Contents

Foreword xi
Preface xiii

Part I: The Tribal World

Chapter 1: Introduction 3

Chapter 2: Theoretical Backdrop 14
1. Early Understanding of Religion 14
2. Historical Background 16
3. Theoretical Approaches in the Understanding of Religion 17
   A. Evolutionary School 17
   B. Diffusional School 25
   C. Functionalism 27
   D. Structural-Functionalism 28
   E. Phenomenological Approach 32
   F. Symbolic – Interpretive Approach 34

Chapter 3: Folk, Origin and History 38
1. Demographic Profile 39
2. Origins 40
3. Bhil Myth on its Origin 41
4. Bhils in the Epics and Puranas 42
5. Historical Background 45
6. Sub-groups among the Bhils: The Vasāvā Bhils 47
7. Creation Legend of the Vasāvā Bhils 51
8. Historical Writings Regarding the Vasāvā Bhils 53
9. Specific Characteristics of Vasāvā Bhils 54

Part II: Field Datas

Chapter 4: The Setting 59
1. District Profile 60
   A. Topography 60
   B. The Climate 61
   C. Demography 61
   D. Tribal Population in Narmada District 64
   E. Density of Population 64
   F. Education 64
2. Village Profile 64
   A. Location and Population of Vandri 64
   B. Literacy 67
   C. Transportation 69
   D. Land and Forest 69
   E. Cropping Pattern 70
   F. Housing 72
   G. Social Organisation of Vandri 73
   H. The Basic Amenities 75
3. Village Officials and Personalities 75
4. Religious Personalities (Intermediaries) 77
   A. The Main Village Punjaro 77
   B. Deities Places in Vandri Village 79

Chapter 5: Celebration of Life-Cycles 82
1. Celebration of Rites of Passage 84
   A. Period of Pregnancy 84
   B. Child Birth 87
   C. The Naming Ceremony (Pichero Di/Hatho Punje/Hatho Chhutawano) 90
   D. Post-birth Taboos 93
   E. Piercing of the Ears (Kan Vindhanu) 94
   F. Growing Up in Society 94
   G. Menses (Menstruation) 95
2. Marriage 96
   A. Bethrothal 96
   B. Wedding (Veheval/Vorad) 100
   C. Types of Marriages 114
3. Death and Final Rites (*Maywud Vidi*) 121
   A. Final Rites at Home 121
   B. Funeral Procession 125

C. Rituals at the Cremation Ground 126
D. Rituals after Cremation 132
4. Post-Mortuary Rites 134
A. Second Day after Death 134
B. Third Day after Death 135
C. Fourth or Fifth Day after Death 136
D. Twelfth Day Commemoration of the Dead (Baramu) 138
E. Rituals at Mortar (Ukhali Dev) 138
F. Turning into a Giant (Rakhav Bonehe) 139
5. Life After Death 139

Chapter 6: Celebration of God at Community Level 146
1. Importance of Festivals in the Vasāvā Culture and Society 146
2. Different Festivals among the Vasāvās 148
A. Gam Devati/Toran Dev/Ujamanio Dev (Village Protector Deity) 148
B. Deity of Green Vegetables (Matanio Dev) 155
C. Tiger Deity (Vaghan Dev) 157
D. Chief Deity of the Cowherds (Gowal Dev) 159
E. Celebration of Deities (Dev/Baa/Bohan Punja) 161
F. Disease Driven away in a Cart (Ovalau/Tida Voral) 163
3. Diwali – A Major Festival 165
A. Festival of Light (Shikan Diwali) 165
B. Celebration of Queen Diwali (Rani Diwali/Diwalio Dev) 169
C. Kataki Diwali/Dev Diwali/Moti Diwali 172
4. Holi – The Major Festival 172
A. Pre-Holi Preparations 173
B. Fifth Day of Fagan (Fagan Pacham) 173
C. Eve of the Festival of Holi 175
D. The Proper Day of Holi 180
E. Ritual of Feeding the Holi (Holi Jamade) 182
F. Post-Holi Celebration 184
G. Fifth Day Celebration (Pacham) 186

Chapter 7: Fairs, Festival and Household Celebrations 190
1. Fair (*Jataro*) 191
A. Celebration of Gimb Dev (Gimb Devno Pado) 192
B. Dev Mogra Fair 195
C. On the Day of Dev Mogra Fair 199
D. Sacred Complexes of Dev Mogra 201
2. Household Celebrations 204
A. House Cleansing Ritual (Ko-Saukal Vidi) 204

B. Feeding the Dead (Shisu Jamadyu) 213
C. Becoming New (Navai/Nova Viyo) 217
D. Annual Worship of the Clan-deity (Geman Poojan/Angay) 218
E. Ritual of Pouring Water (Pai Takavoo) 222
F. Deity of the Threshing Floor (Kholo Dev) 223
G. Main Door-deity (Ba Kovadiya) 227
H. Buying New Bullock or Cow 227
I. Ceremonial Planting of Wooden Stump (Hatali Parali) 228

Chapter 8: Witchcraft, Magic and 'Primitive Science' 238
1. Witchcraft 240
A. Mythology 240
B. Ordination Into Sorcery 241
C. The Final Rites of the Dakan 247
D. Means Used By a Witch to Work Evil 248
E. Evil Eye (Najar Padehe) 251
F. Removing Buried Articles (Datina Kadehe) 253
G. Dakan's Thanksgiving Rituals 255
H. Darkest Night (Kali-Chaudas) 256
2. Magic and 'Primitive Science' 256
A. Training of Shamans (Kashya Hovarya Behade/Ramade) 257
B. Ceremonious Drinking of Blood (Hivaryani Pyayalo (Piyali) Pivani Vidi) 261
C. Magical Entities and Articles 265
D. Malevolent Spirits (Put) 266
E. Rain Forecasts/Predictions (Hās Kadhe) 268
F. Forecast through Omens 271
G. Stellar Signs and Omens 272
H. Terrestrial Signs and Omens 273

Chapter 9: Vasāvā Mythology 280
1. Mythical Tales 282
A. Birth of Raja Pantha and Thakor 282
B. Raja Pantha Marries Devkatan 288
C. Story of Pohana Poira 289
D. Story of the Coconut 290
E. Story of Barmegh 290
F. Other Shorter Tales 291
G. Origin of Yah Mogi (First Myth) 293
H. The Priest of Yah Mogi (Yah Mogino Punjaro) 311

Chapter 10: The Impact of Islam and Hinduism on the Vasāvā Bhil Religion 316
1. Islam 317
2. Hinduism 318

Part III: Recapitulation and Conclusion

Chapter 11: Conclusion and Major Findings 329
1. The Tracing of the Vasāvā Bhil History 329
2. Vasāvā Bhil Religion 330
   A. Rites of Passage Among the Vasāvā Bhils 331
   B. Celebration of Feast and Festivals 334
   C. Re-enactment of Myths 338
   D. Witchcraft and Magic among the Vasāvā Bhils 339
3. Major Findings on the Vasāvā Religion 341
4. Recommendation for Future Research Studies 344

Appendix-I: Names of Main Vasāvā Respondents 347
Appendix-II: Glossary 349
Bibliography 353