CHAPTER II

LAND AND THE PEOPLE

II.1 GEOGRAPHICAL OUTLINES:

II.1.i. Location:

The district Jhabua is located between 21°30'N to 23°40'N and 74°30'E to 75°1'E in the south western part of Madhya Pradesh (Fig.II.1). It has an area of 6782 km² and forms a distinct unit of the Malwa plateau. In the drumlike shape of small straight, it has a length of 140 kms and a width of 63 kms approximately. Its eastern boundary touches the Dhar district. In the west Vadodara and Panchamahal districts of Gujarat, and in the north Banswara district of Rajasthan form the boundaries. It lies between the Narmada and the Anas rivers. The tropic of cancer passes through Jobat town, almost in the middle of the district.

II.1.ii. Physiography:

Undulating topography characterised by low hills, narrow valleys and small plateau and plains are the general topography of the district. The river Duri divides the district into two physiographic divisions. North region starts from Machhaliya ghat where the absolute height is 1784 feet and extends up to the rivers Anas and Mahi in the north. The general slope of the district is in the west towards Gujarat plain where the Mahi descends slowly
and ultimately disappears in the Arabian sea. The Bachaka is the highest peak in Jhabua tahsil which forms a sharp escarpment near the Hathani river. This runs parallel to the Hathani over a long distance. In between the Anas and the Mahi river, there are several small but fertile plains. But the small dry Jhabs (ridges) with tiny thorny bushes, are the main topographical features of the region. The name of the district Jhabua, perhaps exhibits this physiographic characteristic. 1

The southern part of the district has the characteristics of trough in Narmada Valley (Ayyar et. al. 1971). Small tributaries in hard beds rock have eroded the main Vindhyan ranges at several places, through which the Narmada flows (Fig. II.2). This separated hills extends over the whole southern part of the Narmada basin. In upper part, where the relative relief is high, Alirajpur basin lies on the fertile land of black soils. Due to highly dissection in the way of the Hathani river, a gorge like steep slope has been formed on both the sides of the river.

II.1.iii. Geology:

The geological structure of Jhabua may be divided into three types of rocks. The Northern part has been formed by the deposits of Deccan traps which extends up to the Jobat. The middle and the southern parts cover a vast areas of Vindhyan system of Dharwarian and Charnockites of Archaean era. The most striking formation
JHABUA PHYSIOGRAPHY

Fig. II.2

HEIGHT
(Metres)

600-900
450-600
300-450
150-300

4 0 4 8 12 K.M.
of the Vindhyan rocks is the scarp which makes the northern flank of the Narmada valley (Ayyar 1971). At some places, older palaeozoic rocks form a rather deeper and wide landmass. The southern-most point near Bakhatgarh has been designated by the geological movement of Jurassic period and has formed several rifts, fold and faults in the Vindhyan ranges.

On the contrary, most of the Jhabs in the northern part have been formed by the old but soft rocks. This indicates that the land forms took place between the two geological movement. Geological survey reports about the availability of manganese, iron, mica, asbestos, limestone, calcite and dolomite in the district except asbestos and manganese are found near Jobat and Megh Nagar town respectively and other minerals and metals have not yet been produced.

II.1.iv. Soils:

The district has black soil throughout its area. At some places, its colour is light black and mixed with red and yellow soils suitable for rice and cotton cultivation. Black soil varies in depth from some inches to several feet and is usually loamy and clayey in texture. Although the water retentive capacity of this soil is more yet in the absence of insufficient rainfall, the soil loses its cropping capacity.
II.1.v. Forest:

The whole district lies under the zone of northern tropical dry mixed deciduous forests. Most of the forest products in northern portion, are of poor quality containing low grade teak and inferior miscellaneous species. The major forest area is found in Alirajpur and Jhabua Tahsils which account for 57.7% of the total forest area of the district. On the other hand other five tahsils together

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tahsil</th>
<th>Geographical area (hect.)</th>
<th>Forest area (hect.)</th>
<th>%age to total forest area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bhabra</td>
<td>33788</td>
<td>5560</td>
<td>4.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alirajpur</td>
<td>225001</td>
<td>35844</td>
<td>31.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jhabua</td>
<td>144218</td>
<td>24747</td>
<td>26.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobat</td>
<td>76099</td>
<td>9058</td>
<td>7.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petlawad</td>
<td>95641</td>
<td>2913</td>
<td>2.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thandla</td>
<td>54535</td>
<td>10939</td>
<td>9.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Megh Nagar</td>
<td>49999</td>
<td>19457</td>
<td>17.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 679281 113518 100.00

Source: Statistical Handbook, Jhabua District.

have only 44.22% forest land. Its main reason is that Southern part bears rather humid climate due to the effects of the Narmada river. Northern part, on the contrary, has dry climate which helps to grow only the thorny bushes. Heavy deforestation has led to the reduction in forest area. At present State government is making serious efforts for afforestation and establishing social forestry.
The main forest products are timbers, firewoods, bamboos, grass, gums, resins and various kinds of fruits and roots. The length of the teak and sal trees have been improved in southern part as compared to these produce in the northern part. The major concentration of these are found along the bank of the Narmada river (Fig. II. 3).

II.1.vi. **Climate:**

Jhabua experiences monthly temperature between 28.0°C to 35.9°C in January and June which are the coldest and hottest month of the year respectively. The fluctuations in temperature continue up to October which is the transitional month from rainy season to cold season and presents an interesting contrast when days are hot and night are cool.

Although Jhabua has moderate amount of rainfall during rainy season, significant change occurred after 1981-82 when the total annual rainfall was recorded as 112.6 mm. Since then their decreasing trend has been recorded every year and it reached 71.9 mm in 1983-84. The gradual decrease in rainfall (73.3 in 1982-83) seriously affected the cropping pattern as well as the total agricultural production of the district. Furthermore agricultural year 1987-88 also experienced severe drought when the rainfall was recorded only 36 mm.

II.2 **DEMOGRAPHIC STRUCTURE:**

Determination of human habitation depends on the geographical conditions which provides for its rural and
Fig. II.3

JHABUA

FOREST COVERAGE

1984-85

Forest Coverage

- > 30%
- 20-30%
- 10-20%
- <10%

Area Under Forest
urban areas according to physical as well as economic abundance or lack of it of the landscape. Human resources in Jhabua have developed through a long process of human occupancy. The total population of Jhabua during the 1981 census was 7.95 lakh out of which 6.53 lakh (83.50%) was tribals (Bhil, Bhilala, Petelia etc.), 0.25 lakh (3.30%) was the scheduled caste and the remaining 13.20 per cent was shared by the general population.

**TABLE II.2: POPULATION GROWTH IN JHABUA 1971-81**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tahsils</th>
<th>Population (Thousand)</th>
<th>Growth (per cent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alirajpur</td>
<td>215.2</td>
<td>108.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jhabua</td>
<td>189.6</td>
<td>100.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobat</td>
<td>133.3</td>
<td>67.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petlawad</td>
<td>102.5</td>
<td>51.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thandla</td>
<td>145.0</td>
<td>72.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The above table reveals the high female growth in every tahsil. Male-female ratio as well as growth during 1971-81 also indicates the increasing tendency of female proportion for the period 1971-81. Accordingly, Petlawad and Thandla tahsils having 981 and 984 female per thousand of male population respectively while in 1971 this ratio was 968 and 972. Other tahsils also experienced a high female growth in 1981 in comparison with female growth in 1971 census year. Distribution of population presents a distinct pattern. According to 1981 census density of population of Jhabua was 117 per km² while it was 98 persons per km² in 1971. At
tahsil level, Thandla has 139 persons per km\(^2\) whereas lowest density is recorded in Jobat. On comparing the district wise density figure as a whole, northern Jhabua is found to be more densely populated than the remaining parts of the district. This is mainly due to the availability of land, water and also the development of agricultural on fertile land provided with irrigation facilities. In 1967-68 agricultural year, the whole district experienced severe drought. Northern Jhabua is less hilly as compared with its southern parts.

### II.2.i. Rural-Urban Composition:

Rural-urban composition of population is highly imbalanced in Jhabua. The rural-urban ratio in 1971 was 92.68:7.32 per cent. This figure in 1981 also did not improve even with high growth rate. Only 1.04 per cent growth in the total urban population during 1971-81 was recorded.

**TABLE II.3: RURAL-URBAN COMPOSITION (PERCENTAGE)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alirajpur</td>
<td>92.16</td>
<td>7.84</td>
<td>91.59</td>
<td>8.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jhabua</td>
<td>89.75</td>
<td>10.25</td>
<td>87.39</td>
<td>12.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobat</td>
<td>95.74</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>95.02</td>
<td>4.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petlawad</td>
<td>92.59</td>
<td>7.41</td>
<td>92.13</td>
<td>7.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thandla</td>
<td>94.39</td>
<td>5.62</td>
<td>94.17</td>
<td>5.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jhabua</td>
<td>92.59</td>
<td>7.31</td>
<td>91.65</td>
<td>8.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Alirajpur has recorded 0.47 per cent, Jhabua 2.36 per cent, Jobat 0.72 per cent, Petlawad 0.46 per cent and Thandla 0.21 per cent increase in urban population in 1981 as indicated in Table II.3. Except Jhabua tahsil which has two urban centres viz., Jhabua, the district headquarter and Ranapur, a small town. Other tahsils contain only one town each and are also the tahsil headquarters. Megh Nagar and Bhabra were given the status of a town in 1984-85. At present there are 8 medium and small towns, having 65 thousand population. Alirajpur being the largest town has the population of less than 18 thousand. The main reason for the slow growth of these towns are the lack of economic infrastructure and presence of temporary weekly markets in rural areas which attract maximum number of commuters. And thus towns are facing stagnation in lack of heavy migration towards urban areas.

II.2.ii. Literacy:

Literacy rate is very low in Jhabua district. Total literate population in 1971 was 8.23 per cent only. During the 1971-81, 2.76 per cent growth was recorded. In other words, only 10.99 per cent population was classified as literacy which could read and write the names. This figure is much lower in the rural areas (7.01 per cent). On the contrary, in urban areas literacy rate was quite high (54.90 per cent).
TABLE II.4: LITERATE POPULATION (PERCENTAGE) 1981

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tahsil</th>
<th>Rural Total</th>
<th>Rural Male</th>
<th>Rural Female</th>
<th>Urban Total</th>
<th>Urban Male</th>
<th>Urban Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alirajpur</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>6.97</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>50.41</td>
<td>60.57</td>
<td>38.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jhabua</td>
<td>6.23</td>
<td>9.38</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>55.82</td>
<td>66.02</td>
<td>44.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobat</td>
<td>5.69</td>
<td>8.31</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>57.23</td>
<td>67.05</td>
<td>46.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petlawad</td>
<td>12.72</td>
<td>19.44</td>
<td>5.85</td>
<td>51.96</td>
<td>63.07</td>
<td>39.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thandla</td>
<td>8.70</td>
<td>13.97</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>62.59</td>
<td>72.71</td>
<td>51.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jhabua</td>
<td>7.01</td>
<td>10.80</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>54.90</td>
<td>65.13</td>
<td>43.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Although the literacy rate of the population is quite low yet follows the pattern of progressive urbanisation.

The above Table reveals that some tahsil have low literacy rate in both the rural and urban areas while the other tahsil have low literacy rate in rural areas but in urban areas it is comparatively improved. Its main reason may be the availability of educational infra-structure, i.e. the distribution of educational institutions and the number of students receiving education in those institutions.

II.2.iii. Tribal Population:

The 3hils are the single dominant tribe in Jhabua district. As stated earlier, in 1981 its total population was 83.50 per cent to the total population whereas the scheduled caste population was only 3.3 per cent and rest 13.20 per cent population was grouped as general population (Table II.5). But due to the migration of non-tribal population to urban centres, the proportion of tribal population is decreasing over the time. For example, in 1971 tribal
population was more than 85 per cent.

TABLE II.5: TRIBAL AND NON-TRIBAL POPULATION (PERCENTAGE) 1981

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tahsil</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Urban</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tribal</td>
<td>S.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alirajpur</td>
<td>88.74</td>
<td>6.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jhabua</td>
<td>94.07</td>
<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobat</td>
<td>93.03</td>
<td>2.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petlawad</td>
<td>74.78</td>
<td>2.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thandla</td>
<td>89.33</td>
<td>1.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Jhabua 89.06 3.04 7.90 22.03 5.76 72.21


The Table II.5 shows the contrast in the proportion of tribal and non-tribal (excluding the scheduled caste) population in rural and urban areas. For example, only 7.90 per cent of general population is living in rural areas while in urban areas its share is 72.21 per cent (Fig.II.4). On the contrary, tribals share more than 89 per cent of the total rural population whereas in urban areas their proportion is only 22.03 per cent.

II.2.iv. Tribal Labour Force:

The definitional changes of working population and their classification have made several remarks on the analysis of labour force participation regarding proportion of male-female workforce, and sectoral allocation of working population. In 1971, the total working population was about 30 per cent. While in 1981 their number reached 43.72 per cent excluding the marginal workers. This
JHABUA
SICE OF POPULATION

Fig. 11.4

RURAL
URBAN

RURAL
URBAN

ST
SC
GENERAL

0 4 8 12
K.M.
TABLE II.6: TRIBAL LABOUR FORCE IN JHABUA 1971, 81

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>1971</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>1981</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total workers</td>
<td>168360</td>
<td>29.76</td>
<td>Total main workers (I-IX)</td>
<td>290249</td>
<td>43.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-workers</td>
<td>397345</td>
<td>70.24</td>
<td>Non-workers</td>
<td>290636</td>
<td>43.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Cultivators</td>
<td>149311</td>
<td>88.68</td>
<td>Cultivators*</td>
<td>261214</td>
<td>90.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II Agriculture Labourers</td>
<td>14744</td>
<td>6.75</td>
<td>Agriculture Labourers*</td>
<td>20217</td>
<td>6.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III Livestock, Forestry, Fishing, Plantation etc.</td>
<td>1262</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>Household Industry* Manufacturing Processing and Repairs (v(a))</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV Mining &amp; Quarring</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>Other workers*</td>
<td>8551</td>
<td>2.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V Manufacturing etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>III, IV, V(a) and VI to IX</td>
<td>82911</td>
<td>12.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Household Industry</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>Marginal workers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Other than H.H. Industry</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI Construction</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII Trade and Commerce</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII Transport &amp; Storage</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX Other Services</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Main workers.

2. Census of India 1981 series 1, India, Part-IIB (iii) Primary Census Abstract: Scheduled Tribes.
unexpected increase in the labour force is not because of the high growth of industrialisation in the district but for the detailed census of working population.

II.3 SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF BHILS:
II.3.i. Origin of Bhils:

The historians and the social anthropologists have very little knowledge of the actual period of first settlement of habitation and the social origin of the Bhils. But there are still some tales, hearsays and historical remarks of existence of the Bhils in Malwa region and adjoining areas of Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra. Law (1934) explains that Bhils are ancient tribe as the event in the Mahabharata reveals the presence of Aklabya. They were also the original inhabitants of Indus valley civilization. Accordingly, the original home of the Bhils was the region between Yamuna and the Indus rivers (now the latter in Pakistan). Russell and Hiralal (1969) have also expressed their view on the validity of the Bhils being the most ancient tribe. According to them the "Bhils were the oldest inhabitants of Southern Rajputana and parts of Gujarat and were usually spoken of in conjunction with the Kolis who inhabited the adjoining tracts of Gujarat". On the other hand Venkatachadri (1931) has accepted that the Bhils were there in India before the Aryans and the Dravidians. Furthermore, Ktesis (400 B.C.) and the Phyllititge of Ptolemy (AD 150) have suggested that the Bhils were Pygmies. Whereas
archaeological excavations and the materials found in those excavations prove that the Bhils were original inhabitants of Mahi, Sabarmati and Gambhiri plains (Prakash 1967).

Many historians and anthropologists have concluded that the word 'Bhil' is derived from Dravidian (Tamil) word 'Bhil' or 'Bhilawar' means 'bow' which is the characteristic weapon of the Bhil tribe (Ali 1973, Chatopadhyay 1978, Mazumdar 1958, Russell and Hiralal 1963). Thus, the place of original residence of the Bhils should be somewhere in Tamil Nadu. The word Bhil is a corruption of Sanskrit word Bhilla which refers to the inhabitants of forest area. Another word Bhilasa also exhibits the personality of the Bhil tribe (Law 1934).

Rowney (1882) in his book, The Wild Tribes of India, has associated the word 'Bhil' with the Bhilwara, a district of southeast Rajasthan. According to him the Bhil had been resided on a rocky, forest terrain along the Vindhyan and the Satpura range. Chaturvedi (1977) also has dispelled a similar view about the home of the Bhils. But it also being claimed that during their own rule over the area, they used to live on the prosperous and fertile land to the west of Bhilwara and Banswara i.e. Udaipur, Jaipur and its surrounding areas. Today the Bhil settlement has extended over Malwa in Madhya Pradesh, Vidarbha in Maharasthra, eastern Gujarat, beside the Bhils in Rajasthan. In the process of 'driven out' some Bhil settlement have also been found in Tripura, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.
II.3.ii. Relation with Rajputs:

It is believed that either Bhils were a part of Rajput dynasty or they were the superior human stock before Rajput as 'Aryan Tribe' came in this region from elsewhere. On many occasions, Bhils were the first supporter of the Rajputs in battle with the Mughals and later with the Europeans. Tod (1957) says that Bhils were as close to Rajputs as they (Bhil) were to the Purohit (Holiman) during the festivals and family affairs. During the coronation of young prince, the Bhils were needed for the task of smearing the forehead of the prince with their own blood. Bhilala a sub-tribe of the Bhil do equalise themselves with Rajput.

II.3.iii. Linguistic Identity:

Although the language of the Bhils originated from Sanskrit and mixed with Gujarati. Yet the local dialects the similarity with the words spoken in the adjoining areas of Rajasthan, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh i.e. of the Aryan origin (Grierson 1907). Bhil language has also been identified with the Munda sub-family of Austro-Asiatic parent's family. (Mazumdar 1958). This relation of linguistic homogeneity also exhibits the clue to a common origin of the Munda and the Bhils. Whatever may be the reason and region of separation of Bhil tribe from other tribal group, it is still believed that Bhils were driven away by the Aryan and other tribes to south-eastward from northwestern part of India.
II.3.iv. From self-sufficiency to Unemployment:

The economy of the Bhils was self-sufficient before they came to jungle tract and hilly areas of Malwa and Vidarbha. Although the agricultural production based on traditional methods of cultivation, the sufficient production of food and edibles used to be obtained from the land to sustain the family needs. There are also the evidence of cooperative system of agricultural production. The production from the common land was the subject of common property for the Bhil society and later it was decided that according to their labour, the produce would be shared. This system is still being practised in several Bhil villages. Cooperative production as a part of social system is an important characteristic of the Bhil society.

This self-sufficient economic life of the Bhils got disturbed due to migration of the Aryans and others to the land of the Bhils from north-west. The Bhils were driven away gradually to the jungle and hilly region of the south-east. This was the transitional phase when the tribal people left rather superior life of plain and were compelled to lead a tribal life in the jungle. A life which was full of hardship at every stage of movement with nature. Thus, the whole social system began to change. But the major change occurred in good habits, clothing and housing only. The jungle provided them fruits, leaves and roots, became their staple food. The small wild animals like rabbits, rats, rams,
bees, etc. were included in the list of food, in early stage. Later, they began to hunt for big animals of both the groups viz. carnivorous and herbivorous. Thus the food habits shifted from cereal foodgrains to the jungle products.

II.3.v. Shifting Cultivation:

A century later, the forest could not sustain the growing population pressure and the forest products itself began to deplete gradually. The tribal people started to denude the forests by felling the trees and burning the bushes for cultivation of coarse grains. Another important change took place in the social life of tribal people when they employed themselves in shift cultivation. Earlier, the shifting cultivation started on the foothills of the Vindhyan and the Satpura ranges and was limited to a small piece of land, the main reason would have been for this the change in the morphology of the terrain. In the foothills, felling of trees was easy because the soft soils on slope, which helped the tribals felling the trees.

The second most important need of shifting cultivation was the easily approachable area on the foothills. The tribal people did not enter the remote area of dense forest for the fear of wild animals. Slowly, the tribal inhabitants adapted themselves to the forest environment and adjusted their social as well as economic life from generation to generation. It has to be kept in mind that the social life of the Bhils was superior to those of the Aryans. Tribalisation
in their life came after the arrival of the Aryans who invaded the Bhils and later they were pauperised by the vagaries of the nature. (Tod 1957, Doshi 1971 and Carstairs 1954).

There was no sign of religious life of the Bhil tribals like Hindus or the people belonging to other religions. But it was true that during the assimilation process with the non-tribals they partially adapted themselves to some of the religious practices of the Hindus but did not accept the Hindu religion in totality. A major change came in the social life of the Bhils was the criminal tendencies among their masses. The Bhil tribals received ruthless, brutal and cruel treatment at the hands of the Rajputs, the Muslims, the Marathas and the British. The Bhils were captured and killed in battles and were enslaved all those who tried to escape from the onslaught of the invaders. Several Bhil Chieftains were suppressed whenever the tribal masses raised the voice against the rulers (Oza 1953). Animism in the religion entered the Bhils' life partially for fear of oppression by invaders and partially due to belief in "super power" supposed to have caused rain, thunder storm, hail and lightning.

II.3.vi. **Deforestation and change in occupation:**

In the process of deforestation the practice of shift cultivation, the Bhils gradually shifted themselves from the plains of Rajasthan and Gujarat to the remote hilly and
forested areas of Malwas. Later on, one group crossed the river Narmada and took shelter in the Vidarbha area. For a long period, the main occupation of Bhils was shifting cultivation. But large scale deforestation took place after the British occupied these areas. Consequently, the British handed over the felling and selling of forests products to the private contractors and sahukars (money lenders). Now the whole Malwa and a part of Rajasthan have become desert because of the excessive deforestation by the non-tribals.

Later on, the Bhils adopted a settled agricultural life and practices as they were unable to migrate in other areas because of the resistance offered by the native people where the Bhils wanted to migrate. But the agriculture during the latter period was insufficient to sustain the economic life for the non-availability of proper agricultural practices.

At present, the agriculture is the main occupation of the tribals. Low yield of agriculture production led to the low level of employment, and consequently, the low income resulted in the large scale migration to big urban and industrial centres to seek employment.

II.3.vii. Impact of Interaction with outer world:

The interaction of the tribal with the non-tribal community has made profound effects on the socio-cultural as well as economic conditions of the Bhils. From the very beginning the non-tribals especially the Rajputs drove out the Bhils from southern Rajasthan to southeast.
Interaction with outsiders has brought the institutional changes in the social life of Bhils. Conversion of the Bhils to Christianity and Islam brought to them many immoral habits and practices of an urban society, the results of interaction with non-tribals. The Christian missionaries expanded their operations and the influence on the Bhils to promote the ideals of Christianity so that the British could perpetuate their rule with the majority of the converted supporters. Missionaries provided the Bhils modern education, changed their food, habits, fashion and matrimonial ceremonies, thus the economic condition of the Bhils improved. On the contrary, the social institutions like dormitories and festivals cum fairs like Bhagoria were on the decline being disturbed due to the interference of non-Bhils (Mann 1980). Thus, the sexual life of Bhils was also disturbed. Gradually, five types of marriage: Saonas, Bhagoria, Sayav, Udal, Gharjamai and Ghijhilya lost their original significance. (Naik 1969)

There used to be a practice buying and selling of a bride without exception. In order to purchase a bride, a Bhil youth could borrow money from private institutions or could surrender himself to the money lender on low paid job or as a 'bonded labourer' to manage the money. The institution of polygamy was and is still prevalent among the Bhils. Therefore, any body can have more than one wife at a time. However, due to modern urban culture and the education, the polygamy is gradually withering away.
II.3.viii. Emergence of elite class:

Class and caste consciousness among the Bhils are of the recent origin particularly, after the influence of the Hindu culture (as it is said) among Bhils (Srinivas 1966). A new class of educated urban Bhils has been emerging, particularly, among those who are in government services. They are placed in an advantageous position by virtue of their role and status in the village. They acquire more profits and benefits than from the others development projects, consequently enhancing their economic standard (Doshi 1971). Another important change has taken place in the medium of expression at least among the educated Bhils. Now most of the new generation youth can speak Hindi. Owing to this assimilating process, the superior tribal culture, based on sound economic division changed ultimately owing to the tribalisation of Bhil culture. (Chauhan 1978) The Hinduism brought missionaries, social reformers, traders, money lenders, landlords, rulers, administrators and officials who were the media of cultural contract (Mann 1982).

II.3.ix. Pattern of exploitation:

Another aspect of change was due to the interference of the non-tribals, the degeneration of their economy which was based on shifting cultivation and lesser on forest products. The subsistence economy of production, consumption and private accumulation was nowhere in practice, got lost after the colonial transformation of the Bhil society. Till
recently, the Bhils were cheated by sahukars and baniyas in weight and measures of consumable and non-consumable goods. They were unaware of marketing system for a long period. Although the missionaries introduced the system of trade and taught the tribals the methods of bargaining with the seller and induced them to be conscious against cheating by non-tribals. The Christians never emerged as the agrarian institution to help and raise the agricultural production (Singh 1978).

Problem of land alienation created by non-tribals also led to the economic hardship for the tribals. Except sahukars, baniyas, contractors, jamindars moneylenders, and Christian missionaries also acquired the fertile land of the Bhils (Singh 1978). This process continues even today. The poor Bhils have always asked for monetary help from outside community i.e. from the non-tribals, during the failure of crops due to drought (which is regular phenomena) to buy a new pair of bullocks, or for wedding or at the time of death, birth or even during the court cases. Under the conditions of economic insecurity and unable to return the borrowed money, the borrower (tribals) became the Asami (pawn) of the money lender. The next phase of alienation is the mortgage of land and other properties to the non-tribals. Once a mortgaged land, persons, and even the crops, go into the hands of money lenders, never to return to the Bhils (Mann 1982). Aggrawal (1982) opines that "at the
economic level the Bhils are not independent, they are rather over dependent on non-Bhils upon whom they rely for money, goods and services, as some of the non-Bhil rely on them for the same.

This relationship is not limited only to the land encroachment but it also invites the bonded system of labour force for money lenders and contractors either in tribal areas or outside it. At present thousands of Bhils have been forced to work for meagre wages in the mines. (Nav Bharat Times, Feb. 17, 1988). The innocent Bhils generally do hard work for several years, but before the end of expiry date of borrowed money, another amount of money is put against the name of the tribal fraudulently. Another sordid tale of the tribal is the bonded labour in which the whole family (wife and children) have to work even after the parents' death. The children of the bonded parents have to clear off the money borrowed after the death of their parents. Such a vicious circle has always been in operation in the economic life of the Bhils and is interlinked with the survival of the family.

Gradually the process of money lending by private money lenders, is being replaced partially by the government and semi-government organisations such as banks, cooperative banks and cooperative societies. But the hardships of tribal people have not reduced (Rao 1987).
NOTES

1. However, the name of Jhabua is stated to have been derived from the name of the chief of the town. It was founded the Jhabua Naik during sixteenth century. At the end of nineteenth century, Jhabua was bounded by several small states like Kushalgarh on the north in Rajputana Agency, on the south by Jobat; on the east by Alirajpur and Dhar and on the west by the Panch Mahal district of Bombay. The total area at that time was 136089 miles - The Imperial Gazetteer of India vol.XIV - Jaisalmer to Katra (New Edition) Today and Tomorrow's Printers & Publishers, 1908, pp.104-7.

2. Other sub-tribes of the Bhils in Jhabua are Bhilala, Barela, Patelia and Bhil Mina etc.

3. According to new definition, the entire population, even the children below the age of 14 years has been included in the category of 'working population'. Another major change occurred in 1981 census, was that several labour categories were clubbed together. Except these changes, an interesting change has been noticed in the female participation among the marginal workers.

4. Reference to the Bhils have been found in different Sanskrit literatures viz. Puranas, Ramayanas, Mahabharata etc. Several travellers and pilgrims also recorded the presence of Bhils before 400 B.C.

5. Sub-tribes in these states are the Bhil Garasia, Dholi Bhil, Dungri Bhil, Dungari Garasia, Mevasi Bhil, Rawal Bhil, Tadvi Bhil, Bhangali, Pawra, Vasava, Vasave, except Bhilala, Barela, Patelia and Bhil Mina. In Delhi Bhils are categorised as scheduled caste - Census of India 1981, Series-I, India, paper 2 of 1984 - General Population and Population of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

6. Changes in the social organisation of the Bhils are seen to have resulted primarily from the contact with the Hindu Community. The impact of Rajput culture is seen in the realm of religion, new marriage practices and the imbibing of Hindu customs, modes and sanctions. The Bhagat movement traces the backwardness of the Bhils to their habit of eating meat and drinking liquor. The Bhagatism (devotionalism) attempts to give them a social structure based on purity.
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