

CHAPTER : 5

SETTLEMENT

Aboriginal tribes also require shelter. It plays an important role in the life of human beings to protect themselves against the natural forces and to live comfortable lives. The evaluation of the types of houses start from the lake dwellers, tree dwellers, hill men, the forest and cave dwellers, builders of temporary structures. Generally, the tribal houses have no facilities for ventilation, because these have no windows. The tribals fear the outsiders coming in and also ferocious animals. In summer, the hut is very warm and therefore, they go out in to open space for a 'chat' or sleeping. The tribal houses have limited doors. Light and air are not sufficiently available. This has its adverse effect of their health.

A Rathwa village is normally located on the banks of a river or near water-bearing ravines. The huts in village are not built in the form of localities. Palm trees are generally found around the village. It is easy to locate a village in a forest by the palm trees.(Photo) This tree is useful for the Rathwas. It gives them liquor and palm drink called as 'Nero' (Photo). The leaves of the palm are used as roofing material. They make fence, mats, baskets, ropes, broom sticks, strings for beds etc. from it. They also eat palm fruit.

There are roughly twenty to twenty-five huts making up one street. Rathwa huts are neither built in clusters nor rows. (Photo) They are scattered at some distance



Palm tree



Collect Nero in Pot

from each other, whereas the huts of the Dhodia tribe are clustered closer to one another and hamlets, therefore, have a compactness of their own. A Rathwa hut may cover an area about 5 to 6.5 sq. meters (15'X20' feet). The huts belong to the same clan. They use wood, bamboo etc. from forest. They build the hut after the Holi festival, which is after March. During this period, they are free from agricultural work. They consult elderly persons for the selection of land for their huts. Relatives help them in the construction work.

The hut is perched on a small hillock, overlooking the field. (Photo) The Rathwas being independent minded as well as superstitious, fear that their neighbor may be witching and bringing some calamity to visit them. If there is long sickness in the family, the favorite cure is to change the hut. They also have the fear of fire. They keep fire burning in front of every hut. This is meant for heat, light and also to protect themselves from wild animals. The Rathwas do not live in groups. Each one lives on his field or in his own enclosure, which has a strong fencing.

The fence is called 'Hato' or 'Sato'. Each house is roughly enclosed by a fencing, a raised open platform in front of the house and a verandah encompassing it. The construction is temporary in nature and made of combustible and perishable materials which catch fire easily. The fence is fixed in the ground using untrimmed bamboos. The fence is roughly a meter high (2 to 3 feet). Around the hut, the bamboo fence has a gate about 2 to 2.5 meters high from the ground. The hut space is partitioned into different rooms. The size and number of rooms depend on the



Hut built in Clusters



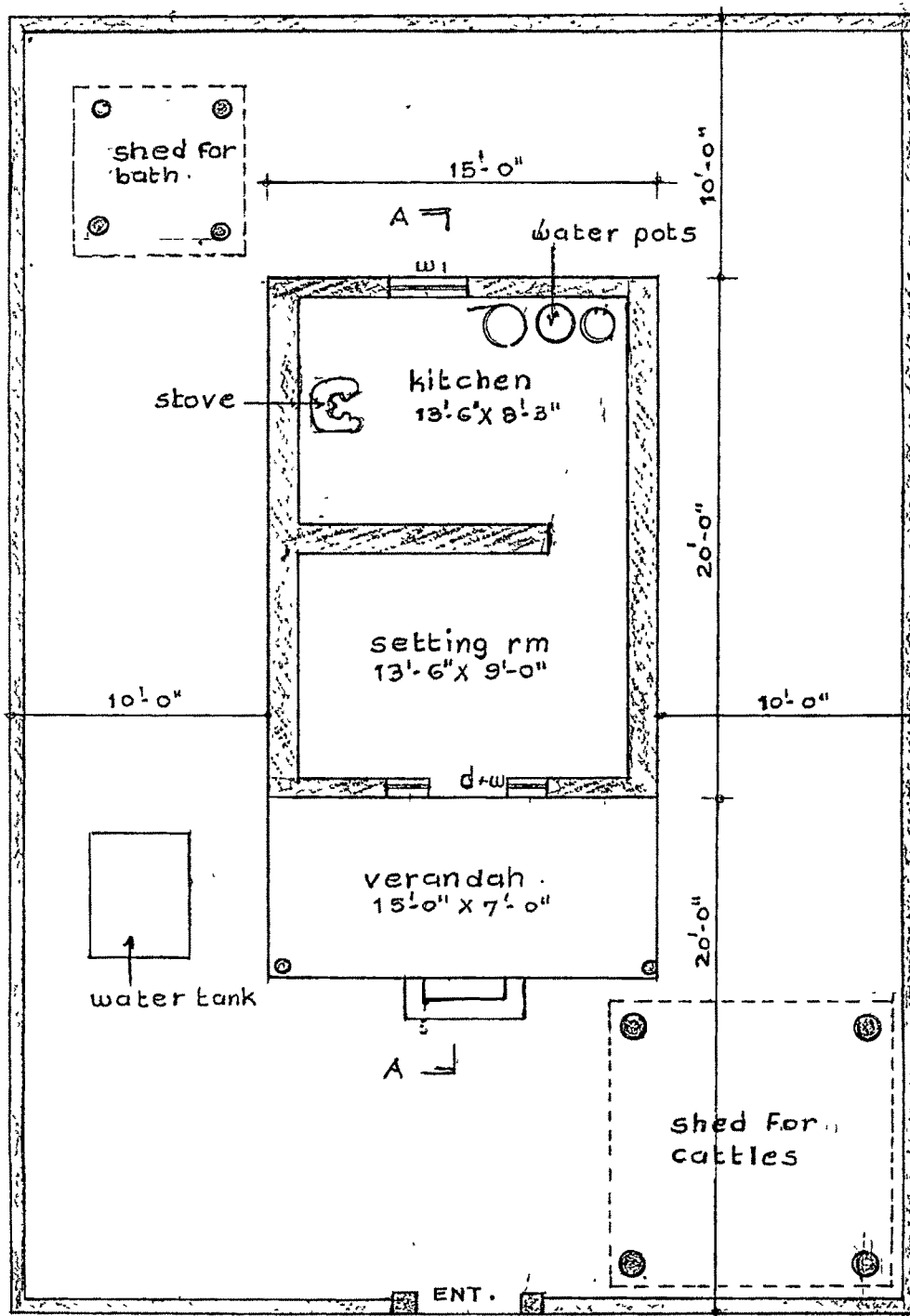
Hut on a small hillock

economic condition of the family. The rooms vary from one to three. The most economically backward family has one room hut. However, two rooms are commonly found. It seems a newly wed couple live in one room in the beginning and more rooms as per their convenience. If the hut is broad, it is then sectioned off for other family members to stay. The length of the room varies roughly from 3X7 meters (15'X20' feet). One corner is used as a kitchen and another as common for all purposes (Photo) Some use the kitchen for sleeping purpose also. The mats are rolled during day time. The household materials are kept in the kitchen. The other room is a retiring room used for many purposes, (Photo) such as grinding, pounding, etc¹. (House Plan) (Photo) The kitchen of a Dhodia tribe is separated from the living room by a partition of a low wall. The Dubla tribes of South Gujarat, live on subsistence economy. Their houses have more facilities and these are made of bricks and have tiles or tin sheets for roofs.

The hut does not have any toilet and bathroom. They take bath in a village tank or river, near a well or outside their hut. Bushy and hilly areas are used for nature call.

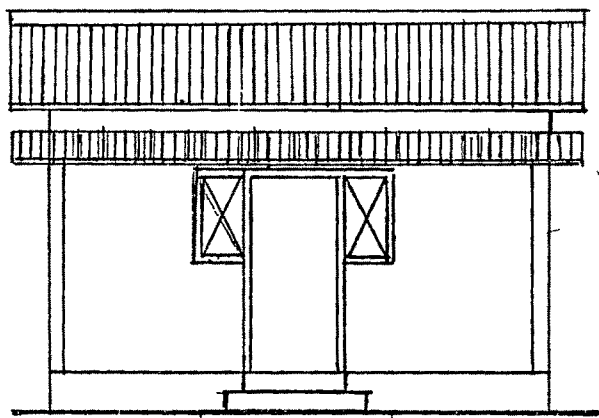
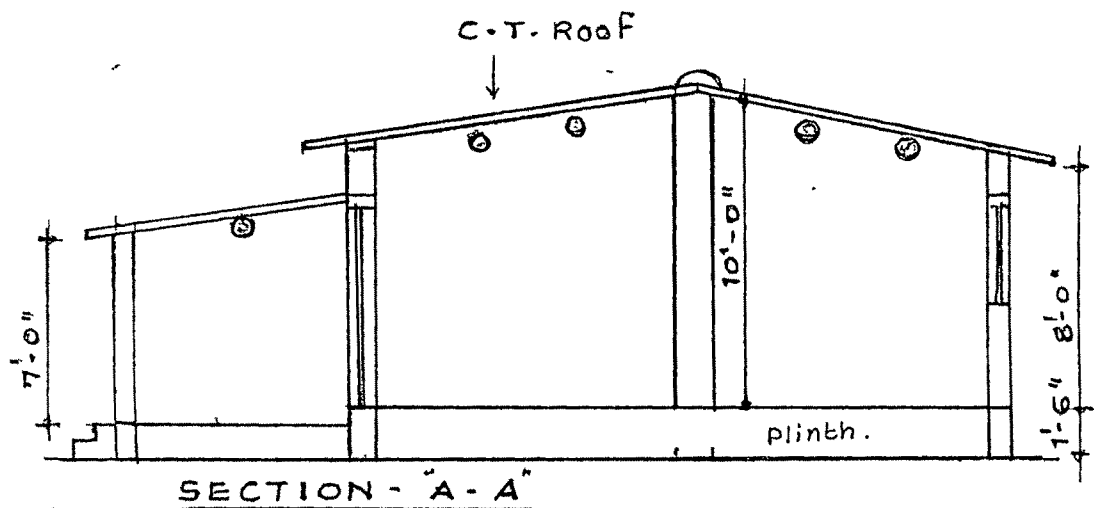
The walls are made out of dried brush wood, bamboo mats or bamboo strips. In some places, brick huts have also started coming up. They take the help of

1. Shah P.G., Tribal life in Gujarat, Gujarat Society, Bombay, 1964.



GROUND FLOOR PLAN
scale 1" = 4'-0"

PLAN OF A TYPICAL RATHWA HOUSE





House View



Westenside Wall



Side elevation

the village carpenter. A majority of building work is done by them on their own. They make bricks or tiles by molding the clay with hand. The roof normally slopes on two sides. Houses are single storied but with an attic (Maliyu). (Photo)

The roof of the hut is covered by bamboo chips, brush wood, dry stems of plants and leaves. Some houses are covered with tiles. The hut has a front door. There are no windows for ventilation and light. But the walls above the attic have a small opening for letting in some light. The front plinth or platform is not kept open. The platform is called 'Otlo'. One side of it is used to keep water pots covered by earthen lids. A hollowed dried gourd is used for taking out water from the pitcher. The nearby area of the plinth is used for growing vegetables. The palm fronds are tied to the walls for preventing rain splashes against supporting walls. For decoration, a peacock made of tin sheet is fixed on some houses in the front. (Photo) The walls are plastered with mud from inside. The main wooden pillars of the roof are protected from rain by covering them with broken, burnt clay pots. The outer walls and doors are decorated with painting. (Photo).

In the front or at the back, the cattle are tied in a separate cattle-shed constructed specially for the purpose which covers about 3X3 meters (10'X10' feet). (Photo) Its walls are covered with horizontal wooden pieces which are called 'Melo'. Generally the hut has one opening protected by a bamboo door. In the back side of the hut, a bamboo attic is constructed for storage purpose. It is normally used to store wood for fuel and cow dung. The composite is a bit far away from the hut.



Maliya



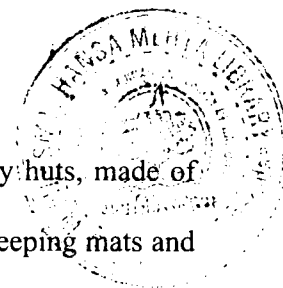
On roof Peacock for decoration



Outer door decorated

Cattle - shed





The Rathwas are economically backward, and live in ordinary huts, made of low quality materials. Their way of life is very simple. They have sleeping mats and few ordinary coverlets, blankets etc. They have earthen pots and vessels such as the earthen curry pot (Todlu), a flat earthen dish for baking cakes (Kuldu), a bamboo cup to sup from (Asan), earthen water pots (Tamdu), earthen bowl (Rampatra), (Photo) a brass bowl (Vati), a wide-mouthed tin (Kansa), drinking cup (Talsi), a bronze plate (Thali), and earthen jar for storing corn (Matlu). Every house has a number of earthen jars or large bamboo baskets to hold grain (Porsas). The baskets are kept in the kitchen. (Photo) The mortar (Khaniyo) plays a significant role in tribal life. It is a small hole dug into the floor. The corn is pounded or un-husked with mortar. The women do all the pounding. The grinding stone and mortar are the common domestic implements of tribals of Gujarat².

2. Ibid.



Earthen Pots



Kitchen



Kitchen wall fasality



‘Chulo’



Painting Chulor Wall