WH0 ARE THE KHARAKS? WHERE AND HOW DO THEY LIVE?

There is no documented history of the Kharak community. Our knowledge of their origins and their history depends, therefore, on the accounts of their Barots. With slight differences in version, the Barots agree on the account given below:

The history of the Kharaks, the Barots say, goes back to Puranic times. The Kharaks in those days were Kshatriyas (or warriors) and were rated high in the caste hierarchy. When the Kshatriyas of the land were being hounded by Bhagawan Parashuram, the Kharaks too were under attack and fled in various directions. A large group of them took shelter in a temple of Mahalakshmi in Central India and sought protection from the Goddess. Parashuram followed on their heels in pursuit but the Goddess saved her supplicants by saying that they were not the Kshatriyas that he was after, but her Benias meaning the people who dressed her hair and adorned it with flowers. And when Parashuram took her at her word and left the temple, she advised them that they could as well renounce the ways of the Kshatriyas; which they agreed to do prostrating before her and seeking
her blessings. She did the traditional *ovarna* over their heads to cleanse them of all evil; she used ten arms to do this on the heads of some and they came to be known as Dasa Shrimali Vanias. She used all her twenty arms to do this on others and they came to be known as Visa Shrimali Vanias. Some of them made red marks on the Goddess's forehead (or Kapol) and came to be known as Kapol Vanias. Others adorned her head with a jewelled crown (Modha) and came to be known as Modha Vanias. The Goddess then bade all of them (i.e., Dasa Shrimali, Visa Shrimali, Kapol and Modha Vanias) to observe the following strictures or norms.

1. They were not to keep a decorated shelf (abharai) supported by pillars in their houses.

2. They were not to use musical instruments.

3. They were not to use the washerman's blue (gali) to whiten their clothes.

4. They were not to hang bells round the neck of their cattle.

5. They were not to pierce the ear-lobes of their boys.

She then gave them a chariot to ride on, and asked them to settle down wherever the wheels came off the axle.
She also asked them to name the settlement Pampapur. The Vanias did accordingly. They stayed in this place for many years. Then they moved on to Bhinmal region in Central India where they tilled land and kept cattle. But successive famines made life hard for them and they had to give up farming and take to running caravans; they kept camels and carried goods around. But conditions continued to be adverse. Even camels were hard to keep. So they had to change over to donkeys. Trading on these, the Barots say, they reached the outskirts of Ujjain where there was a considerable community of Dasa Shrimali Vanias. When the Dasa Shrimali Vanias of Ujjain came to know that some of their kinsmen were in the neighbourhood they wanted to invite them, as was customary, for a feast and sent some of their young men with an invitation. When these young men reached the spot they saw in surprise and with amusement, rows of donkeys in their camp; and so when they invited them they addressed them (with a shade of contempt) as 'Kharahanks' (or donkey drivers). The Kharaks resented the address and felt humiliated; they expected to be called 'Sheths' or 'Sahukars' like Vanias were usually called. This made them break relations with the Dasa Shrimali Vanias of Ujjain and live separately. The Barots say that the Kharaks lived in Ujjain as a separate group until 180 Vikram Samvat.
During this time, they built a temple of Lord Shiva near the town. The 'Kharahank' name, however, stuck to them and the present name Kharak is supposed to be derived from it.

In 235 Vikram Samvat the Kharaks moved to Piroj-pattan, another town in Central India, and spent many years there. From there, they moved to Dholka (now a taluka headquarter in Ahmedabad district in Gujarat). In Dholka, they settled down as farmers, and started bread relations with the local farmer communities – Kanbis and Gurjar – Suthars – from whom they learned the craft of farming. They ceased to be tradesmen (Vanias) thereafter. This change also resulted in a change in their religious affiliations; according to the Barots they became Vaishyas (Hindu Vanias) in Dholka, while earlier (when they were tradesmen) they were Meshari Dasa Shrimali Vanias (Jain Vanias). And they were now a small community (as they had broken off from their kinsmen in Ujjain). There, they also made some changes in their customs – they gave up wearing the red turban (lal fento) as they used to and accepted widow re-marriage. This, the Barots say, happened around 882 Vikram Samvat. Around 1315 Vikram Samvat the Kharaks moved to Gariadhar near Palitana. They built a step-well there (vav) in the village of Parawadi.

At that time, Mohummad Tughlak was the emperor at
Delhi. He sent his Governor to Saurashtra to collect revenue from the king of Gariadhar, Lakhaji Kandhaji II. Lakhaji was not able to pay his share, as famine and drought had ravaged the area for long. In reprisal the Governor put all the people around under arrest, so the Barots say, and his army marched them as captives towards Delhi. On the way, the various community groups started buying their freedom; first the Ayars raised a ransom and freed themselves and settled around Jusdan, Botad and Paliyad, then the Audichya Brahmins did so and settled down at the Pali village in Rajasthan (and came to be known thereafter as Palewal Brahmins). But the Kharaks did not have the means to do so as they had been on the move too long and had gathered no resources. So the Kharaks were taken to Delhi. (The Barots say this happened in 1442 Vikram Samvat). The emperor ordered that they should pay their full share of revenue within 6 months or produce a surety before a Kaji and if they failed to do so they would all be put to the sword.

The leaders (panch) of the Kharaks were exercised about this and started thinking of a way out. The king of Gariadhar had not protected them as he should have; so they looked elsewhere for help. They sent a message to the Gaurs of the Dasa Shrimali caste in the Bhinmal region saying that if they would help them out they would accept
them as their priests (as they still did not have any relations after their break-up with their kinsmen in Ujjain). The Gaurs did not show any interest in this as they were already heavily engaged. The Kharaks then approached the Barots of Rajkot for help, against which they promised to respect their rights over the community and pay them handsomely every year. Chandrabhan Barot, who was then active in Rajkot, accepted the challenge; he was prepared to even risk his life to earn their gratitude and patronage. According to the Barots, Chandrabhan had seven sons and many daughters and daughters-and-sons-in-law, and they all went together in a group to help the Kharaks; they were about seven hundred strong. As they marched towards Delhi, many others joined them, Bawas, Atits, Brahmins, Sadhus, Targalas; they were three thousand when they reached the northern city gates of Delhi. On their approach the keeper closed the gates and barred their entry. The Barots and their followers went on fast in protest, the women even starved their children and cattle. This went on for seven days. On the eighth day their measures became more drastic; they began immolating themselves. The seven sons of Chandrabhan Barot killed themselves and their heads were strung on the city gate. Women flung their children to death over the city walls, other men ran to death on their swords or mounted funeral pyres alive.
These acts terrified the citizen elders (mahajans) of Delhi. Such drastic self-torture outside the city gates foreboded evil; they hurried to the emperor and tried to persuade him to free the Kharaks. They pleaded that the Kharaks were poor and had undergone much suffering and that much blood had already been shed in their cause. The emperor gave in and called Chandrabhan Barot to his court. He set the Kharaks free and gave them some money to see them back home.

The Kharaks started back. They did not want to return to Gariadhar after the way the king had let them down, not even drink water from the area; outside the city they erected a memorial stone showing a male donkey mounting a female donkey to insult the king. Then they moved to the Talaja region in Gohilwad (in Bhavnagar State), ruled those days by Gajraj Sinhji Rathod of the Waja dynasty. He allowed them to settle near Unchadi village (in Talaja taluka); this area was sparsely populated and was short of skilled farmers. The Kharaks demanded land for their Barots also and the king agreed to this; he allowed them to settle in Pithalpur village.

After this, the community elders selected a member from each surname group and sent them all on an expiatory pilgrimage - to atone for the blood of the martyrs who had laid down their lives at Delhi; they immersed their ashes
in Prabhas Patan (in Saurashtra) and went to the four major centres of pilgrimage, Dwarka, Puri, Badrinath, and Varanasi. On their way back they rested in the house of an Ichhamalia Brahmin in Halwad village (now in Surendranagar, Saurashtra) and told him their story - how they were in trouble, how the Shrimali Gaurs did not help them at the time of need, how they had denied their rights over their community and had no Gaur at the moment. The Ichhamalia Gaurs caught at the opportunity and asked whether they would accept them. The Kharaks readily agreed and performed the necessary rites and returned home with an Ichhamalia Gaur.

At Unchadi they built a temple of Hanumanji and one Ranka Patel built a tank (talav) known as Randal Mataji's talav. From Unchadi the community moved westward in search of fertile land and, in time, settled down near Mahuva town and the villages of the Talaja taluka. Various groups spread out in the villages surrounding the town of Mahuva. Groups of Kharaks also moved towards the east from Talaja taluka and settled down in Ghogha and Bhavnagar talukas (see Vol.II, Pl. 1).

This account certainly indicates that the Kharaks had a chequered history. The credible facts as emerge from this rather romantic account are that the Kharaks were originally a Vania or trader community that migrated from
Rajasthan as many other groups like the Shrimali, Modha, Agrawal, Manodara, Narsipura, Nima, Oswal, Porwad, Lad, Nagar, and Gurjar did at various times. Famines and droughts drove them out of their homeland and they seem to have been singularly unfortunate in that these calamities dogged them from place to place. This probably impoverished them and drove them into farming. They do not seem to have Kshatriya antecedents as the story of the Barots suggests. This could be just an effort on the part of Barots to upgrade them in the social structure. Their general characteristics of docility and uncombativeness mark them out as belonging more to the passive trader class than the arrogant and volatile warrior class.

Their surnames like Valia, Kapadia, etc. are also similar to those of other Vania communities like Modha, Shrimali, and Visa Shrimali and Kapol, as also is their practice of donating ghee during weddings or any religious ceremony in terms of money. The adoption of Mahalakshmi as their main deity also points in this direction. So they could well be a variant branch of the Dasa Shrimali Vania (whatever their derivation), who changed from Meshari to Hindu, and later settled down to agriculture, first in Dholka in West Gujarat and later in Saurashtra. It is also reasonable to imagine that they learned the art of agriculture and embroidery from Kanbis and Gurjar-Suthars of Dholka and they developed these in their individual ways. Although the facts are not quite
clear, the reference to famine in the Barot accounts in Rajasthan and south east Saurashtra are confirmed by other historical accounts, as also Mohammad Tughlak's incursion into Saurashtra, but these facts are peripheral to the main story. The Barots' mention of the Waja rulers in Talaja, where the Kharaks lived has also some support in recorded history. In short, we could say that the Kharaks, a Vania group of Rajasthan, came into Gujarat and after many changes of places and fortunes, settled in the south east coastal region of Bhavnagar district in Saurashtra, as farmers, and through hard work, shrewdness and thrift, attained some measure of prosperity. In their change of occupation from trading to farming, they learnt the art of farming from the Kanbis and Gurjar-Suthars and, with that certain peasant arts, especially that of embroidery. (Enthoven in his book 'Tribes and Castes of Bombay', Bombay, 1922, Vol.II, pp.196-199, also comes to a similar conclusion on this issue).

WHERE DO THE KHARAKS LIVE?

The Kharaks are mainly found today in villages of Bhavnagar, Ghogha, Talaja and Mahuva talukas in the Bhavnagar district of Saurashtra (see Vol.II, PIs. 2,3,4). There are very few of them living in other parts of Gujarat State. These villages are scattered within a narrow coastal strip
about 70 miles long and 7 miles wide along the south east coast of Saurashtra peninsula. The land is flat and low-lying and has fertile soil, and where it borders on the Gulf of Cambay has heavier and more regular rainfall than the other parts.

The Kharaks are to be found in the following villages: (Vol.II Pl. 4)

**Ghogha Taluka:**

**Bhavnagar Taluka:**

**Talaja Taluka:**

**Mahuva Taluka:**
1. Bhadra, 2. Lakhupura, 3. Kumbhan,

The Kharaks say that they migrated to this area about one hundred years ago and settled down as small farmers. They were relatively poor and many of them were just small farmers or farm labourers. Through the years, however, they have improved their fortunes by hard work and efficient farming methods and increased their land holdings. Taking advantage of the new irrigation projects in the last 20 years, and the use of improved seeds and farm equipment, as well as the appreciating prices of farm produce, they have become wealthier. They are such great sticklers at keeping their land well-manured that a local saying goes: Kharak loves a fistful of manure even more than his own child.

On their land, the Kharaks raise millet and pulses like Bajara, Jowar, Shing, Adad, Math, Mag, Chola, etc. during the monsoon months, onions, wheat, sugarcane, chillies and vegetables in the winter months, groundnut and Bajara (special summer varieties) in summer. In orchards they grow coconuts, bananas, mangoes, betel nuts, chikoo, papayas, pomegranates, lemons, guavas, etc. Most Kharaks with farm-land keep 3 to 7 heads of milch cattle (buffaloes) and a pair
or two of bullocks; some of the richer ones have been known to keep as many as 21 heads of cattle. Landless Kharaks mostly depend on cattle rearing and the sale of milk products (though they are found only in large villages and towns). The Kharaks sell milk, ghee and butter in the markets of Mahuva, Talaja and Bhavnagar and keep their earnings from this earmarked for the purchase of cotton and silk threads for their embroidery or expenses related to their customary family gifts.

The Kharak land for all its flatness is not unattractive. Dotted with hillocks, it has rocky beaches where it borders the sea. Kharak orchards are lush and green, and field-stone hedges and borders of cacti and babul trees add variety to the farm land. The colour of the earth varies from yellow, red and brown to black. The village houses being mud-washed on the outside are pinkish in Kalasaar, yellow in Vadali or Bhadroda, red in Longia and Longadi, to cite a few examples. The rainy season is from mid-June to mid-September. The cold months are mid-October to mid-February and the hot season March to mid-June. The months of February and March are dry and mild.

The main varieties of trees on the landscape are banyan, neem, babul and the various orchard trees mentioned above. Varieties of oleander (Karen) and champa (michelia
champaca) are common flowers but there are assortments of flowering creepers. The wild animals seen in the area are deer (haren), stag (sabar), black-buck (kaliyar), jackal (shiyl) and wolf (varu). Occasionally leopards and panthers appear from the Gir forest (of Junagadh district). The common birds of the region are peacocks, parrots, sparrows, crows, and varieties of water fowl, including storks, cranes and flamingoes.

Some of these birds and animals feature in the folklore and decorative arts of the region, and many of their decorative motifs are named after the facts of local flora and fauna.

**HOW DO THE KHARAKS LIVE?**

The villages where the Kharaks live have no set plans of growth (see Vol.II, Pl. 5). The Kharaks live in these with other caste groups, though in each village the different castes have their own quarters, (Bharwad-pa, Kharak-pa, Pancholi-pa, Khumbhar-pa). Most of them live adjacent to each other, except the Harijans, who live a little apart and in poorer houses.

The villages are generally built close to a tank or river from where women fetch water, where people bathe and wash their cattle, and children splash around. On the
outskirts of a village there is usually a temple of Shitala Mata (the smallpox deity), and near its approach a group of shady trees (neem, banyan, peepal, babul) with platforms built around them, where people relax, play games, receive guests, or gossip, and where children play. There is a threshing ground near each village where harvested corn is trampled and winnowed, also a 'gauchar' (or grazing common) for cattle. At some distance from the village there is a cremation ground. (Where there is a river the cremation ground is always on the riverside). At the approach of most villages one can see rows of memorial stones locally known as 'paliyas', facing the east, and quite often a temple of Hanuman.

Although, there is a main street in most villages, the streets and lanes generally follow a zig-zag pattern. The village houses are generally built of mud-bricks and washed (or plastered) with mud and cow dung. A few houses are white-washed with whiting (khadi). Most of the houses have a front courtyard and the door on the street is the door to this courtyard. Affluent farmers have larger courtyards which hold their living quarters on one side, cattleshed and loft on another, and has cots, farming implements, etc. strewn around. The family uses this courtyard in many ways, to work, relax and receive people. The bigger houses have an additional back entrance, opening often in another lane or street. In
the middle of each village there is a meeting place (chaura) where the panchayat (the village council) meets to discuss common problems, to collect levies and settle disputes. There often is a temple of a puranic deity (Rama or Krishna or Shiva) around.

There are various kinds of craftsmen in the village to meet local demands. These are: potters, masons, weavers, carpenters, blacksmiths, shoe-makers, gold-and-silver smiths, tailors, dyers and printers. Of these, some are found only in the large villages and towns.

The Kharak villages are undergoing a great deal of change. The main roads are being improved; better communication has brought in new cultural factors. Being within the reach of towns, they are today more susceptible to urban influences. Urban commodities are seen in greater numbers in Kharak houses, items made out of plastic like buckets, yoke-straps, cot-straps, etc. Transistor radios, table fans, wall-clocks are also seen in many houses of the Kharaks. Most of the villages have been electrified. Most of the farmers use sophisticated farm implements, chemical fertilizers and newly developed seed strains. Primary schools and health centres are there in most of the villages, and postal services are available. More people know how to read and write and so newspapers and magazines are in
evidence as well. The village walls carry, here and there, posters advertising commodities, or seeking support to politicians and parties. There are now tube wells in many villages and public water taps where women fill pots with drinking water; the old well-scene where water is drawn by the rope-and-pulley method is becoming rarer. Similarly, motor-driven flour-mills are there in abundance and hand-mills are becoming rare. Affluent farmers are starting to build houses of fired brick and cement, and corrugated iron sheets are replacing hay and earthenware tiles on the roofs.

Although some of the old folk observances and amusements still continue, some are going out of vogue. Ram Lila\textsuperscript{50} and Dana Lila\textsuperscript{51} troupes are rarely seen these days, as also certain kinds of holy men like the Naga Bavas\textsuperscript{52}; although, Sita-Panthi Bavas\textsuperscript{53} are seen. Itinerant Hakims selling Unani medicines\textsuperscript{54} are also not much seen.

The Kharaks too have undergone changes. They have improved their economic position through the years; they hold larger tracts of land and are today solvent enough to hold their farm produce in warehouses and defer sales till a gainful season; they are today higher in economic status than most of other farming groups like Paliwal Brahmins, Karadiya Rajputs, Kolis, Pancholis, and Ayars, even slightly higher than the Kanbis of the region.\textsuperscript{55}
In the traditional social hierarchy, however, the Brahmins (of Audichya, Unewal, Mewada subcastes) and the Vanias (Jain and Hindu) come first. Farmers like Kanhis, Kharaks, Karadiya Rajputs, Paliwal Brahmins come second. Farmers like the Kolis, the Pancholis and cattle-herding castes like Bharwads, Rabaris come third and craftsmen like potters, masons, carpenters, blacksmiths, shoe-makers come fourth. Harijans, including the weavers, come fifth. The goldsmith's social status is higher than that of the other craftsmen and they come more or less in the second slab. The Paliwal Brahmins, on the other hand, are rated lower than the other Brahmins as they practise farming instead of priesthood, or trade.

The Kharaks do not have the same kind of relations with all their social groups. They interdine with the Kanhis and Gurjar-Suthars but do not intermarry with them. They do not even interdine with the other groups. Some of the singular characteristics of the Kharaks are that they do not generally drink, rarely smoke or chew tobacco like other castes do; they are generally timid and docile, not given to quarrels or crime, even retribution or revenge against criminal acts on them. In this, they are similar to the soft Vanias and like the Vanias they are thrifty and shrewd in business. They are
also strict vegetarians like the Vanias.

In many respects the Kharaks are more conservative than other communities. Although they are subject to the same urbanizing influences as the others in the village, and should be considered more so due to their relative affluence, they seem less susceptible to change. The houses, the household effects, fabrics, costumes, jewellery, even the arts, of the Kharaks, are, with small differences, common to other farmer communities (especially the Kanbis); while the new urbanizing influences are changing slowly the life style of these communities and the nature of their possessions, and has more or less persuaded them to abandon a number of their traditional arts, they have affected the Kharaks to a smaller degree. In fact, the new affluence of the Kharaks has given a new boost to their household arts like embroidery and wall decoration and they still adhere to their traditional costumes and household effects. This is what makes the study of the arts of the Kharak community particularly interesting.

THE LOOK AND COSTUMES OF THE KHARAKS

Kharaks are generally of medium build. The average height of a man is 5'9" and that of a woman 4'11". Their bodies are well proportioned and healthy. Their complexion is brown to medium fair ('ghav varno' or wheat-complexioned
according to local expression). Their features are generally sharp and handsome; the girls have large expressive eyes (see Vol.III, Pl. 2 a, b). The physical type, features and complexion of the Kharaks are similar to those of Kanbis, Ayars and Pancholis (as against those of Kolis, Kardiyqa Rajputs and Paliwal Brahmins who are generally darker). Kharaks keep healthy and fit well past middle age (see Vol.III, Pl. 4 a, b, c and Pl. 5 a, b, c).

Kharak costumes are standard; all men and women, often children, wear costumes of the same kind within their group. Kharak men wear loose trousers (chorani), a tight shirt (kediyun) and a turban (paghadi) all in white cotton (see Vol. III, Pl. 4 d and Pl. 5 a, b, c). Young Kharaks do not wear a turban like the older ones do; and now-a-days most of them go about bareheaded; but at one time they used to tie around their head a folded head-kerchief (paniyun). Kharak boys wear simple shorts or knickers (chaddi). On festivals or special occasions young Kharaks wear a red turban, Kharak boys embroidered jackets. It is usual for Kharak men to carry a cotton wrap (Pachhedi) on their shoulder. In winter they cover themselves with a light woollen blanket (dhabla), either white or black in colour.

Kharak women wear a lungi-like waistcloth (usually
referred to as a short-skirt or 'chaniyo') with embroidery at the bottom, embroidered backless blouses (kapadun), and a body-wrap (sadala) over it. Young Kharak girls wear a head-cover (odhani or pachheda), generally of printed red cotton material (see Vol.III, refer Pl. 3 a, b, c and Pl. 4 a, b, c). The skirts are usually scarlet to brown, rarely black, with colourful embroidery in them; the basic material is heavy cotton. The blouses are generally of various bright colours, again heavily embroidered; the basic fabric is either cotton or silk. On festival occasions Kharak women wear brightly embroidered skirts and blouses (blouses generally of silk, except in the case of adult women or widows), and new sadalas or odhanis. Widows do not wear embroidered skirts, but a plain, generally deep brown, waistcloth. Very young children wear simple blouses and white cotton knickers.

Various kinds of ornaments are part of Kharak women's daily wear. Old women and widows wear earrings of silver or gold, sometimes wristlets of silver, but younger women wear a larger assortment. Various types of necklaces of silver (madaradi, ekdaniyun, kanthi), different kinds of earrings (tholiya, vedhala, ful) of silver or gold are in use. Young married women wear wristlets of ivory (baloya), these and necklaces like 'ekdaniyun' are considered symbols of married status (saubhagya). Young women wear rings on fingers (vinti),
on thumbs (angutho) and toes, generally of silver. On special occasions young women wear necklaces of gold (abharami, sonano har), gold bangles, silver wristlets (kandiya), silver hair-pins (chak) (see Vol.III, refer Pl. 2 a, b and Pl. 3 a).

Kharak men also wear some ornaments, though much fewer than women. They wear earrings of silver or gold (tholiya, ful), often necklaces of gold (mag-mala, kanthi), silver wristlets (saralia), silver finger rings (vedha, koyada, vinti) silver waist chains (kandora), and silver chains to go on their shirts and jackets (sut). On special occasions today men wear shirts, sport necklaces of gold (sonano har), golden button chains (sonano sut) and silver anklets (todas, bedi) and on festive occasions, children wear necklaces (hansadi).

Both Kharak men and women wear shoes. Men's shoes are sturdy and hard wearing (dunda-la, hevla); women's shoes strong but of slightly more elegant shape. They wear lighter and decorative shoes on special occasions, men wear 'rangin boot' and the women wear 'mojadi'. The shoes are generally of leather, though now-a-days frexin, plastic, rubber and other synthetic materials have also been brought into use.

Kharaks wear tattoos on parts of their body; young girls have tattoos on their cheeks, chin, palms, wrists, the motifs of arms, feet and legs, sweet balls (ladva), flower (ful), fly
(makhi), scorpion (vichhi), being common motifs. Motifs like the lock (talun), scissors (katar), flag (dhaja) are recent additions. Men carry tattoos on their hands, palms, wrists and forearms; chain (sankali), flowers (ful), sweet balls (ladva), flies (makhi) being the traditional motifs, and various gods and goddesses the new ones.

Many grown-up Kharak men have their heads shaved clean by a barber. But young boys have the brass-bowl (chhaliyun) cut, which rounds up the hair line over the forehead and takes it over the ears on both sides. Now most young men have the urban cut (seritho) and side parting. Formerly, moustaches (muchh) and beards (dadhi) were common among older men but it is rarely so now (except in the case of people who keep vows).

Young people regularly shave their beard these days, Kharak women comb and braid their hair and loop it into a knot behind the head. Traditionally, a small wooden comb (kanchaki) was used for the hair. Young girls today use larger combs (dantiyo) and wear their hair in two long plaits. Both men and women keep their hair oiled; women oil and comb each others hair, and pick them clean of lice.

Kharaks do not bathe every day, though they wash their faces, hands and feet a few times each day. Men
usually bathe once a week, women whenever they go to launder their clothes. Traditionally, they used to wash themselves down with gray clay (bhutado) or the dry berries of the soap-nut tree (aritha) rubbed into foam in water; now soaps are commonly used. Women dry their hair stroking it with a rolling pin (velam). Women wear collyrium (anjan) round the eyes; they do not wear a mark of kumkum (red turmeric) on their forehead every day, out of fear that it will get rubbed out while working in the fields and bring ill-luck. But they do wear the mark on festive occasions.

**KHARAK HOUSES**

The Kharak houses are not different in general layout, structure, fixtures and outward appearance from those of other peasant communities. Being affluent farmers, their houses are often larger and better built than the others, with larger courtyards, more store-rooms, bigger cattle sheds and lofts, longer verandahs and more living rooms. They use field stones for building the front walls, walls of the verandahs and the inner rooms, and brick for walls of the compound and cattleshed. All the walls are plastered with mud. They use field stones to edge the verandah platform. In certain cases the houses have an upper storey (see Vol. III, Pl. 6 a, b, c, d, e).
The Kharak houses in small villages have some typical features. Usually the houses are built facing East. They have a rectangular plan usually longish and are designed for the needs of average farmers and their cattle. So most of the houses have cattlesheds and storerooms. A typical Kharak house will have the following (see Vol. II Pls. 6 to 8):

1. Big gate with front wall Delo
2. Two adjacent rooms on either side of the gate Orada
3. Courtyard Faliyun
4. Cattleshed Gaman
5. Loft over cattleshed Medo
6. Verandah Padasal, Otalo
7. Inner room Orado
8. Kitchen either separate or provided in one corner of the inner room Rasodun
9. Roof Chhaparun
10. Back wall Pacēhit

**THE KHARAK ARTS AND THEIR SOCIAL SETTING**

The Arts of the Kharaks can be broadly classified into two large categories (1) the arts that they practise and (2) the arts that they patronize (though these are in most cases patronized by other communities also to a greater
The first category includes the following:

1. **Drawings:** (a) white drawings on mud-plastered walls, (b) coloured drawings on whitewashed walls, kothis, etc., (c) ritual drawings.

2. **Embroideries:** (a) wall pieces, door-hangings, (b) costumes, skirts, blouses, etc., (c) cattle and horse trappings, (d) miscellaneous items like bags, cushion covers, etc.

3. **Clay Work:** (a) clay built grain pots, kitchen cupboards, etc., (b) clay built shelves, (c) making of small bowls (thapada) from paper etc.

4. **Simple Skills:** (a) rope and cord making.

The second category includes the following:

1. **Costumes, Fabrics, Wraps:** (a) blanket weaving, (b) block printing, dyeing, (c) tailoring, (d) shoe-making and leather craft.

2. **Jewellery and Ornaments:** (a) gold and silver-smithy.
3. **Body Ornament:** (a) tattoo.

4. **Household Effects:** (a) wooden objects, furniture, door jambs, chests, (b) lathe-turned lacquered objects like a cradle, mortar and pestle, knee-prop, etc., (c) pottery and earthenware, tiles, etc., (d) iron-mongery lamps, frying pans, moulding board, tools, and other implements, (e) metal vessels, (f) baskets.

5. **Houses:** (a) carpentry.

6. **Memorial Stones:** (a) stone carving.

This study attempts to describe the various art and craft activities as mentioned above, their products, their special virtues, their functional background, methods of fabrication, and the circumstances that seemingly sustain them or work against them, presuming that this will be useful in two ways: (1) It will present an authentic record of these activities and products, which may disappear from the scene. (2) It will help in our assessment of whether traditional manual skills have any chance to survive in an industrialising society and if so to what extent, identifying the circumstances necessary for their survival.

All peasant arts (for that matter all traditional
arts) are closely related to the pattern of peoples' lives, their houses, household effects, dress, ornaments, seasonal calendar of activities and spells of work and leisure, festivals, rituals, observances, social customs and value systems. Therefore, to study the arts of the Kharaks in a proper light we need to have an idea of the general pattern of their lives and where in this pattern each category of art finds its place.

Kharaks, like other peasants in Saurashtra, have a certain seasonal cycle of work and leisure (see Appendix I). They start work on their fields late in summer and end the work in late spring, during which time they are busy raising and harvesting their two or three crops; their routine of work is broken only by occasional religious festivals. Their larger social observances like weddings, 'Anas', etc. are generally timed within their period of leisure between late spring and late summer; this is when they build or replaster their houses and decorate them. Births and deaths certainly do not go by a fixed calendar (see Appendix III) but certain social customs like sending a bride to the husband's home or bringing her to her own house or exchanging of gifts between houses do, (see Appendix IV). Similarly, a Kharak family has a kind of timetable for the day (see Appendix II). They work in the fields or at home, or divert themselves or, as in the case
of women cook or darn or make clothes or embroider (see Appendix II). The various objects that kharaks use (or make themselves) or the arts they practise are related to this calendar of seasonal festivals or social observances (see Appendix I).

The following is a brief statement on how the different art/craft activities listed above fall into this calendar (see Appendix I).

The Kharak drawings, all done by womenfolk go roughly by the following calendar. The wall-drawings (in white, called 'alekh', in colour, called 'chitar') are done on the occasion of festivals or religious and social observances.

This starts with Diwali (the local new year). The Diwali drawings are not elaborate as the Kharaks are busy with harvest at that time. The bulk of the wall-drawings is done in summer, when they recondition their houses and celebrate the weddings (see Vol.III Pl. 7 a, b, c, d) and have other social and ritual observances. In between the drawing activity of the Kharak women is confined to certain festivals and ritual occasions like Ganesh Chauth (May), Dhokala Terash (May), Nagapanchami (August); the Vratas (or observances related to ritual vows which are observed at various parts of the year on personal choice). Drawing of
sanctificatory symbols on doorways, farming equipment, tools, etc., precede a special occasion or their fresh use.

The Kharak embroidery is practised throughout the year, whenever Kharak women have some spare time. During the weddings in the rainy season (July, August) and the autumn harvests (September, October) and the time of sowing and harvesting the winter-crops (November and February) the Kharak women find less time to devote to embroidery. The summer respite is, therefore, their busiest time; they embroider the family trousseau; and most houses keep tailors engaged for considerable lengths of time to complete the dresses. At this time, you can often find women busy with embroidery at night, in electric or lantern light. Other summer time chores of the Kharak women include fabrication of clay jars and house furniture and the making of quilts and mattresses. The menfolk devote their time to repair their farm tools, fashion cots with natural branches of trees and lace them with cotton tape or coir rope. They also help the village masons and carpenters in building or repairing houses, by carting the necessary material and helping in the accessory processes. Rope-making is another activity that keeps the Kharak peasant busy in summer, especially those who do not hold land. Ropes, cords and cables of various weights are made from cotton yarn waste for various use on the farm land. Now, this has become a minor full-time industry for
some; they use mechanical devices like oil and electric
engines for this purpose and their turnover is computed to be
to the tune of Rs.5,00,000/- a year and as employing roughly
1500 Kharaks the whole year round.

During the summer months the Kharaks do their main
shopping in the nearby towns. The women buy their jewellery
and the materials for dresses and embroidery. From black­
smiths men buy their tools and the women accessories for the
kitchen. From shoe-makers they all buy their footwear. Some
things are specially ordered from craftsmen - the decorated
bullock-cart (gadu or gadi) - the wooden storage chest (patara)
from the carpenters, woollen blankets from the weavers,
water storage and cooking pots from the potters. Other
purchases include metalware for the household and miscellane­
ous knick-knacks.

The recent affluence of the Kharak farmer has increas­
ed his consumer power and this has increased the quantity of
his purchases; being comparatively orthodox in his tastes, his
money still goes for traditional commodities. Some of these
are objects of personal use, some appurtenances of the house­
hold, some tools of their trade, others status symbols. The
Kharak social life enjoins the possession of certain things
for the normal household and the exchange of certain customary
gifts between families. (For a picture of these refer Appendix
IV).