

PAHAVADI - A VILLAGE IN THE HILLS

Look at the pictures in this chapter and discuss the differences between your locality and Pahavadi.

The Satpura Hills

The hills of Satpura lie to the south of Kotgaon. The Tawa river originates from here. A large number of streams and rivers also join the Tawa. You can see some of the streams from the hills joining the Tawa in the picture on page 87.

Let us visit the hills of Satpura to see how people live there. The tribal people living here leave their homes and go to far off villages and towns and work in the construction of roads and railways. Sometimes, they also go to the villages in the plains to harvest wheat.

- *Do people in your locality also go off to far away places to work?*

To reach the Satpura hills, you have to take the road leading from Hoshangabad to Betul. Look at the map of Madhya Pradesh and find out the direction in which we have to go. The Narmada plains extend upto a little distance from Itarsi.

From here the road and railway lines follow a zig-zag route up the hills. The slopes of the hills are covered with forests. In some places, there are patches of level ground, most of which are also covered with forests. Here we do not see vast stretches of cultivated fields like those on the plains of the Narmada.

Wherever there is level land in between the

hills, we come across patches of cultivation. Small villages can also be seen in such areas. In between these patches, the land is rugged, rocky and covered with forests. Forests still remain on the slopes of these hills. In the plains, the forests have been cleared and in their place there are vast stretches of greer fields.

- *Write four main points of the above section.*



Fig. 1. Forests of the Satpuras

The Road to Pahavadi

Going south from Itarsi we cross bridges over several streams and rivers. About 50 kilometres from Itarsi, we come across the Machna river which is a tributary of the Tawa river. On the banks of the Machna lies the

town of Shahpur which is famous for its pots.

Shahpur is surrounded by hills and forests on all sides. Cutting through them is a mud road in the north-west, which goes to a village called Pahavadi.

The road to Pahavadi is rugged and uneven. Sometimes it descends into a dry stream bed. Most streams do not have bridges over them. During the rainy season, when these streams are filled with water, it becomes difficult to go from Shahpur to Pahavadi. Such streams carry mud, sand and leaves which finally reach the plains of the Narmada.

The Terrain of Pahavadi

See the land of Pahavadi in the picture. How is it different from that of Kotgaon? The fields of Pahavadi are uneven. One can see a few trees growing naturally in between the fields. Streams and small channels of water flow in low lying lands. They carry the fertile soil away from the fields and leave behind less fertile sandy soil with pebbles and stones. This soil is generally red and yellow. It is also thin layered. In the villages, level ground is seen only in those places which are away from the hills. The soil in these fields is black and clayey. It is brought here by the streams flowing down from the surrounding hills.

- *In figure 2, which number indicates the less fertile land? Which number indicates the fertile land?*

Soil differs from field to field in the hills. While there is black soil in one of the fields, a neighbouring one may have red or sandy soil.

- *Fill in the Blanks -*
 - *In Pahavadi, most of the land is sloping and the soil is _____.*
 - *Wherever the land is even, the soil is _____.*
- *Do you know what type of crops can be grown on sloping land? What crops are grown on plain land?*

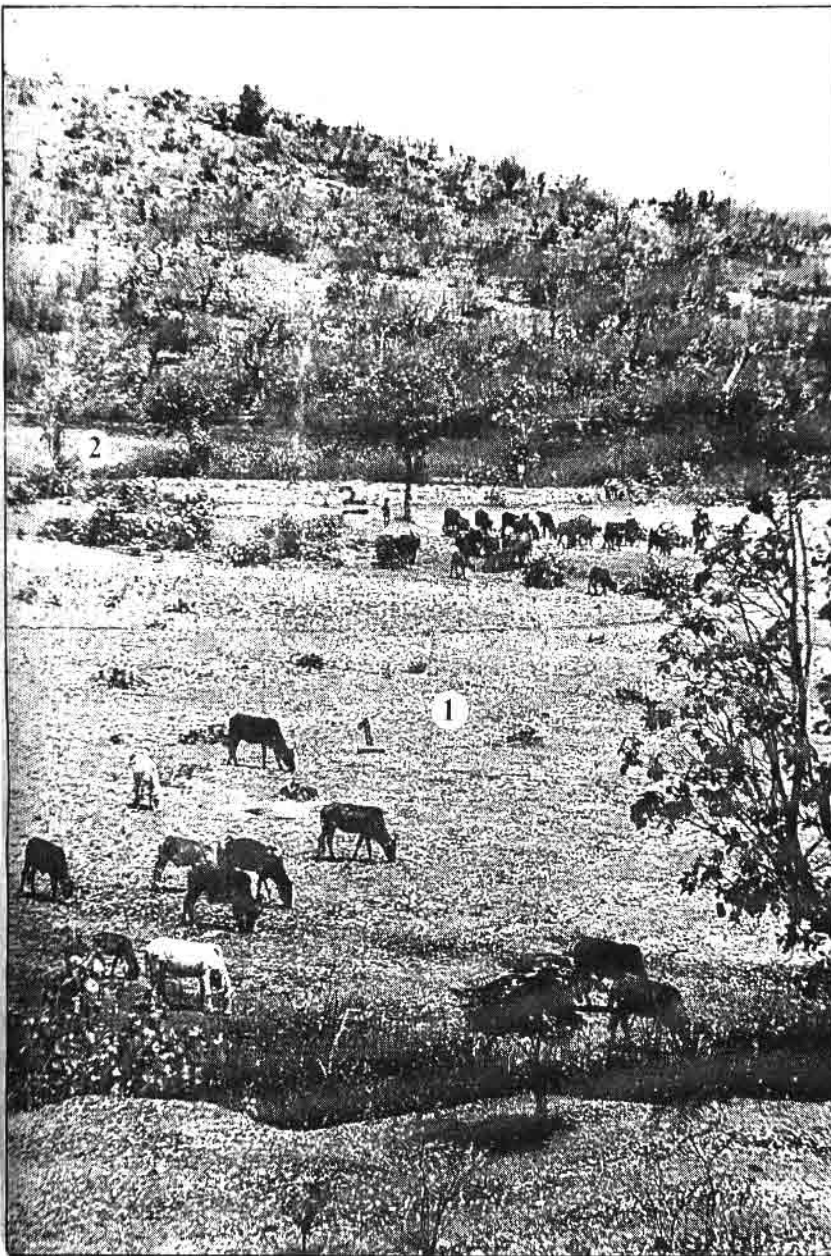


Fig. 2. Terrain of Pahavadi



Fig. 3. Rugged and rocky land



Fig. 4. Fields of 'kodon'

- Which crop would be grown more in Pahavadi - wheat or coarse grains like kodon and kutki?

CROPS OF PAHAVADI

Crops in the rainy season (*kharif*)

Most of the cultivation in Pahavadi is carried out in the rainy season. *Kodon*, *kutki*, *jowar*, *til*, etc. are the main crops grown here. These crops are grown on slopes that have sandy, red and yellow soil, because water is not retained on the slopes. These crops cannot be grown in black clayey soil because it retains moisture which rots their roots. In recent times, some peasants have started growing soyabean on such soil.

In the hills, livelihood from agriculture is

uncertain. The stony and sandy soil is not very productive and the rainfall is also not regular every year. Coarse grains like *kodon* and *kutki* require continuous rainfall for three months. Sudden and heavy rain or dry spells can ruin such crops. If that happens the farmers cannot even recover what they sow.

Apart from problems like lack of fertile soil and uncertain rainfall, there is another problem faced by the farmers of Pahavadi. The village is surrounded by forests inhabited by wild animals. These animals, especially wild boars, enter the fields and damage the crops. Sometimes they eat up the entire field, leaving behind nothing. To protect their fields, the farmers sit on high *machans* built in the middle of the field to guard against wild animals.

Since the soil is loose and rocky, crops cannot be cultivated every year. The field is left fallow every alternate year. Unless this is done, the soil will not be fertile enough for the next crop. Suppose a farmer owns twenty acres of land. He cultivates only ten acres of land one year and leaves the remaining ten acres fallow till the next year. In contrast to this, you must have noticed that in Kotgaon, two or three crops are raised every year from the same field.

- Where does the land give a better yield - in Kotgaon or Pahavadi?



Fig. 5. Kitchen garden at the back of a house. You can see the strong fence surrounding the garden where maize is growing

- **What are the four main difficulties in cultivating the slopes of Pahavadi?**

Kitchen Garden in the Backyard

Farmers in Pahavadi depend more on the produce of their backyard or kitchen gardens than the produce from the sloping fields.

Every farmer's house in Pahavadi has a backyard or clear space around the house. This space is surrounded by a strong fence made of wild bushes and shrubs. The space near the house is flat and the soil is also fertile. The peasants improve the quality of the soil by regularly adding compost and manure. Moreover, it is easier to protect the backyard against wild animals and birds.

Many farmers also have a well in their yard. They use the water from the well to irrigate the crops. They are thus able to grow corn, gourds like pumpkin and *gilki*, yam and other vegetables like beans in the rainy season.

With a little production of *kodon* and *kutki* from the fields and corn and vegetables from the kitchen garden, the villagers in Pahavadi are able to get food for a few months in a year.

- **Discuss the differences between backyard agriculture and agriculture on the slopes of Pahavadi.**

Winter (*rabi*) Crops

The loose, rocky soil of hills cannot retain moisture for long after the rainy season. Therefore the fields are left bare in winter and autumn. In winter, some farmers grow wheat in their back yard. Creepers of beans are also planted. Besides eating beans as a green vegetable, the seeds are dried and stored for later use.

Fig. 6. Digging a well in Pahavadi. You can see one person laboriously digging the rock with a rod and another man collecting the rubble in baskets. These baskets will be drawn up with the help of a rope and emptied outside. You can imagine how difficult, time consuming and expensive it would be to dig wells here. You can also see that despite having dug to such depth there is no sight of water in the well still.

Those who have flat land with black, clayey soil, and are able to irrigate their fields by some means or the other, can grow wheat, gram and *alsi* (linseed). In Kotgaon, however, these crops can be grown without irrigation as the soil there is able to retain moisture.

Fill in this table :-

Crops of Pahavadi		
	Rains	Winter
Fields on hill slopes		
Kitchen gardens		
Plain lands		

DRINKING WATER AND IRRIGATION

It is both difficult and expensive to dig wells in rocky and hilly areas. Here, the soil layer is not very thick. The rocks are exposed after digging just a few feet. Also, even after the rocks are broken and the well is dug, there may not be water in it. Imagine how difficult it must be to get drinking water.

Earlier there was only one well in Pahavadi. Now there are many hand pumps.





Fig. 7. Harvested wheat in the area irrigated by Chilasm Tekri dam.

So the situation has improved. There are about seven or eight wells in Pahavadi for the purpose of irrigation, but only three or four wells have water all the year round. Water is drawn from these wells with the help of 'moth' drawn by bullocks, and some of the wells have diesel pumps. Even though some of the houses in Pahavadi have electricity, they are not able to use it for irrigation. That is why there are very few irrigated fields in Pahavadi.

Apart from digging wells for irrigation, the villagers also collect water in small lakes or tanks. *Bandhs* are made with mud across the streams and rain water is collected here. Water is drawn from them with the help of pumps to irrigate the fields. Water is also conveyed to some fields through canals but since the land here is uneven and rugged, this is not possible for most fields.

There is a small tank called Chilasm Tekri near Pahavadi. The water from this tank is used to irrigate about 150 acres of land (figure 7).

- *What crops could be grown more easily on thin soil - kharif or rabi?*
- *Did you find small tanks around Kotgaon also?*
- *Why don't the people of Kotgaon make tanks and ponds?*
- *Why is it easier to make tanks in Pahavadi?*
- *From where, and in which season, do the tanks get filled with water?*

THE FORESTS OF SATPURA

There are valuable trees like teak in the forests of Satpura. Businessmen and contractors were felling these trees in large numbers because of the demand for wood in factories. The government, therefore, made a law prohibiting cutting trees and killing wild animals in the forests of Satpura. Now the forest department of the government cuts the old trees and plants new saplings. The cut logs of wood are stored in depots and auctioned to traders. Bhaunra, near Pahavadi, has a depot where a large number of big and small logs are stored. Government rules and restrictions relating to the forests have also affected the people of Pahavadi.

Adivasis of Pahavadi and Forest Produce

The Gonds, Korkus and Pardhans are some of the adivasi tribes of Pahavadi. These tribes live in small villages and have a deep and old relationship with the forests surrounding them. From very early times, they earned their livelihood from the forests, hunting wild animals and collecting flowers, fruits and roots. They also cultivated some grain and grazed their livestock in the forests.

Today their condition has changed. They do not have the freedom to collect whatever they require from the forests. They can collect only a headload of firewood for their own use, and nothing more than that. They have to get wood and bamboo from the government depot to construct houses. It has now become



Fig. 8. Picking tendu leaves

impossible for the tribal people to earn money by selling wood in the neighbouring town of Shahpur.

In the past, the adivasis earned their living by selling valuable forest products like *chironji*, *mahua*, lac, gum, honey, grass, etc. Now, however, these items have become government property. Now the tribal people require licenses from the government to collect these products.

The adivasis also earn their living by collecting *tendu* leaves. These leaves are used to make *beedis*.

Mahua

Mahua is the most important tree of these forests. Have you ever seen or eaten *mahua* flowers? They are sweet and have a strong smell. In April, when the *mahua* trees bloom, the whole forest smells fragrant. *Mahua* flowers are eaten both fresh as well as dry. The tribal people make several dishes out of *mahua*. There are several *mahua* trees around Pahavadi. A family can collect 2 to 3 quintals of *mahua* in one season. By selling this, they get some cash to buy necessities. The *mahua* seeds, called 'gulli', are ready by May-June. Oil is extracted from these seeds and sold. This oil is used in cooking and for making soap.

The people here are very dependent on the forests. The forests compensate for the poor agriculture in the mountains. By selling forest produce and labouring long hours in the forests, they earn money to buy food.

- **Why are the forests important to adivasis?**

- **Do the people of Kotgaon also depend so much on forests?**
- **After the forests were made into government property, what are the difficulties that people have had to face - in finding food, in finding building material for houses, in finding forest products to sell in the market. Make a list of these.**

Cattle Rearing

Most families in Pahavadi have five to six animals, mainly cows, oxen and buffaloes. Some people also rear goats and hens. In the past, these animals used to graze on forest land. Now a license is required from the government to graze cattle. One person in the village is in charge of taking the animals to the grazing grounds and bringing them back in the evening. There is no shortage of fodder for animals as in Kotgaon.

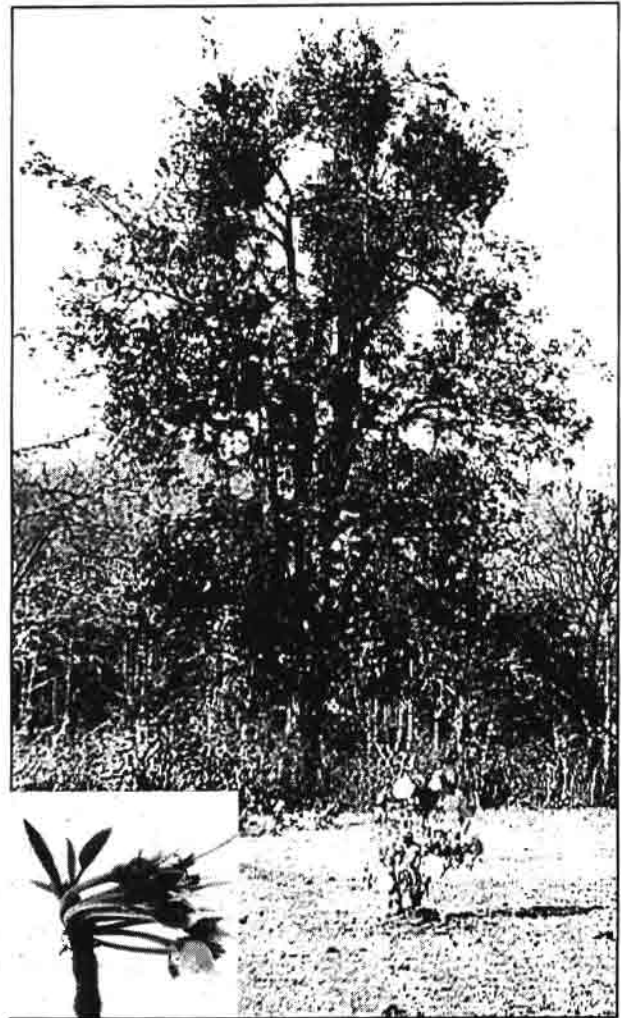


Fig. 9. Mahua tree and flowers



Fig. 10. Houses of Pahavadi. Note the use of mud, wood and hand-made roof tiles

Cattle rearing and poultry farming in Pahavadi is on the increase. Eggs, milk and goats are sold in the market. Milk is sold in Shahpur, but eggs are even sent to Sarni some 30 km away. The local breed of cows is of a very small size and yields little milk.

Houses

Let us see what materials are used by the people of Pahavadi to construct houses. In Kotgaon, houses are mainly made of mud, mud bricks and tiles. In Pahavadi, houses are mainly made of wood. Most of the houses have walls made of bamboos and mud plaster. The roof is made of bamboo sticks which are tied together. The sticks are tied by rope made from the roots of a tree. Some people have also started using wires. Tiles are small and of irregular shapes. They are made locally. You

probably remember that there is a factory of tiles in Bagra, so the people of Kotgaon get big, baked tiles. However, in Pahavadi the tiles are made locally by hand.

PROBLEMS OF LIVELIHOOD

The fields of Pahavadi cannot provide sufficient sustenance to the people. Earlier this was supplemented by what they collected from the forest; but today due to the cutting down of forests even this is not enough. Hence the people from such villages in the hills are forced to look for work in the plains villages during the sowing and harvesting period. Some people also go to the towns of Shahpur and Bhaunra for work. In Bhaunra, there is a nursery for seedlings and a timber depot. Some people also find employment as casual workers in road construction and railways.

EXERCISES

1. What problems of transport do the people of Pahavadi face?
2. Why are the people of Pahavadi not able to cultivate the same fields every year? Answer in four lines.
3. Why is it difficult and expensive to dig wells in mountainous areas like Pahavadi?
4. Unlike Kotgaon, why does Pahavadi not sell a lot of produce in the market?
5. Write down the differences between plain areas and hills in ten sentences.
6. What differences do you find between fig. 10 of Kotgaon and fig. 10 of Pahavadi? What are the reasons for these differences?
7. How can the production of milk, eggs and meat be improved in Pahavadi?