

SOUNTI

The Sounti settlements are traditionally unclan and homogeneous. In multi-ethnic villages they live in separate hamlets maintaining distance from other communities. Family is generally nuclear, patrilocal and patrilineal. The community comes under one totemic gotra *Nageswar* (cobra) and is divided into a number of exogamous clans (*Khilli*) like *Doldasia*, *Bardia*, *Saru* and *Tangsaria*, etc. Family is predominately monogamous, though polygyny still exists in a few cases. They prefer marriage by negotiation. Payment of bride price is obligatory. Remarriage of widows, widowers, divorcees, junior levirate and sororate are permitted. The birth pollution is observed for twentyone days. They practise both cremation and burial to dispose off their deads. The bereaved family observes death pollution for ten days. The Sounti are Hindus by faith. They worship village deities like *Thakurani* and *Mangala* and Hindu deities like Siva and Raghunath and observe Hindu festivals. Dehury is their traditional priest. The Sounti have their own traditional community council headed by village chief and influential elders.

