

CHAPTER V

Ethnography of the village

The Ethnographic data was collected and organized under following categories.

- (1) Agro-climatic characteristics of the village
- (2) Geography of the village
- (3) Ethnic composition of the valley
- (4) Caste and lineage based relations with other villages
- (5) Appearance of the people
- (6) Dress pattern of the people
- (7) Religious pantheon and beliefs
- (8) Magic religion
- (9) Religious customs and rituals
- (10) Family organization
- (11) Food composition and sources of food
- (12) Foraging behaviour
- (13) Leadership and politics
- (14) Settlement pattern
- (15) History of the community
- (16) Occupational patterns
- (17) Food production ,distribution, and security
- (18) Land use patterns
- (19) Crop patterns
- (20) Housing patterns
- (21) Animal husbandry
- (22) Medical and health services

- (23) Sanitation facilities
- (24) Irrigation facilities
- (25) Co-operative institutions
- (26) Industries and cottage industries
- (27) Social education facilities.
- (28) Communication patterns
- (29) Administration and inhabitation patterns
- (30) Seasonal occupation patterns.

Ethnographic data about the village is presented below in the same order as mentioned above.

(1) Agro - climatic characteristics of the village and its area

Village Ghera Mordari was located in the Western Ghats. These were mountain ranges formed out of the volcanoes that dotted the Deccan plateau. These were also popularly known as Sahyamdri ranges. These ranges separated the coastline of Konkan on the western side of India from the plains of the Indian subcontinent. The Western Ghats extended between the northern end of Riagad district in Maharashtra and Palghat district in Kerala. These ranges were spread over a geographical area covering the western coastal tracks of four states viz. Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka and Kerala. Thus, the ranges were obviously inhabited by people with distinctive cultural, linguistic, social and economic characteristics. The village under study was located in the hill - tracks extending from the eastern phalanges of the Ghats. Thus, one could identify it as one located on the border of two

distinctive geographical systems. The hill - ranges along which the village was located were devoid of any forest growth. Landscape on the top of the hills as well as the slopes appeared barren with scanty growth of shrubs. However, if one travelled approximately 10 kms towards the south of the village in the same hill - tracks, then one used to find dense growth of tropical, moist deciduous forest.

The area was characterized by annual rainfall of 100 - 150 cms. The mean annual temperature was between 26^o and 27^o Celsius. Humidity percentage was 60 - 80 %. Indeed, it was reported by the local people in Kalyan - Mordari valley (the area of study for the present research) that their area was also covered with this forest till thirty to forty years ago. According to them, rapid growth in population resulting in extension of settlements led to cutting down of forests. The forest was mainly cut for clearing of land for development of settlements; agriculture; satisfying the need of fuel wood and obtaining food consisting of roots, tubers and fruits.

The forest in the area consisted of **Saal** (*Shorea robusta*), **Teak** (*Tecona brandis*), **Arjun** (*Terminalia arjuna*), **Ebony** (*Diosphyres inelanoxylon*), **Kusum** (*Schleichera trijuga*), **Kanju** (*Holoptela*), **Bel** (*Zizyphus jujuba*), **Palas** (*Butea trondosa*), **Mahua** (*Bassion latifolia*), **Sandal wood** (*Somtaha album*) at the time of ethnographic exploration.

The forests in the Ghats were inhabited by following fauna :-

Leopard, Oxen, Buffalo, Horse, Deer, Rabbit, Crow, Sparrow, Parrot, Robin, Bharadwaj, Fox, Wolf, Bear, Hyena, Pangolin (scaly ant eater), Squirrel, Hedgehog, Monkey, Pigeon, Wood pecker, Cock, Egret, Bulbul, Eagle, Kite, Vulture, and Weaver bird.

People in the village had organized their lifestyle on the basis of Hindu calendar. The Hindu months were Chaitra, Vaishakh, Jyeshtha, Ashadh, Shrawan, Bhadrapad, Ashwin, Kartik, Margashirsha, Paush, Magh and Phalgun.

Summer, rains, winter were the main seasons in the valley. Summer used to begin in Chaitra and continue till Jyeshtha. Rainy season used to begin in the mid of Ashadh and continue till the mid of Ashwin. Winter used to begin in the second half of Ashwin and continue till the mid of Magh. The second half of Magh and the month of Phalgun was the period of transition towards the summer season.

(2) **Geography of the village :**

The village showed a peculiar geographical pattern. On the one hand the village was located in proximity of an urban area and rural settlements in the process of urbanism. On the other hand, it showed geographical distinctiveness characterized by location along an environmental system defined by sharp geographical barriers which performed as a doorway to flow of information in both the directions viz. from outer polities toward the village and vice-versa.

The village was located in between the north - south and east - west phalanges of the Sinhagad mountain on three sides. These phalanges were marginal branches of the Sahyamdri

mountainous ranges that separated the coastline of Konkan from the Deccan plateau. In fact, one found two of these phalanges narrowing down toward Kondhanpur in east.

Thus, it was easy to define village Mordari and its vicinity as a definable open environmental system that was characterized by its own climatic, topographical features. These features distinguished the Mordari basin from its immediate neighbourhood of plains inhabited by villages like Kondhanpur, Shivapur, Ranje, Kusgaon, Arvi and Sanaswadi. The village was located along communication routes dotted by either administrative or market growth centres to which the study - village transferred varied information about its almost closed or narrowly open composite system of natural and social environments. Information required for the perpetuation of this composite system was in turn obtained from these centres directly. Thus, the study village, the growth centres and the communication routes between them could also be viewed as a network.

The transition in the condition of the route that led from Pune to Ghera Mordari indicated a marginalisation of the community along channels of communication. But this statement must be understood with broader economic implications. It suggested that the relationship between the urban area and the growth centres on the one hand and the village on the other hand was not based on mutual economic status. Relative to the growth centres in the proximity the study village was possibly seen

with less importance in terms of supply of labour, yield from land resources and potential market.

The condition of the communication routes showed a seasonal variation in the flow of information as the routes were used at very less times during rainy season than other times of the year. But there was also a possibility of an increased flow of information between the village and the villages in the hinterland of Sinhagad-particularly, during the rainy season.

However, this possibility did not have necessarily direct relation with the condition of the connecting routes. Further it had more to do with traditional links between the villages in the hinterland with respect to patterns of landownership. It was supported by the observation that some of the landholdings in the vicinity of the village were owned by settlers from the neighbouring villages.

The hamlets of Shivatharwadi and Khalashachiwadi were incorporated in the Gram Panchayat of Kalyan while the hamlet of Gheryachiwadi was included in the Gram Panchayat known as Ghera Sinhagad. Thus, the last was a group of many tiny hamlets and a larger village known as Donaje. All of these were located along the circumference of the fort. However, Ghera Mordari was distinctively located on the eastern side of the phalanges while the rest of the settlements are located on the opposite side.

An exclusive classification was used by residents of Ghera Mordari while defining its geographical boundaries. This classification was followed with respect to the rainwater

drainage patterns in the Mordari basin. According to these people rainwater along the slope of Sinhagad ranges flows down to three villages viz. Kalyan, Rahatwade and Kondhanpur.

Inspite of the fact that other settlements were also located within the same distance like the above three from Ghera Mordari, no geographical relationship was defined by the villagers with the rest of the villages. Instead, membership of a larger environmental area was projected with respect to precipitation proportion.

Because of its location at the margins of the two separate geographical areas the village showed composite pattern of precipitation and its channelization. It was reported that when the monsoon rains used to start these would reach the villages on the immediate western side of the Sinhagad phalanges at least 3-4 days before they would reach Mordari.

The proportion of the precipitation too was relatively low on the side of Mordari compared to the western side. This used to immediately affect the crop patterns in the two contiguous areas as such variation was to be found between Mordari and villages on the other side of the fort.

(3) Ethnic Composition of the Valley :

The term 'ethnic' had been used in a very specific sense of caste and religious identity in this exploration. Otherwise, the term was used by social researchers to even denote linguistic identities. In the context of the present research, there was no need to hold linguistic considerations in mind since the area

under investigation was very homogeneous from the point of reference to spoken language. Almost all social groups in the area mainly used Marathi for daily communication in public. Even a large majority in the area used Marathi for communication within the family too with the exception of the Muslims and a small number of families which had mostly migrated to this area from outside Maharashtra state. Muslims used Hindi with some mixing of Urdu lexicon for communication within the household; while the rest of the non - Marathi speaking group was miscellaneous in composition with respect to mother - tongue. Nevertheless, the most conspicuous among them were Marwaris who used to speak a dialect of Rajasthani for communication within the household. However, it was definitely noted that Muslims and other non - Marathi speaking groups were not settled within the valley Kalyan - Mordari. They were settled in villages in the adjoining plains areas, and more particularly in the villages close to the national highway between Bombay and Bangalore.

Coming back to the point of castewise and religious composition of the valley, it was a remarkable condition that a large majority of the population was made up of Maratha peasant caste. In the rest of the villages in the valley other than Mordari viz. Kalyan, Rahatwade, Kharmari, Mogarwadi, Khamgaon, Vazewadi, Thoptewadi, Malkhed and Chadawadi. There was presence of more than two caste groups in the village, but the situation with respect to caste composition was unique in village Ghera Mordari where one would find inhabitation of only two caste

groups. Details of the caste system in Mordari are discussed in the sub - section on Caste system and Lineages.

The castes other than Marathas were traditionally engaged in occupations that supported the agricultural economy. A corollary to this process was the absence of Brahmins from either of the villages in the valley. The ritualistic needs related to religious life were centred around the institution of temple, and these needs were taken care of by Gurav (the temple - priest). Details of the role of Guravs in the caste system will be discussed in details in the sub - section on Religious Rituals and Customs.

The relationships between caste groups in the valley had already undergone significant changes. This was to be related with the changed occupational patterns in the area. People belonging to all the caste groups had taken to non - traditional occupations in considerable number. Besides that one also noticed the acceptance of the monetary principle by all caste groups. Therefore, even though one still found members of different castes rendering traditional services to each other (expressed in the form of **Balute** system), nevertheless, more and more exchanges between different castes were taking place in the form of monetary transactions.

As well as, institutionalization of political franchise had also relaxed the traditional bonds between castes; and indeed a spirit of competitiveness between castes and clans had been induced. This was reflected in the most intricate electoral

alliances that used to be forged between various sections of caste groups and clans in the valley. These alliances used to be formed with respect to controversial issues common to one or more of the settlements in the valley. In turn, These issues used to take birth from the conflict between interests of caste groups or clans involved in the given situation.

(4) (a) Caste system and Lineages

Ghera Mordari was a hamlet of village Mordari. The traditional single entity of village Mordari had been divided into two parts viz. the hamlet of Ghera Mordari, which had the largest number of families, was part of the group Gram Panchayat named as Ghera Sinhagad. The other two smaller hamlets known as Khalashachi Wadi and Shivathar Wadi had been incorporated in the group Gram Panchayat named as Kalyan consisting of the neighbouring village Kal yan.

As described earlier, the majority population of the valley was made up of Maratha peasantry. The situation was much more homogeneous with respect to caste composition in Mordari, and more so in the settlement of Ghera Mordari. In Ghera Mordari, out of 49 families 41 belonged to Maratha caste. Maratha families were clustered together in the proximity of another settlement called as Khalashachi wadi. Khalashachi Wadi was made up of only Maratha families. The 8 Ramoshi families from Gheryachi Wadi were clustered together in make-shift houses of mud and located at a distance of approximately 1/4 km from the main settlement of Maratha families. There were three major clans among

Marathas of Ghera Mordari viz. Khatape, Yadav and Talekar. Most of the members of Ramoshi group belonged to chavan clan. Only one old man among Ramoshis who lives alone belonged to Mandale clan.

Characteristics of the caste and lineage system in Ghera Mordari were as following -

- (i). There was a predominance of occupational specialization. The Marathas were mainly agriculturalists while Ramoshis were mainly village - watchmen.
- (ii). A segregation of habitation along the lines of was found which conformed to the traditional caste - based settlement pattern.
- (iii). Members of both castes used to observe norms of the traditional 'Balute' system to a great extent as far as occupational services and economic transactions were concerned.
- (iv). As a part of Balute system, the Ramoshis used to act as guardians or watchmen of the cropped fields of Maratha farmers during the nights. Ramoshis used to received varying quantities of grains (mostly rice and sometimes, wheat) from the families to whom they would render services towards the end of harvesting.
- (v). Members of both castes had taken to non - traditional, urban based occupations for a period of around thirty years before the researcher visited it. This had compelled them to migrate to urban areas. This had certainly brought about an attitudinal change in them. The relationship that went as a part

of Balute system were more need - based and rooted in non - traditional context and the principle of obligation had weakened. Thus, sometimes the exchange of service and obligatory gifts (that formed an integral form of Balute system) was replaced by exchange of service for monetary returns.

(vi). The majority population of the village belonged to the Khatape clan among Marathas. As discussed earlier, they supposed to have purchased land from Ramoshis. Yadavs and Taleks came next in number to Khatapes with respect to numbers among Marathas. Talekars had migrated to the village only a generation ago and only one family belonged to this clan. Yadavs, on the other hand, had branched off in many nuclear households after a migration to the village (unspecified) generations ago. The exact number of generations of Yadavs that had lived in the village was not known but there was a common version shared by all in the village that they migrated from the vicinity of the famous fort of Devagiri near Aurangabad in Marathwada region of Maharashtra and they came to the village through matrimonial ties with the Khatapes.

(vii). Although there were a handful of nuclear households among Ramoshis, Majority of them were supposed to have branched off from a single large family of Chavans. There were more than one household of Mandales among Ramoshis of this village. At the time of research all of them - except the single old man - had permanently migrated to urban areas of Pune and Bombay. There was a common version shared in the village that the Mandales had come to the village through matrimonial ties with the Chavans.

The exact period of generations of their stay in the village was known.

(viii). There was no ritualistic or prestige based discrimination between clans of the same caste in both the groups. On the other hand , relationship based on the principle of equality among clans was emphasized.

(4) (b) Caste and lineage based relations with other villages

The relationship among various clans of Marathas and between Marathas and Ramoshis was part of the larger caste and lineage based relationship. In Kalyan - Mordari valley, indeed this observation carried substance given the historical condition that village Mordari evolved as an extended appendage-like settlement of a few other Maratha dominated settlements in the valley and its adjoining areas. The salient features of the caste and lineage based relationship between inhabitants of Ghera Mordari, the other two settlements of Mordari and other villages and hamlets of the valley are described here.

(1) There were matrimonial ties among Marathas of the valley strictly based on the principles of Clan Exogamy and Caste Endogamy.

(2) The principle of village endogamy which was dominant in the north Indian rural society was not observed in the villages of the valley. Thus, one found marriages taking place between members of the same caste inhabiting the same village or settlement. In fact, one found instances of marriage between Khatape and Yadav families of Ghera Mordari.

(3) Ramoshis of Ghera Mordari used to observe village endogamy since they were part of a single clan and their caste members were located in villages Kalyan and Kondhanpur in the vicinity.

(4) Relations among clan members of the same caste were strictly based on the principles of ritualistic equality and equal social prestige.

(5) Balute transactions played an important role in the interactions between different castes of the valley. Salient features of these interactions are presented here.

(a) Brahmins (Priestly caste); Sutars (Carpenters); Buruds (basket - makers); Kumbhars (potters); Guravs (temple -priests); Ramoshis (village watchmen); Nhavis (barbars); Marathas (the agriculturalist caste); Dhangars (nomadic shepherds); Mangs (a so - called untouchable caste traditionally engaged in basket making, broom making and rope making); Chambhars (cobblers); Kasais (endogamous group of butchers among Muslims); and tribals especially, Katakarris (who were neither natives nor permanent migrants to the valley) were the endogamous caste groups that participated in the Balute exchanges.

(b) All these castes were traditionally engaged in specialized occupations. These occupations carried sets of certain rituals and social obligations accompanied by social prestige.

(c) Members of each of these groups provided special services to others in exchange of which they used to receive grains and other food items in certain quantities.

(i) Brahmins were supposed to enjoy highest ritual and social

status in the caste system. There were no Brahmins who were native to the villages of the valley. All of them had settled in certain villages in the areas adjoining the valley. They used to offer religious services like officiating **pujas**; officiating marriages; performing death rites; reading and interpreting religious scriptures, particularly to Marathas of the valley. The families offering these services received grains in various quantities from Maratha families to whom the services were offered. It was peculiar that the Brahmins accepted only raw food grains from Marathas. As a symbol of ritual status, they would never accept cooked food from Marathas or for that matter from any other caste.

(ii) Sutars (carpenters) used to manufacture bullock - carts, agricultural implements and a wide range of domestic appliances for all villagers. They also used to enter into contractual relationship with the villagers to repair these objects. In exchange, they used to receive grains, pulses, vegetables from the villagers. These items were particularly received from Maratha farmers.

(iii) Buruds used to prepare baskets of varying sizes and shapes from bamboo cane and sell the items to farmers and potters. They would receive grains in varying quantity in exchange of this service. However, it was observed that there was a little scope for this exchange as there was very little surplus production of agricultural produces in most of the villages in the valley.

(iv) Kumbhars manufactured earthen pots that were sold to villagers in exchange of grains. For five pots of any size bought, the Kumbhar was paid one pot full of rice. The pots were used by the villagers of the valley for carrying purposes and storage of water, festivities etc. Additionally, the villagers of Kalyan - Mordari used the pots for storing and carrying curd and butter - milk to Sinhagad fort for sale to tourists.

(v) Guravs were a group holding a social status lower than Brahmins. Nevertheless, they claimed a status equal to Brahmins. They were the traditional care - takers of the village temple. They were responsible for maintaining cleanliness of the temple premises; giving bath to the idols of the temple deities; offering **pujas** to the deities etc.

They were offered certain quantities of grains by each and every family of the village for these services. Guravs in Kalyan- Mordari valley appeared to be an endogamous group which was a picture not conforming with some other parts of Maharashtra. In most of the other regions in the state, they were hardly regarded as an endogamous group on their own. Instead, they belonged to various endogamous caste groups and used to marry in their own caste.

(vi) Ramoshis were also called as Naiks. They were village watchmen who used to guard the lands, crop and properties of other castes in the area. They were offered certain quantity of grains - mostly, rice in this valley - by the family which used to avail of their services.

(vii) Nhavis were barbars. They used to give hair - cut and shaving services to the so - called upper caste Hindus in the valley like Sonars (goldsmiths), Marathas and Brahmins. Each family from these so - called higher castes, thus, offered a certain quantity of grains to them for the services they used to offer. The services offered by Nhavis were basically for the purpose of both daily cleanliness and ritual performance.

(viii) Dhangars were the nomadic shepherds. They mainly used to offer the excreta of their sheep as organic manure to the farmers during the period of sowing and planting. They also used to offer the wool of their sheep to the farmers. They would receive certain quantity of grains and vegetables from the families to whom they offered their services.

(ix) Mangs were a so - called untouchable caste who used to manufacture rope and baskets and sell these items to the farmers. They used to receive grains, pulses and vegetables depending on the thickness and length of the rope and size of the basket from the farmers.

(x) Chambhars were cobblers who were engaged in making shoes and other footwear for all caste groups in the valley. They used to receive certain quantity of grains from all the families in the village as well as the vicinity for the services they offered.

(xi) Kasais were an endogamous group of butchers among Muslims. They used to offer regular services like killing of goats, hens for Hindus and Muslims throughout the year. For this, they would receive either fixed amount of money or certain quantity of

grain which was supposed to be equivalent to the monetary value. They played an important ritualistic role during the Hindu community festivals for which again they used to be given separate monetary returns or grains.

(xii) Katakari used to enter in a Balute transaction only during the religious festivals. They would assist the Muslim Kasais in cleaning the bowels of the sacrificed goat or poultry (which were considered as unclean parts). They were entitled to retain these parts after the cleaning process was completed and the sacred food was offered to the deity.

(5) Appearance of the People

There was no difference in the appearance of the members of caste groups like Brahmins, Marathas, Sonars, Kumbhars, Sutars, Nhavis etc. They were broad headed, medium in stature, wheatish to dark in complexion, with straight dark hair and dark eyes. The men were thinly built, while the women were stocky. Both men and women had broad facial features.

Members of the so - called lower castes and Ramoshis were similar to the above caste - groups in most respects except the complexion which was more dark. The shape of their lips was typically thick like Negroes.

Dhangars appeared to be a physically isolated group. They were long headed, tall in stature, brown in complexion and with sharp features.

(6) Dress Pattern

It may be said that the dress pattern showed an urban to

rural continuum. The men of younger generation mostly used shirt, bush coat and trousers. In case of young boys, the long trousers were replaced by half pants. Their hair style was much similar to that of middle - class men in urban areas. Otherwise, a few men in the younger generation used to wear a pair of white Kurta or shirt and white pyjamas. They shared the dress pattern with the men in the middle age group of 40-50 years in the rural areas. Their hair were sharply cut and short according to the traditional fashion. Elderly men used to don white Kurta or shirt, a white Dhoti and a white Gandhi cap or on occasions they would tie a colourful turban. Nevertheless, the men of all generations and all statuses invariably kept moustaches as an indication of masculinity in this area.

The picture was again varied with respect to womenfolk. The young unmarried girls used to put on a skirt and blouse. The skirt was of two styles i.e. younger girls in the age group of 12-13 years used to wear skirts long upto knees while girls in adolescence would wear skirts that were long upto the ankles. Many times the adolescent girls used Sarees that were wrapped around the body in a circular fashion. On certain festive occasions, the adolescent girls would also wear Salwar - Kameez with a Dupatta. The dress pattern for the married women was predominantly the Nauwari (Nine yard) Saree and blouse. A few young married women used to wear Panchwari (Five yard) saree, otherwise they also followed the Nauwari pattern. Invariably, women used to grow long hair and tie them in a tight knot.

Sometimes, they use to tie hair in a long plait. Most of the married women and even widows and separated women used to cover their heads with an extension of the upper portion of their saree. This used to be considered as an indicator of Good Moral Character of a woman.

(7) Religious Pantheon and Beliefs

People of the valley were part and parcel of the Hindu religious gamut. Thus, they were found to be worshipping all the major Hindu deities like Ram, Krishna, Ganapati, Mahadev, Laxmi, Saraswati, etc. The Hindu Pantheon had been brought closer to the daily life of the lay worshippers by the various devotional songs composed by saints belonging to Bhakti tradition. People of the valley had a great reverence for the deity, Dattatreya which was supposed to be an incarnation of the three supreme deities of Hindu Pantheon i.e. Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh. The ideology of spiritualism also had been brought within the reach of the lay worshipper through the tradition of devotional songs and religious scriptures written by Marathi saints in medieval times. It was particularly noted that works and lives of saints like Dnyaneshwar, Tukaram, Ramdas were most popular and revered by the people in the valley.

Besides the supreme deities of Hindu Pantheon, local deities and demi - God like characters were also strongly worshipped by these people. The demi - God like characters of Hanuman, Goddess Jagadamba, and Khandoba were conspicuous in this regard. Indeed, these were regularly worshipped by people and temples committed

to these deities were erected in many hamlets of the valley. The researcher found a tradition of worship of Village deities (particularly, female deities called as **Gaon Devi**) and Holy spirits (supposed to be present in certain places) among the people of the valley.

The Gaon Devi was supposed to be the goddess guarding the lives and properties of people in a particular village and temples devoted to her were usually built at the boundary of the village. Interestingly, in some of the villages of the valley, the temples of Gaon Devi were located in the centre of the settlement due to gradual shift in the settlement. Although, no temples were built for the Holy Spirits, yet people used to offer worship at the places that were supposed to be under the influence of particular Holy Spirit. A Holy Spirit was supposed to bring boons for their devotees and curses to the detractors. Pujas would be usually offered at these places on the occasion of Purnima (Full moon night) and Amavasya (New moon night).

(5) Magic religion

Although, magic played a significant role in the lives of the villagers from the point of view of alleviating symptoms of psycho - somatic anomalies ; still it could be said that it did not occupy a central place in their lives. This was the characteristic which set this agrarian community apart from the tribal society where magic and religion would be synonymous. There were two types of magic practised in the community viz. Mantra Shakti which was the name for magic used for good ends

and Kali Vidya which literally meant Black Magic and was used for evil purposes. Although, there was not a single person known to be possessing either of the magical abilities in the village; yet a Gurav known to be possessing the abilities was found in the neighbouring village of Kalyan. He was called as Bhagat. The term Bhagat was a form of the original Sanskrit term Bhakt which literally meant a devotee. In the context of magic religion in the study village, a Bhagat was understood to be a Devicha Bhagat meaning devotee of the goddess. This term symbolized a person's adherence to the sect of Tantriks who were supposed to be devotees of goddess Kali. It was firmly believed by the villagers that to acquire abilities to perform magic, it was necessary for a person trying to become a Bhagat to appease goddess Kali through Sadhana. Sadhana was considered as kind of meditation which was performed through a series of intricate rituals centred around magic chants, performance of a series of Pujas to appease goddess Kali, the Holy Spirits and the spirits of the dead and torture of one's body to test one's physical and mental ability to endure in unusually difficult situations.

Following rites related to magic religion could be observed in the village :

(a) **Angaat Yene** : It literally meant possession of the body.

It meant a person being under the spell of a deity or a holy spirit. Such a person used to be regarded as a medium of communication between the worshipper and the deity.

(b) **Zaad Pakadane** : It literally meant capturing a tree. This

was considered as a state of possession of the body and mind of a living person by the spirit of a dead person. The dead person was believed to satisfy its desires through the possession of the living person.

(c) **Bali Dene** : It literally meant offering sacrifice.

It formed a complex of rites as it was very closely related to the rite of offering Naivadya (sacred food). A Bali usually consisted of a goat or a poultry bird.

(d) **Nazar Lagane** : It literally meant casting of an evil eye

by somebody. It was believed that when a person possessed a rare desirable quality or valuable goods, he or she would become a target of contempt by others who did not wish well - being for the gifted person. It was firmly believed by the villagers that this situation could be remedied only through the act of Nazar Utaravane i.e. offering prayers and sacred food to a deity or holy spirit in order to ward off the evil spell.

(e) **Bhanamati** : This was considered as the most evil form of black magic by the villagers. In Bhanamati, it was believed that valuables would start disappearing from the household of the person afflicted. This was done by pressing in service an evil spirit. It was believed that this phenomena could be controlled by a Bhagat only through casting of a sacred bond through chanting of Mantras (sacred incantations).

(.9) Religious Customs and Rituals

The terms were interpreted specifically as customs and rituals closely associated with worshipping by present researcher. Thus, one took into account religious festivals; family ceremonies and worship of natural objects while exploring the religious customs and rituals among the people of the village. Lord Mahadev was the most popular deity among the villagers. Indeed, they attached lots of significance to the celebration of Mahashivaratri festival (holy night of Shiva). During the period of the festival a fair used to be organized at village Kondhanpur. Villagers from Ghera Mordari as well people from other villages of the valley used to attend the fair in large numbers. Sacrifice of goats or poultry birds used to be offered either on behalf of the villages or independently by families to the deity during the festival.

Puja seemed to be the most dominant form of worship. It could be practised ideally by any individual irrespective of age, caste or creed. It was performed daily within the family. In the Puja within the family, prayers were offered to the idols of the supreme deities of Hindu Pantheon, viz. Lord Krishna and Mahadev. Besides these two deities, idols of Ganesh were worshipped in some families. Sometimes the paintings consisting of pictures of Lord Rama, Lakshman, Sita and Hanuman were also worshipped. In all the families invariably a coconut kept in a copper vessel used to be worshipped. This coconut in the vessel symbolized the Devak, which was a Totem of the clan of which a family used to be a part. In practice, the symbols signifying

Totems were part of a wider range of objects and animals in nature. The most popular religious festival was Diwali which usually used to take place in the month of November every year. This period would be synonymous to Hindu months of Ashwin and Kartik - to be more precise, the second fortnight of Ashwin and first fortnight of Kartik. The festival used to be celebrated generally for five days consisting of certain religious observances like bathing of women on the first day (Dhantrayodashi); bathing of men on the second day (Narka - Chaturdashi); worship of goddess Laxmi on third day (Laxmi Pujan); followed by offering of prayers by wives for the well being of their spouses (Padava) and offering of blessings by a brother to a sister on the same day or two separate days depending on the auspicious moments as defined by the Hindu calendar.

Ganesh festival was celebrated by the villagers on a large scale at the family level as well as at the community level. The celebration period used to vary from 1.5 days to 8 days. This was again determined by family tradition. The agricultural implements as well as other implements and animals helping in making livelihood to the farmers used to be worshipped on different festive occasions by the villagers like Holi (Initiation of cleaning of land for cultivation); Laxmi Pujan (during Diwali); Bail Pola (day of the oxen) etc. There were also customs pointing towards strong links with Bhakti movement. Especially noticeable were (a) joining the

procession popularly known as Pandharachi Wari (Pilgrimage to Pandharpur) in Maharashtra; (b) worshipping every day the compilation of Sant Dnyaneshwar known as Dnyaneshwari and reading excerpts from it; (c) reading Dnyaneshwari and Guru Dattatreya Charitra (biography of Guru Dattatreya) continuously for many days on the occasions of birth anniversaries of Sant Dnyaneshwar and Lord Dattatreya (incarnation of Lord Brahma, Vishnu and Mahadev) respectively.

(d) Family Organization

Joint family was the traditionally most dominant family type. However, in the course of time the family type had shifted towards the other end i.e. the Nuclear family. Nevertheless, the state of the family at the time of investigation could have been more properly defined as Intermediate family. This intermediate family type was in the middle of the joint and the nuclear family. There were certain salient features of the intermediate family type. These salient features are described below.

(i) The original dwelling complex used to be sub - divided into smaller units of one or two rooms accomodating nuclear families in each. The subdivision was usually done with the help of makeshift walls of wood or baked earth.

(ii) The units in the dwelling complex were inhabited by real sibs or patrilineal male cousins of first degree and their respective nuclear families. Thus, immediate and common descent was an important pre - requisite for this style of living.

(iii) Usually, each dwelling consisted of a big empty square

shaped space in the middle of the dwelling or a long and square shaped cemented elevation of stones in the front of the house. This space or the stoned elevation was commonly used by all family.

(iv) Food used to be prepared separately by each nuclear family either inside its own sub - dwelling or in the common space.

(v) The land used to be possessed by either the living ancestor common to all the heads of these nuclear families or one of the sibs or cousins - mostly the eldest among them was the legal owner of the land. This land would be divided into smaller parts and each nuclear unit would till its own piece of land separately. Each family had a total control over the disposal of the produce from its own piece of land.

(vi) The intermediate family used to take decisions regarding matters of common interest through consensus. If the living ancestor was co - habiting with them, then he would be convinced about certain decisions by the heads of the nuclear families. This used to leave ample scope for manipulation. However, this also ensured optimization of scarce resources through economic use of resources by maximum number of members in the dwelling.

(vii) The intermediate family would broaden the scope of optimization of resources through use of the extensive network made up of interpersonal relationships of family members cutting through kinship, occupational associations, peer groups into distant but accessible urban neighbourhoods.

(11) Composition and Sources of Food

There were four major sources of food for the villagers viz. (a) Permanent market at Shivapur and weekly market at Kondhanpur; (b) Grocery shops within the village; (c) Farm produces and (d) Tubers and fruits collected through foraging. A wide range of food stuff were available at the markets of Shivapur and Kondhanpur. These were Bajra (*Pennisetum typhoideum*); Jawar (*Sorghum vulgare*); Wheat (*Triticum aestivum*); Bengal gram (Whole) (Scientific name. *Cicer arietinum*); Bengal gram (dal) (Scientific name. *Cicer arietinum*); Green gram (whole) (Scientific name. *Phaseolus aurens* Roxb.); Kesari dal (*Lathyrus sativus*); Rajmah (*Phaseolus vulgaris*); Spinach (*Spinacia oleracea*); Shepu (*Peucedanum graveolens*); Tender Amaranth (*Amaranthus gangeticus*); Colocasia leaves (*Colocasia anti - quorum*); Chakwat; Safflower leaves (*Carthamus tinctorius*); Kobi (*Brassica Oleracea* var. *Capitata*); Radish leaves (*Raphanus sativus*); Suran (*Amorphophallus campanulatus*); Sabu daana (Sago); Simla aloo (*Manihot esculenta*); Gajar (*Daucus carota*); Beet root (*Beta vulgaris*); Ginger (*Zinziber officinale*); Potato (*Solanum Tuberosum*); Kanda (*Allium cepa*); Brinjal (*Solanum melongena*); Cucumber (*Cucumis sativus*); Cauliflower (*Brassica oleracea* var. *botrytis*); Knol - khol (*Brassica oleracea* var. *caulorapa*); Bhendi (*Abelmoschus esculentus*); Groundnut (*Arachis hypogaea*); Soya bean (*Glycine maxmerr*); Dry Coconut (*Cocos nucifera*); Water - melon (*Citrullus vulgaris*); Mustard seeds (*Brassica nigra*); Garlic (*Allium*

sativum); Tamarind pulp (*Tamarindus indica*); Turmeric (*Curcuma domestica*); Guava (*Psidium guajava*); Chikku (*Achras sapota*); Fig (*Ficus carica*); Banana (*Musa Paradisiaca*); Mango (*Mangifera indica*); Lemon (*Citrus limon*).

The two grocery shops in the village used to sell only the condiments, spices, pulses and legumes. The grocerers used to purchase these items from the market of Shivapur and Kondhanpur and sell these to the villagers at almost an additional price of 20% than the original price of purchasing. Therefore, the villagers preferred to buy the items in the two categories mentioned above from open market. They resorted to buying the food items from the village shops only in case of emergency. Very few food items like rice, wheat, bengal gram and a few leafy vegetables viz. spinach, amaranth, colocasia leaves were grown in the private farms of the villagers. A small number of cultivators had started growing mango as Vanrai, a voluntary organization based in Pune, distributed the mango grafts to the villagers.

(12) Foraging Behaviour

Foraging was an occasional activity. It used to supply a small part of the diet of the villagers. Following items were collected through seasonal foraging viz. Amaranthus, Amla (*Emblica officinalis*), Tamarind (*Tamarindus indica*), Bor (*Zizyphus jujuba*) etc. Foraging was sometimes followed by hunting and fishing which might bring additional food for

certain families. The animals hunted were rabbits, wild boar, deer, crabs. The variety of fish that was available locally was known as Murya.

(14) Leadership and Politics

Researcher encountered a rather interesting situation with respect to politics and leadership in the village. Historically, the village evolved as a single entity consisting of the Gheryachi Wadi, Khalashachi Wadi and Shivathar Wadi. Then followed the administrative decision to divide the village and attach Ghera Mordari with the group Gram Panchayat named as Ghera Sinhagad. The other two hamlets of Mordari were attached to the neighbouring village of Kalyan to form a separate group Gram Panchayat.

This division reinforced through various administrative decisions and actions in the course of last few decades had snapped off channels of political communication between the three Wadis of the village. The only three occasions that could bring the people of the three hamlets together in the year before the beginning of the present research were (a) arrangement and distribution of responsibilities for the organization of the traditional village fair called as **Urus**; (b) implementation of the afforestation campaign launched by the voluntary organization called as Vanrai. (c) construction of the small check dam across the bottom of the fort Sinhagad to store rainwater for the three hamlets.

Interestingly, the researcher observed that organizing the traditional village fair happened to be a formal ritual affair for the inhabitants of the three hamlets than a usual spirited affair with the sense of excitement that one would find in some of the neighbouring villages. Indeed, the researcher could observe a general meeting of the inhabitants of the three hamlets where the persons taking initiative were found to be not permanent residents of the village but young men from villages in the neighbouring plains area. They were accompanied by only two men from the village in conducting the meeting. The same lack of initiative among the locals was found with respect to the implementation of the afforestation campaign. The initiative in sensitizing the people; organizing them in meetings and informing them was taken by the volunteers of the organization. A few individuals from the village played a marginal, supportive role in the above actions. Indeed, the village showed a conspicuous absence of any reliable source of information and guidance as well as organization for co - ordinating implementation of the campaign after withdrawal of the voluntary organization from the village.

The same lack of leadership among the locals was observed with respect to the construction of the check - dam. The financial provision required for the construction of the dam could not be arranged for five years after the initial proposal was submitted to the Zilla Parishad (District Council) of Pune due to lack of any pressure by the inhabitants of the three

hamlets together.

Even the peculiar way of organizing labour activity during the construction of the dam showed lack of central leadership. It was observed that inhabitants worked on separate days for construction of the dam. There was hardly any communication between the three Wadis regarding each other's work. Even when people from the same Wadi used to work on the same day, they always tended to divide into small bands doing activities related to construction discretely. There would not be any coordinating individuals to organize the activities of these small bands into a systematic, concerted effort. The basic development facilities that had reached the other villages in the neighbouring plains area as well as the villages on the other side of the fort (which ironically were part of the Gram Panchayat of Ghera Sinhagad) had not reached the village Mordari. The villagers ascribed it to the lack of strong leadership in the village.

(1.4) Settlement pattern

Salient features of the settlement pattern of Ghera Mordari are presented here.

- (i) Gheryachi Wadi was located at the corner of the cross - section of the two major phalanges of the mountain on which the fort was located. One of the phalanges was spread north to southwards while the other one was spread east to westwards.
- (ii) The two hamlets of Khalashachi Wadi and Shivathar Wadi were located towards the north - east of ghera Mordari.

(iii) The road leading from Kalyan - Mordari bifurcation to Ghera Mordari traversed through the above two settlements.

(iv) Two Wadis of Ghera Mordari and Khalashachi Wadi were separated from each other by a distance of one hundred metres approximately.

(v) Ghera Mordari was located on the rising slope of the fort Sinhagad.

(vi) Ghera Mordari had two clusters of houses. The first cluster was close to the Khalashachi Wadi and inhabited by Maratha families. The other cluster of three dwellings belonging to Ramoshi families was located at the bottom of the north to southwards phalange of the fort.

(vii) Both the residential clusters were surrounded by land under cultivation.

(viii) Maratha families were again regrouped along lines of clan affinities and family ties.

(15) History of the community

The historically evolved arrangement of the hamlet showed distinctiveness too. The houses regarded as belonging to Gheryachiwadi were clustered. Only two families with houses located in proximity of the cluster were included in the Khalashachiwadi which was part of Kalyan Panchayat. Strangely these two families were reported to have more frequent interactions with inhabitants of the Khalashachiwadi and Kalyan than with those of GheryachiWadi. This pattern of communication might have to do with 1) the administrative

breakup of the traditional village which should affect the land relationships between people 2) branching of the major lineage of the Khatapes which had divided membership into less important but functional lineages segregated into the Gheryachiwadi and the Khalashachiwadi.

The organization of the village into three distinct settlements was apparently a result of branching of major lineages alongwith gradual addition of affinal lineages. This proved important for the functional distribution of land in the area since the villagers were accustomed to the practice of leasing of land and another practice of marriages within the cluster of the three settlements which entailed transfer of land between families through affinal relationships.

Apparently there was a close relationship between the version of settlement pattern of the village cluster and the distribution of land at the time of investigation. One observed a marginal proportion of landholdings belonging to Ramoshi caste in the total cultivable land available to the farmers in the village. Also one noticed availability of less proportion of cultivable land in the total land belonging to that group. On the other hand, the largest proportion of land went to Khatape clan who were numerically the strongest too. Even more peculiarly the dominance of Khatapes in land distribution was witnessed with respect to the total size of the land in their possession. In spite of the fact that Shivatharwadi was populated by members of Shivathare clan it was interesting to

note that even more valued landholdings contiguous to that settlement were largely possessed by members of Khatape clan.

If this observation was to be considered with the earlier one, it was not presumptuous to decipher some form of social network related to land transactions. And as far as mobilization of landholdings was concerned, apparently this network worked in favour of the persons of Khatape lineage as a group.

As mentioned earlier traditionally Ghera Mordari formed part of the village cluster called as Mordari. Even-though, there were no written records of antecedents of the village cluster, there was a certain version about the settlement pattern of the place which was shared by all of its inhabitants. Obviously, this version had been maintained by the living generations in the village and past generations through oral tradition. The version went like this :

Security of Sinhagad fort was looked after by members of Ramoshi caste. The patron-client relationship between the Maratha chieftains on the fort and the Ramoshi community continued for almost two centuries till the establishment of British rule.

According to a common version one Kanbi Maratha farmer Raghuji Khatape and his sons were among the major purchasers of land in Mordari approximately 150 to 200 years ago.

Historically the Khalashachiwadi was established first followed by the Gheryachiwadi. The Shivatharwadi came last. In

the course of last few decades (single branched) Maratha families had also started living in the Gheryachiwadi mainly because of their affinal relationships with either Khatapes or Yadavs. Almost same process of incorporation of newer clans because of patronage through affinal relationships had occurred among the Ramoshis.

The caste composition of Ghera Mordari and the other two neighbouring settlements suggested evolution of the village more as an extension settlement of some unspecified parent settlement. This identity had compelled upon the village a dependence on the neighbouring villages and especially the proximate growth centres for satisfaction of prescriptive-ritualistic needs as well as economic needs. In such a case one would have expected more alliances between the natives of the village and inhabitants of neighbouring villages. But observation did not support this hunch. The interactions between both the sides were short-term and functional. This occurrence could not be seen in isolation since instead of improving alliances with the neighbouring villages the inhabitants of the study village used to undertake frequent immigrations to urban areas. This pointed to a much complex phenomenon of acculturation.

The village was a much homogeneous entity with respect to caste. There was a numerical predominance of one caste over the other among the only two caste groups present in the village. This was a characteristic in contrast with the villages in the

immediate vicinity of the study-village.

Both the caste groups inhabiting the village showed predominance of relatively few lineages that apparently settled at different times. Thus, genealogical constructions showed that residents of the village bearing the same surnames did not have a degree wise distance more than two generations. Interestingly, they did not claim any hereditary relationship with the bearers of same surnames from settlements in vicinity. The lineage members of Ghera Mordari had developed reciprocal affinal relationships with all other lineages within the village and in the settlements in proximity. Thus, being a cultural hinterland of the Khalashachiwadi and being an administrative hinterland of Ghera Sinhagad Panchayat the Gheryachiwadi seemed to have acquired a distinctive identity of its own.

16) Social composition of the community :

Occupational associations : Besides agriculture, people in the village were mainly engaged in cattle raising and menial work. Nevertheless, one did not find any formal institutions based on occupational needs existing in the village. A traditional exception to this might be the "balute system". In the balute system functional interdependence of different caste groups exists. Nevertheless, this system was a small scale affair for people of Mordari. It is asserted that provision of surplus agricultural produces is a prerequisite for functioning of this kind of occupational association. As the situation relating to food production in Ghera Mordari showed, very little surplus

food was available for exchange.

Social discrimination : With respect to nutrition and related processes apparently not much discrimination was practised by the villagers. However, at the larger level of social interactions, preferential treatment on the basis of settlement, caste, lineage and friendship occurred. This indicated presence of the nutrition related exchanges in terms of exchange of agricultural produces and prepared food between people identifying each other as "intimate associates" in the village. This was more likely to an epiphenomenon of social stratification than difference in the access to the nutritional sources.

The developmental picture of the village will be considered only as far as it permits one to comprehend the information acquisition and sharing behaviour of the community. Thus instead of attempting to draw a model picture of the village, one will limit oneself only to present the extent to which innovations in different developmental areas had reached the village till the end of the investigation.

17) Developmental profile of the village :

The composition of the population of the village with respect to age, sex and educational distribution showed a conservative picture in two ways. First, the village showed a higher proportion of potentially reproductive and dependent population. A family wise analysis too showed a higher number of offspring than accepted norm of government and low birth

spacing. This indicated a fast growing population with higher caloric requirements.

On the other hand, the village presented a poor educational picture with clustering of majority population toward illiteracy and education upto IInd standard which in long term would result in virtual illiteracy. This directly limited the scope of the villagers to either obtain skilled employment outside the village (and thus permanently reduce the pressure on land) or to improve their own environmental potential by means of acquisition of information and skills through education. This was bound to affect together the availability of nutrition to the community. Especially with respect to the second sub-point above one may refer to the income data presented in the next chapter. This was further corroborated by the caloric and food composition data.

Development profile of the village was constructed mainly out of the conversations held with the villagers during the field work and through the survey. Certain crucial areas of social development were identified to gather picture about development in the village. Nevertheless the data presented here gives a relative picture and not a fulfilled model or simulation of the developmental stage of the village since that was not a focus of present study. However, some of the implications of the relative development situation in the village is discussed in this chapter. The dimensions of development that were considered in the present investigation

were

- (i) Food production, distribution and security
- (ii) Housing
- (iii) Animal husbandry
- (iv) Medical and health services
- (v) Irrigation facilities
- (vi) Co - operation
- (vii) Industries and cottage industries
- (viii) Social education facilities
- (ix) Communication patterns
- (x) Administration and inhabitation patterns
- (xi) Seasonal occupation patterns

Conditions pertaining to these aspects of development are presented below.

(i) Food production, distribution and security :

The village was located in an environment that had been exploited by different populations in different times. The area had witnessed a gradual deforestation and erosion of soil. The erosion of soil was compounded by heavy rainfall and steep water channels. Thus the local population did not depend for a varied and calories-sufficient diet on immediate environment.

As far as advancement of agriculture based on modern innovations is concerned the village showed a much complex situation. This is thought so by the researcher because on the one hand, the community showed a traditional pattern of crop preferences and use of technology. While talking to the

cultivators in the village one got a strong impression that inspite of the unyielding character of the environment of the village they had evolved a set of varieties of rice which was the staple food there.

On the other hand, recently the community had started introducing some structural changes in its agricultural infrastructure and communication patterns. For instance, with regard to preferences for manures and fertilizers one found a tendency of the cultivators to use chemical fertilizers available in market than using locally manageable manures.

Apparently the cultivators did not have access to any modern means of crop protection than the costly pesticides available in the market. Neither they seemed to have any traditional measures to protect against pest infestation. This made the annual crop yields vulnerable to unpredictable onslaughts of nature. As well as, Scanty traditional facilities like bamboo baskets (Kanagi) and cotton sacks were the major means of storage for the villagers. The last two points again contradicted the so called trait of introduction of modern means of agriculture.

As discussed in the chapter I of the thesis nutrition is to be understood as a cultural process of production, distribution and consumption of food. The productive aspect includes components like topography, land use technology, pattern of landholding, crop yield, crop pattern; while the distributive aspect includes availability of food to families and discrete

individuals within families. Food consumption is apparently a much complex psycho-somatic process including rituals associated with food intake, classification of food, daily routines of food intake, preferences of food as well as prescriptions against food.

The data regarding production, distribution, and consumption is presented in a compressed manner here :

A. Unresponsive topography :

The village topography showed complex structure of landscape. The surface of the landscape was composed of both latterite and granite layers. This had directly affected the landuse in the village. The surface of the terrain was characterized by deep slope and steep elevations. Large part of the middle and lower heights of the Sinhagad phalanges were covered with loose soil which was susceptible to erosion due to heavy winds and rains. The process of soil erosion was particularly visible during rainy season and winter.

A sparse forest of Saag and Babhul trees was located at the top of the phalanges with sparse bush growth throughout the rest of the heights of the phalanges.

B. Monopoly of land :

The cultivated land was located from the middle level of the phalanges down to the sink which was located a little below the baseline of the phalanges. Largest number of landholdings belong to the Khatape clan which was numerically

too was the largest segment in the village.

C. Soil classification :

The villagers were not acquainted with the standard soil classification system established by the Indian Association of Agricultural Universities. Even though, the researcher could not take up a systematic survey of soil structuring in the village or otherwise could not find any records of soil typing in the area, still a consistent and keen observation by him over a prolonged period had given rise to the impression that a large part of the cultivated land could be classified as Class II with class III falling in the suit.

Nevertheless, apparently over a long period the community had evolved its own norms of land classification. Thus, the researcher found a four type system being used by the villagers viz. **dark black soil, black soil with calcium, reddish erosive soil and waste soil.**

D. Land use patterns :

There was a remarkable homogeneity among the group of cultivators with respect to functional distribution of land. Depending upon the soil classification, one could notice four functional types in the village viz. Garden, dry land, wet land and fallow land. Among the landholding families majority had dry, unirrigated land. Almost half of them kept some part of the land fallow. Only three families used the land around their houses for gardening of leafy vegetables; while only two

families had partly irrigated land.

If one relates this observation with that in no-1 above, then one can deduce that only two categories from either of the sets equated with each other viz. Fallow land and waste land. Otherwise all the other soils were used for cultivation. (Ref. Table no 5.1). The landholdings were used for mainly mono-crop system.

Table 5.1

Landwise distribution (LAND TYPE)

Type of land	No. of families holding the land
Garden	03
Dryland	38
Wetland	02
Fallow	22

5. Landownership pattern :

There was a tendency among the villagers to divide the land informally between sibs and close kins due to top kinship ties. This was reflected in the report about landownership by 52 families. Out of these only 24 family-heads claimed landownership. The rest of the lot were reported as landless. But this was not exactly the case. Usually all of the other 28 families were related through family heads to the formal landowners.

Besides one found a descending trend of number of families

with increasing size of land. (Ref. Table no 5.2).

Table 5.2

Land wise distribution (LAND SIZE)

Land size (acres)	No.of families possessing land
No land	28
Below 2.5 acres	14
2.6 -5 acres	5
5.1 -12.5 acres	3
More than 12.5 acres	2

The village had a high ratio of land to dependent population. Taking this fact into consideration, Some items in agro-forestry had been introduced into the village by a non-Government wasteland development agency. These items were Mango, Tamarind, Pulp, and Ber trees. The number of items which had been distributed to various families did not have any direct relationship with land size possessed by the families. This was proved by the case of certain representative families from the village viz. family no.1 had a total land of the size of 5 acres and it was in receipt of 50 mango trees ;family no. 3 had land of size less than 2.5 acres but that also a considerably large number of mango trees viz. 35. Then, family no.7 had more than 2.5 acres of land and that too possessed large no. of mango trees i.e. 35. Lastly, one could see that family no. 11

officially did not possess any land at all , yet it possessed comparatively significant number of trees i.e. 30.

From the above data it was apparent that majority families in the village possessed land less than 2.5 acres in size or did not possess any land at all. Nevertheless, the situation pertaining to land utilization was complex as the families without official entitlement to land could till some land as it was informally distributed among sibs and cousins according to tradition. This should explain the disparity in the data presented above (where even families without any officially possessed land had planted the trees distributed by the Pune based voluntary organization).

F. Cattle raising :

One could see a relationship between the size of land possessed by a family and its cattle strength to a limited extent.

Table 5.3

Cattle strength and Land size

Land size	Cattle strength

No land	5
0 to 2.5 acres	5
2.6 to 5 acres	5
5.1 to 12.5 acres	8
Above 12.5 acres	5

From the above table one can see an almost uniform distribution of cattle-head across different sizes of land under cultivation. Except the category made up of land holders with land between 5 to 12.5 acres, all the other cattle- raisers in the village had an approximately equal size of cattle in possession. The present researcher could not find any apparent relationship between the relatively large size of cattle-head possessed by cattle raisers in this category and the size of land held by them.

This was important in the cultural ecological context since this factor related to the availability of milk nutrients and income to the family on the one hand and required input of animal energy into improving cultivational potential of land on the other hand. As majority of the families reported to be possessing cattle had milch animals viz. buffalos mainly and indigenous cows , it was observed that the short - fall in nutritional essentials from the staple food was partially compensated by milk supplies. As well as , possession of draught animals by a considerable number of families indicated the ability of cultivators to maintain a marginal level of food production. This was particularly substantiated by the fact that one found a well laid norm among the villagers to borrow drought animals from fellow villagers on rent. This enabled ploughing of land for all the families in the village.

G. Land size and income :

The relationship between land size available to a family and its income was not directly interdependent. At the same time one found a large number of families earning income through an agricultural occupation. These facts suggested that the community did not show an apparent stratification based on certain crucial economic factors which would have induced so in a rather environmentally heterogenous situation. This was indicated by the following conditions.

Table 5.4

Land size and income

Land size (Approx.)	Income (Annual) in Indian Rs.
No land	4800=00
Below 2.5 acres	7040=00
2.6 to 5 acres	4200=00
5.1 to 12.5 acres	5000=00
Above 12.5 acre	4100=00

While calculating the total income of the family the cash earnings through wage labour in agriculture as well as urban based occupations and approximate value of the agricultural produces taken by a family were taken into consideration. And, in case of certain families their cash earnings through non agricultural but traditional occupations (viz. sale of milk

produces and food preparations to tourists at Sinhagad Fort, and guarding of farms under cultivation- especially by members of the Ramoshi caste) were additionally taken into consideration.

One can see from the above table that the approximate average income of the major chunk of families in the village was between Rs.4000=00 and Rs.5000=00 except the families possessing land below 2.5 acres. Interestingly, in this category the income range was between Rs.2000=00 and Rs.20,000=00 per annum inspite of the average land size for this category almost being the same. It was a hunch of the researcher that the little higher size of the average annual income of the families belonging to this category was a result of the relatively large incomes of a few families when compared to the average annual income of the families belonging to other categories.

W. Foraging as a supplement to staple food :

The villagers could not depend exclusively on natural forest growth for obtaining edibles. Still one found foraging behaviour among people of this village. This activity was mainly conducted by womenfolk and young girls of the households. The food preparations were exclusively dependent on successful completion of this activity by the women. The cultivated and bought food was occasionally supplied by hunting of small animals like hares, wild pigeons and large sized animals like wild hogs by menfolk.

Here was an example of an agrarian society which depicted the foraging behaviour and which resembled to some extent with

the tribal societies. This was because the community was located in a poor eco-system on the slopes of Sinhagad where water could not accumulate. It used to run down taking away the nutrients in the soil. Secondly there was no **pucca** approach road to Mordari. Taking into consideration this background that the nutritional facilities were far away in Kondhanpur, Shivapur, Nasrapur & Pune; therefore, instead of going faraway(considering the economic costs involved in that) these people managed with whatever they could have in the village grocery shop and more importantly

- (i) in farms
- (ii) in the hill ranges.
- (iii) on the bunds
- (iv) in the jungle around them within a radius of 10-15 kms.
- (v) in kitchen garden.

I. Case of nutritional deficiency :

The proportion of villagers taking up cultivation of more than one crop produce was less than 25%. Only four families in the village had sufficient yield of rice while only one family had sufficient yield of crop in addition to rice which together used to satisfy its caloric requirements. Sources of food outside the community were scanty and distantly located. Therefore, it was unlikely that residents of the village could easily make up the shortcomings from local food with the help of external sources. Brief presentation of data related to this aspect is given below.

These two facts considered together suggested that the community was exposed to potential nutritional impoverishment. In spite of the facts that the community practised foraging, this possibility existed since foraging could bring very little nutritional inputs given the environmental impoverishment of the community.

ii) Housing :

All the houses in the village were constructed out of traditional material like baked bricks, mud and stones. The roofs were covered with baked tiles. Interestingly the houses in the village did not show much variation in internal designing as well. The only discrimination was to be found with respect to the size of space available for domestic use. This was a function of size of the family occupying the space.

Another typical phenomenon about the use of domestic space was that the family units of space were created through partitioning of large halls that existed as a single unit earlier.

The internal structure of these houses was not congenial for personal health and hygiene with little scope for ventilation and sunlight. There was also limited scope for relaxed movement of limbs.

Nobody from the village was reported to be availing of housing assistance schemes. Instead, the villagers remained dependent strongly on the availability of traditional

construction material and mobilization of labour through kinship and neighbourhood ties. The housing pattern was much traditional and did not indicate any difference in the economic status of the families. The use of the residential space showed overcrowding and a complete ignorance of health concerns.

iii) Animal Husbandry :

In an earlier study carried out between December 1991 and March 1992 by the present researcher in eleven villages located within a radius of 30 kms from Pune it was observed that those villages not supported with irrigated land tend to depend heavily on cattle-raising for livelihood. Especially, in villages endowed with hill-tracks and either barren land or grazing land there is a potential growth of dairy as a profession. This observation about other villages is supported by Ghera Mordari. Although, the researcher could not collect quantitative data related to milk yield, yet when the respondents from all the families were probed during the socio-economic survey about the possible milk yield from their milch animals they informed that the average milk yield per day would remain between 5 to 10 litres for the major part of the year except in summer. This was accounted by the fact that this village suffered from water scarcity during the summer which affected fodder production adversely.

Besides cattle, almost all families had domesticated native poultry and sheep. Poultry and sheep milk essentially served the dietary needs of the family. Additionally, the sheep

breeds provided some quantity of wool and occasional supply of meat for domestic use. It was noted that the sheep milk was particularly used to feed infants.

iv) Medical and health services :

At Shivapur a government - aided Primary Health Sub-center was operating. For availing treatment to more complicated health problems one had to go to Pune. Because of lack of frequent conveyance between the village and these places the villagers resorted to home remedies for casual illnesses. Thus, only in unavoidable situations the villagers resorted to the modern services.

Another noticeable medical service being provided to Ghera Mordari was from a barefoot medical practitioner located in Pune. He used to visit the village regularly twice in a month and attend to every other family.

The village was much impoverished as far as rural sanitation facilities are concerned. This situation was ascribed by the villagers to lack of strong political contacts in the Zilla Parishad. Despite this contention on the part of the villagers, the situation has to be understood in terms of the topography of the village too.

The village primarily represented a picture of an uneven landscape and a system afflicted with scarcity of enduring water reservoirs. This had hampered construction of a cost-efficient sewage disposal system on the one hand and constrained the use of sufficient water for maintenance of

personal hygiene on the other. The uneven landscape had led to a very constricted use of space for residential purposes. Thus, the villagers had always shown a preference for using the residential space for primary activities like food preparation, sheltering and short-term food storage. Therefore, one apparently observed that use of space hygienically for disposal of domestic waste went down on the priority list of the villagers. Thus one witnessed a complex settlement pattern in the village with houses closely clustered but still located at different altitudes. This did not allow dumping domestic waste at a convenient distance from houses. This had forced the villagers to dispose waste at the margins of the settlement where it merged with the larger landscape of cultivated fields. This led to piling of heaps of waste around the settlement.

As far as bodily discharges were concerned Ghera Mordari was in a better situation than other villages. In spite of the fact that the village did not have any public latrines, yet because of availability of lot of open space one did not see an accumulation of bodily discharges within the precincts of the settlement.

In accordance with the homogeneity of social composition in the village, one did not find an unhealthy isolate there as one could notice in the neighbouring villages of the plains.

The villagers showed an occasional dependence on modern health facilities which were distantly placed and costly. Of course the situation was compounded by no serious custom in the

village regarding traditional therapies. Besides there was a general indifferent attitude subtly perceptible toward personal health and hygiene but which might be related with the earlier observation that the proportion of population above 50 years was very less in the village. As well as spread of epidemics like malaria, amoebiasis, flu was a common sight in the village.

(v) Irrigation facilities :

The other side of the coin of water scarcity was with respect to availability of water for cultivational purposes. The absence of enduring water reservoirs had resulted from the uneven structuring of slopes of the phalanges of Sinhagad ranges. This had created conservative water channels that flow in directions but other than the cultivated lands of majority of cultivators in Mordari. In fact this phenomenon was culturally reflected in the woes of residents of Mordari that in spite of heavy rainfall in their area most of the rainwater flows down to other villages like Rahatwade and Kondhanpur. This situation according to them had led to difference in economic mobility of their own village and these neighbouring ones.

(vi) Co-operation :

Regarding co-operation it can be merely stated that the cooperatives as an institution were not attached with any importance by the villagers.

(vii) Industries and cottage industries :

Besides farming, agriculture, agricultural wage labour,

cattle raising and semi-skilled menial work based employment in urban areas the residents of village Ghera Mordari did not have access to any other means of generating income.

(viii) Social Education :

A number of miscellaneous items can be considered under this head viz.

- (a) Community recreation centres.
- (b) Adult literacy centre.
- (c) Sports & welfare organizations.
- (d) Childrens' organization and welfare.
- (e) Libraries and reading rooms.

There was a marked absence of institutional set up with reference to these facilities in the village. This was conspicuous if compared with neighbouring villages on the plains. These villages were strongly exposed to these developmental inputs for a long time in the near past.

Thus, environmental and social factors had interacted in a complementary way to reduce the village to an ill-developed entity. For a consistently long period natives of the study village had been exposed to urban situations and they had also developed strong linkages in urban areas. Thus agriculture as a model of economic mobility did not compete with the more stronger model of urban-based employment. Thus, the environmental constraints seemed to have played an important role against transformation of a traditional extension settlement into a growth centre. Nevertheless, there could be a

brighter side too to the homogenous caste composition of the village. In a more homogenous community one would expect a more intense communication between members. But the data gathered here with respect to interpersonal communication networks presented a contrasting picture to this expectation. Apparently the social homogeneity along with environmental homogeneity (in terms of less variations in soil type according to the standard system of soil classification) which reduced the possibility of exposure of the community members to varied alternatives in land cultivation. Thus, irrespective of the daily, regular interactions between the inhabitants because of compact settlement pattern based on homogenous caste composition and close kinship ties one found a reluctance of community members to treat the communicative experiences as 'information' and simulate those. This implies that the villagers from Ghera-Mordari were not used to draw generalisations from their cultural experiences. This was substantiated by the presence of "expressive " and "declarator" speech acts in the communication among the villagers as well as between them and outsiders. Those speech acts which expressed the psychological state of the communicator than any thing else are called as expressives. It was observed by the researcher that whenever the respondents were engaged in speech act related to either of the cultural ecological contexts of nutrition, it was associated by a conspicuous emotional expression. This emotional expression would be characterised by a relatively brief description of the

relationship between the objects and individuals participating in a particular situation. This description would emphasize on the "totalistic " aspects of the relationship with stress on the harmony and balance between the objects and the individuals rather than an analysis of the relationships in terms of the interactions between the elements constituting these objects and individuals. For example, when the researcher tried to probe the villagers regarding the use of the common community land, they would tend to emphasize the principle of 'discretion of the collectivity' in the decision related to that land instead of elaborating on the possible alternatives for the use of that land. Thus, one could see that when they were in a speech act related to the use of the community land, they were more interested in emphasizing the totality of the relationships between the land under question and different elements that went up to make the community than focusing on the strategic managerial aspects of the use of that land.

Similarly, "declarators" are those speech acts which indicate the content of a situation through pronunciation of certain qualificatory aspects of the content. This implies that the very performance of a speech act brings about the content to be communicated by the person engaged in the speech act. For example, when the researcher tried to probe deeply into the various meanings of the term 'amacha chulat ghar' (i.e. my OR our cousine family), he found that the term would be used by the same person to describe a number of relationships between

himself and other individuals with a surname similar to his own. These relationships, although, were described by the means of the same single phrase 'amacha chulat ghar', yet in reality the closeness in relationships would vary with respect to the degree of the kinship between an individual and the other individual or family denoted as 'chulat ghar' (the cousine family). Another pattern of the use of the term would be in terms of the discrimination between the relationship with the same individual in different situations. In reality it was expressed in the form of exclusion and inclusion of somebody in that category by an individual engaged in the speech act in two or more totally different situations which were perceived by that individual as totally unrelated.

The preponderance of these two kind of speech acts showed that the villagers were linguistically used to express the psychological and qualificatory aspects of the situations in which they used to participate. This prevented them from analysing reality in its elemental form which precedes generation and transfer of 'information.'

As a consequence of this communicating conditions, information obtained through urban linkages did not have immediate relevance to the traditional economic pattern based on agriculture in the village. This was in sharp contrast to most of the proximate villages where involvement in agriculture brought more substantial returns in terms of yield and money.

Not much premium was kept by the community on higher levels

of formal education. This could be seen in relation with the labour intensive economic activities of the community. Thus the lack of technical know how and scarcity of information in all spheres of life was repeatedly found in the village. Given the peculiar location of the Gheryachiwadi it occupied a dual membership viz. membership of a traditional polity and membership of an ascriptive-modern polity. The epicentres of both these polities seemed to lie outside the Gheryachiwadi. Thus, instead of operating as a more mobile section it showed a slowing down of formal developmental inputs in terms of physical and human capital. This was corroborated by a marked absence of benefits of the basic developmental facilities within the village. For example, the recent attempts at introduction of major innovations like bio-gas plants and agro-forestry in the village failed. Introduction of the said innovations could be ascribed to the bridge linkages between a very small number of individuals in the village and a distantly located political leadership in the urban area. This indicated lack of or weak institutional arrangements for internalisation of developmental inputs. Thus, this introductory process could be thought of more as a result of patron-client relationship than a structural impetus for developmental achievements from within the village.

The village was located in an environmental system that had been rapidly depleted of nutritional forest produces that could have formed a substantial part of the diet for the local populace. This in turn compelled the community to engage in

labour intensive agriculture and yet depend on external sources for supply of food.

The impoverished soil quality and scarce water reservoirs heavily constrained a varied crop pattern. But this had not strongly induced the community members to search for strains and varieties that are suitable to a semi-arid condition.

ix) Communication patterns :

The village had little developed roads that constrained frequent transportation of food produces and equipment. Nevertheless, the roads were the major means of contact for the community. This was fortunately realized by the villagers and they used to persist with the district level government authorities to improve the condition of the roads connecting the village with the world.

Remarkably, the villagers showed a consistent exposure to mass media like radio and television. These were mainly looked upon as the means of 'entertainment' by the villagers than channels of acquisition of information. Nevertheless, the subsistent economic condition prevented the adoption of any of the flux of messages from the mass media to which they were exposed. This was compounded by an acephalous character of the village where the absence of a clearly defined leadership prevented the village from using the information obtained through mass media under the guidance of the leadership through reflective opinion making about discreet messages for developmental pursuits.

There was an inclination among community members to mobilize credit sources through urban oriented subsistent networks. Still there was no perceptible perspective to use these funds for community improvement. This reflects on the much personalized character of the subsistent networks.

Thus, the village was deprived of any institutionalized information dissemination strategy that have obvious advantages for all aspects of development.

x) Social administration & inhabitation pattern :

The village settlement was primarily organized on the basis of caste segregation and lineage segregation. All the socially approved interactions between community members took place on the basis of these two principles. With respect to this characteristic, this village did not differ from other villages in Maharashtra.

xi) Seasonal occupation patterns :

During the rainy season the majority population was engaged in Paddy cultivation. No Kharip (Winter) crops were cultivated within the community. Therefore, between November and next year's rains villagers were engaged in wage labour in rural and urban areas; and cattle-raising. A substantial number of males were engaged in manual labour in neighbouring urban areas throughout the year. Most of them were found to be returning to the village during rainy season to participate in Paddy cultivation.

The earlier discussion with respects to development

infrastructure shows that no special channels for introduction of newer nutritional information existed. As well as, the villagers practised more traditional patterns for production, distribution and consumption of food. Thus, it can be said that no flow from outside existed in the village .

Summary :

1. The village Ghera Mordari was located in a geographically distinctive area.
2. The environmental system in which the village was located was impoverished with respect to nutritional resources.
3. There were no institutionalized occupational associations within the village.
4. The community was divided into settlements, castes, lineages and peer groups. This affected the exchange of information indirectly.
5. The villagers were dependent on the scanty resources available for the modern kind of agriculture which was typical of the marginally living agricultural groups.
6. The village showed a high proportion of land to population which indicated the potential of further development of nutritional resources in the village.
7. The village was homogenous economically.
8. The villagers indicated foraging behaviour which is not so common about the agricultural groups.
9. The food produced locally was not sufficient for the nutrition of the community.
10. The village did not have access to the resources of development which were present in the neighbouring villages.
11. Agriculture as a model of employment could not compete with the urban mode of life which was evident in the migration of a large number of individuals to the urban areas.