strength and vitality to the newborn baby (Tirkey, 1989). Some resin and some cooked rice are kept on the thatch of a house in a piece of broken earthen pot while down below, a fowl is killed in a 'Puja' and its meat is given to little children to eat. When the crow eats, little children are required to shout "Eat, Eat".

The naming of the child takes place on the tenth day of the birth of the child (Thurston, 1909). Head of the new child shaved on that day. Generally, children are named after the day of the week on which they are born. Saoras of South Orissa prefer the names of their ancestors for naming the child. Again, nicknames are frequently substituted for the birth name of a child, such as a man is called as Gylo because, in the childhood a person is fond of breaking nuts called Gylo, another is called as Dallo because, in his youthful days, he was fond of playing with a basket Dalli on his head (Thurston, 1906). Smaller children play at winnowing, cleaning, cooking, rice husking, beating pulse, they make mud pieces and little toys with sticks and leaves and above all they like to play with Shamans (Elwin, 1955). On the other hand, the children assist their parents in all the occupations and attain skill and proficiency in tribal vocations and crafts and they can skin a buffalo, climb hills, fetch water, do agriculture operation, tend cattle etc.
3.8.3 Death and death rituals

According to Fawcett (1888), 'As soon as a man, woman or child dies in a house, a gun, loaded with powder only, is fired off at the door, or if, plenty of powder is available, several shots are fired to frighten away the kulba (Spirit). If death of a man or woman occurs due to old age or long illness, the elderly man of the family tries to speak with the dead and to shake him or her to revive, and in case of failure, death is finally declared. The death news is announced in the Saora society by gun firings. Since the Saoras in the daytimes are always on hill slopes, it would be impossible for them to be communicated easily, and quickly; and this gunshot conveys the news to gather all at the dead man's house. Water is poured over the dead body while in the house (Thurston, 1909). Sometimes the corpse is laid down on its back across the mat in the middle room of the house covered with a cloth, then the women carry on the corpse outside of the house and lie it on a cot in the street, remove most of the ornaments (incase of woman's corpse), bath the corpse and comb the hair. Often, vermilion (Sindur) is also sprinkled on the corpse to give it life like appearance of the blood pulsating in the body (Singh, 1967). It is stated by Rice (1901) that 'the dead man's hands and feet are tied together, and a bamboo is passed through them, enabling two men to carry the corpse to the burial ground. In each village there is one man set apart to carry the dead over his back and in some villages, he is assisted by two others; one supporting the head, another the feet and he himself the waist of the head. In some villages they carry the dead body, with the help of four men, on a stretcher. But in certain areas of South Orissa, the rules seem to be for women to carry the corpse, on a string cot to the cremation ground of the village. Guns are fired while the body is being taken. The Saoras never use a coffin to carry the dead body of a fellow man or woman. Even the Saoras get angry with the person who asks anything about dead man on the way to burial ground. The corpse is
burnt on the very day the man dies. The Saoras either bum or bury the dead bodies, placing the corpse on the pyre with its head to the north, in the belief that heaven lies in that direction (Russell and Hiralal, 1916). The Saoras use only fresh green branches of mango and Pongania globra for the funeral pyre, but some dry twigs are used to light the fire (Thurston, 1909). The funeral pyre is prepared by the villagers and only the head of the family (of the deceased) is set apart from it. It is also said that the Saoras used to throw away the dead body simply to be eaten by the wild beasts. Then in the later period they bury the dead standing upright with the head above the ground, and the people used to remove the skulls to use them as hearths for cooking. The idea might be that the soul returns to the country of its ancestors in normal death except in the case of death by the small pox where the goddess has taken the souls to the plain country. In the following day of the cremation, the members of the deceased family go to the burial place with water, which they pour over the ambers and collects the fragments of the bones. They bury the collected bones with an empty eggshell (domestic hens), about two feet deep in the ground at the burning place (Thurston, 1909). The Saoras of South Orissa keep burning the bones of the deceased until another person dies in the family. When the second death occurs in the same family, the bones of the previous ones are dug up and thrown away, and bones of the second person are kept inside in that place. The spot is marked with a sal post or a piece of stone to which a piece of dead’s garments are attached and with drinking and singing the ceremony is concluded. It is not uncommon to send pieces of bone, after burning to relation at a distance, to allow them also to perform the funeral rites. Again, when a Saora dies elsewhere than in the village of his birth, and is cremated there, the remains must be returned to his native village for burial as above, within a year. In case of death of Saora woman, the members of her Kheja may demand the corpse to be cremated in their own village, and if it is not feasible, a portion of the
cremated ash must be taken to their own village and ceremonially buried their. The ultimate abode of the dead is believed to be in the land of their ancestors. The Saoras of South Orissa believe that every person possess two souls viz. 1) Suda Purada and 2) Belang Purda or Rup Rup Purada.[ Census of India 1931; Op. cit. P. 202, Orissa Dist. Gazetteer, Koraput (1966) P. 118]. The funeral rites culminate in the periodical guar, immediately after which the departed soul is privileged to take up its permanent residence and is there after raised to the status of deity called by class name Sonnum. The Baleng Purada is the life substance of the body, which resides in the heart, may be representing the heartbeats. It ceases to function after the final departure of the Suda Purada, but temporary absence do not embarrass it. The death rites of a dead in the Saora family is performed by Kudan or Shaman (Priest). In order to satisfy the Kulba of the dead, the Saoras of South Orissa performs various sacrificial ceremonies, such as Limma, Guar and Karjya( Thurston, 1909).

The first sacrificial feast or funeral rite, called Limma, is usually performed on the same day in the evening of the cremation of the dead body (Maltby, 1918). After the Limma, the Kulba returns to the house of the deceased, but it is not supposed to remain there always. Thereafter, a miniature hut is built for the Kulba over the spot where the bones are buried (Thurston, 1909).

The second sacrificial feast to the dead is called Guar. The funeral rites culminate in the periodical Guar, immediately after which the departed soul is privileged to take up its permanent residence and is therefore raised to the status of a deity called by the class name Sunum. This Guar is much expensive where numerous buffalos are sacrificed and a menhir (memorial stone of the dead) is erected by which a good part of Saora resources is drained out and causes him to borrow loan in kind of cash. There is no fixed time for this Guar ceremony; even the grand sons are entitled to perform this as per their own financial convenience. Generally, this great
sacrificial feast of the Saoras of South Orissa takes place on a full moon day in the spring. The Birinda brotherhood, relatives, and villagers join in and relations exchange compliments by presenting one another with a buffalo for the Guar feast, and receive one in return on a future occasion. When a Saora dies without any living member of his own, the relatives perform the limma, in the same evening and the Guar on the following day. The men armed with all their weapons, with their feathers in their hair, and adorned with coloured dresses, accompanied by the woman, all dancing as they go, leave the house for the place where the menhirs (memorial stones) are put. They also bring out the property of the dead, such as his axe, plough, clothes, box, umbrella, basket, shirt, ornaments, pots etc., and dance keeping it with on their heads. One of the dancers carries a rope or a weapon with the help of which, in case, the dead has committed suicide or is murdered. Music always accompanies the dance. The menhir or stone generally 1.5 to 4 feet high and is put up on the deceased's name at about 11 A.M. in the family menhir's ground (Maltby, 1918). According to the Ramamurti (1931) “Special portion of the sacrificed animals should be presented to those who carried the dead bodies to the grave, as well as to the Buuya and Gamango”. The Guar is supposed to give the kulba considerable satisfaction, and it does not injure people as it does before. The saora believe that after the performance of Guar, the Kulba of the deceased remains in peace and does not bring any more troubles to the family members in the form of disease, or other calamities. But if trouble continues they perform the third and final rite called Karyya, a great biennial feast, to appease the dis-satisfied Kulba of the dead. Karyya is usually performed in February or March after the crop yield. All the family members, relatives and neighbours join and keep drinking and dancing which continues for twelve days. During these days guns are fired and the Kudan eats only after sun set. On the last day there occurs a great slaughter of buffaloes. The Kudan offers the food and liquor to the
Kulba with a cloth of the deceased. The Kudan then tells the Kulba to leave, and not to trouble the inmates any more to which the family members repeat. Thereafter at 8 P.M. they use to set fire on the house and rebuild a new house on the very spot, as they believe that the Kulba will never come to the new hut. Minor illness due to the trouble of Karjya may be easily driven away by small sacrifices (Thurston, 1909). However, at present, due to conversion to Christianity, some Saoras avoid such expensive rituals. Saora try their best to observe three Karjyas for a dead person and then stop it.

Thus, the interesting pattern of social organization of Saora tribe and its management over generations are unique features. They respect the souls and satisfy them through different social processes which are unlikely in other tribes.