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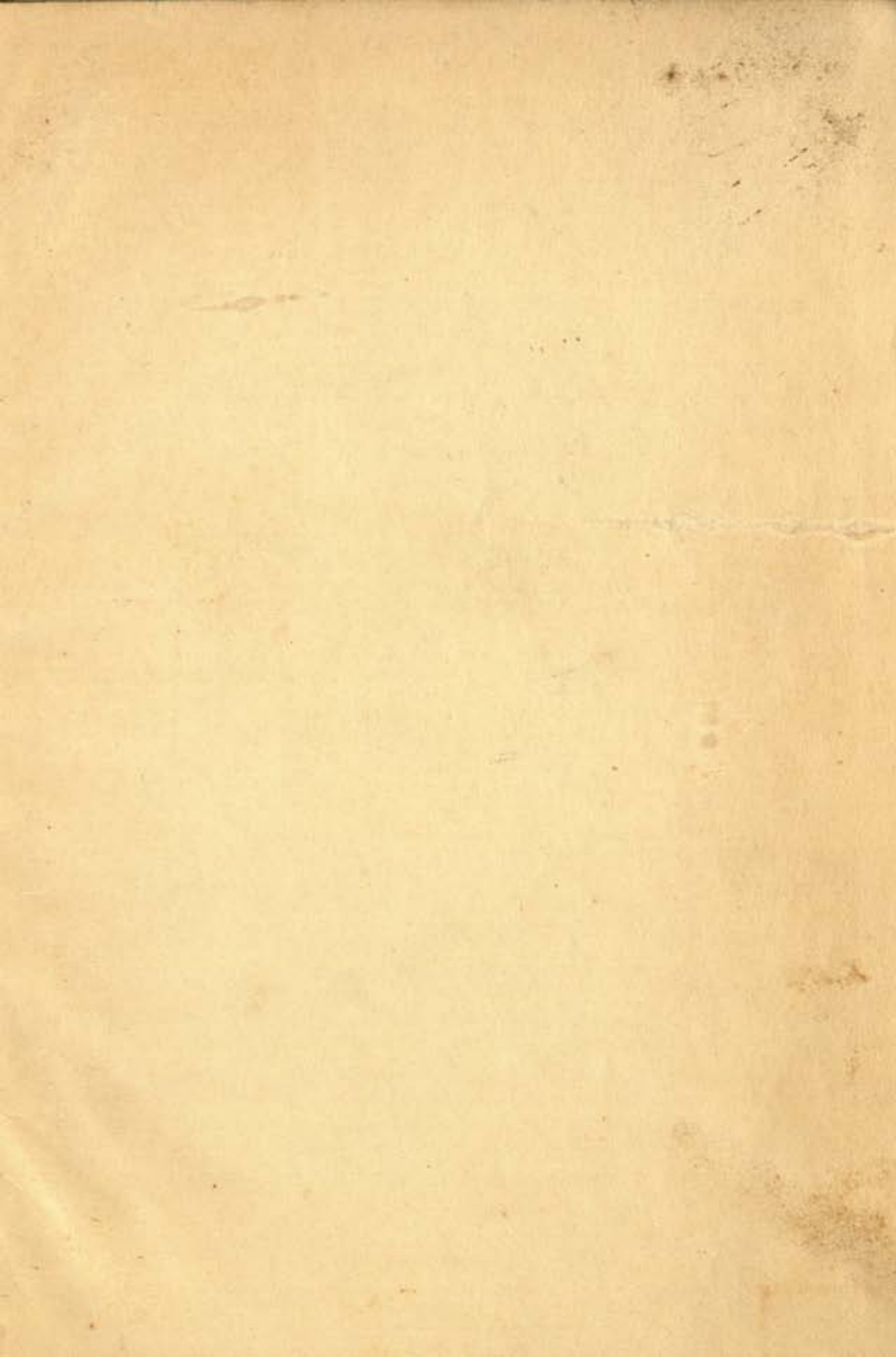
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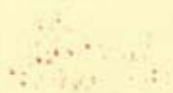
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# A TRIBE IN TRANSITION

A STUDY IN CULTURE PATTERN



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# A TRIBE IN TRANSITION

A STUDY IN CULTURE PATTERN

19113

BY

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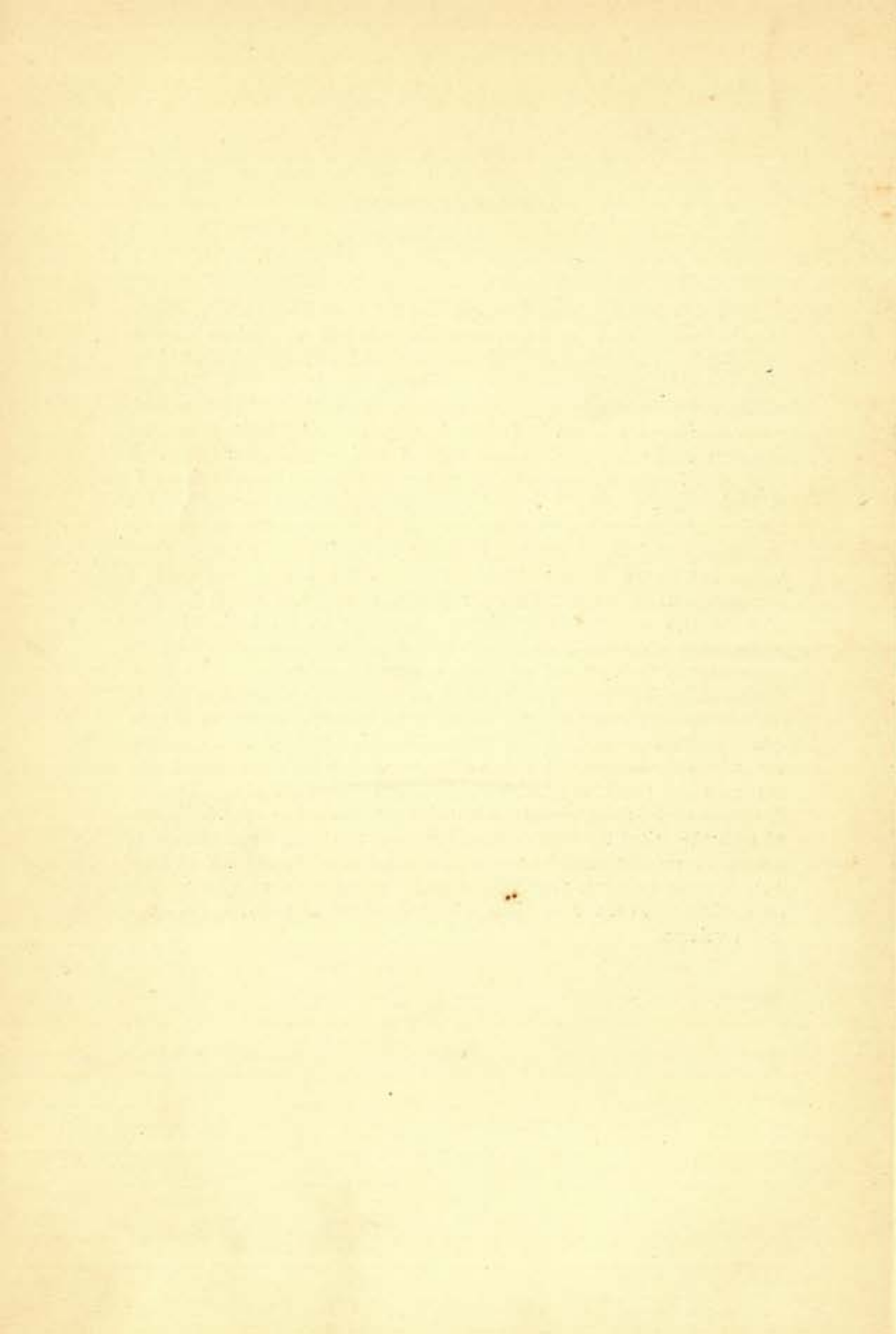
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It was in January, 1924, I accompanied Mr. Sarat Chandra Roy, Editor, Man in India, Ranchi, on an ethnographic tour into the Kolhan Government Estate. I received my first lessons in field investigation from him. Since then Mr. Roy has given me all necessary help in my work. My debt to him is too deep to be expressed in words. To Professor B. Malinowski, whose seminars I attended in London in 1933, I owe my initiation into the technique of the functional method which I tried to use in the summer of 1934 when I came back to India for further field work. From Professor T. C. Hodson of Cambridge I received invaluable assistance and sympathy. To Sir Edward Gait I owe a deep debt for reading the manuscript and suggesting changes and improvements. Professor F. C. Bartlett, F.R.S. of Cambridge has offered some valuable criticisms which I have also tried to incorporate in the volume. I am also grateful to my friend Mr. P. J. Locke of Cambridge with whom I discussed the plan of the book. To Dr. Radhakamal Mukherjee I am grateful for constant encouragement during the preparation of the work and for many important suggestions. To my friend and colleague, Mr. D. P. Mukherjee, I am particularly thankful as without his help the book could not have been printed so early. A number of Hos, mostly students of the Chaibassa High School, have assisted me in collecting the materials presented. It is impossible to mention each one individually, but my special thanks are due to Mr. Kanuram Deogam, Assistant Teacher, Chaibassa High School, one of the few educated men among the tribal people who may be called the torch-bearer of progress among the aborigines of the district. I am also thankful to the administration of Kolhan and of Singhbhum for the assistance they have rendered me on various occasions. My pupil, Nilachal Padhe, B.A. (Hons.), has obliged me by preparing the index of the volume.



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## INTRODUCTION

Several new approaches to the problems of Social Anthropology are being tried to-day. A number of scholars, who have done first-hand investigations among savage peoples, have come to realise that the old method of constructing human history by collecting culture-traits from different societies is inadequate for the proper understanding of primitive culture. Even three decades back, ethnological expeditions aimed at collecting and recording savage customs and beliefs rather than at formulating any general sociological laws. These resulted mostly in descriptive accounts of savage societies and reconstructions of hypothetical past ages of which the present savage institutions were considered to be relics or survivals.

Rivers was one of the earliest to stress a new methodology in which a similarity of culture-traits based on a supposed uniformity of the workings of the human mind was not tacitly accepted. He not only studied the phenomena of diffusion and blending of cultures as the result of migration and race admixture, but also analysed the interrelations of the various phases of savage life and culture as an integral whole. He thus developed a technique by which the study of primitive peoples gained in exactness and realism.

Radcliffe-Brown and Bronislaw Malinowski claimed that the function of the anthropologist was to deduce and formulate general laws governing the structure of primitive societies rather than to collect and describe merely the peculiar antics of savage peoples. Malinowski and his pupils have developed a method of investigation the object of which is to give an accurate picture of the individual in the whole complex of the society in which he lives. Anthropology, they hold, seeks to discover the role of specific customs and rites in primitive society in its particular milieu. Culture is a complicated piece of machinery; the different parts of the machine are interlocked, and have to work together, or the machine becomes useless. Each part is also of no use by itself, it can do nothing except to assist the whole to function. As Malinowski puts it, anthropology does not look at the details of culture in order to appraise them as details, but examines them to see how and why they work, how they fit into the whole pattern, what is the motive behind them, and then, finally, to reveal how these are co-ordinated in a working and living system. In his study of the Kula system of the

Trobriland Islanders, for instance, he presented savage society as an integral system of culture, rather than as an abstract scheme of social relationships. Social institutions must be studied as they actually function in a concrete environment, and in relation to the fundamental cultural needs they satisfy.

The change in methods of anthropological field investigations has been facilitated by recent developments in the technique of observation. The investigator seeks a fundamental unity in the patterns of customs and beliefs, economic activities and social institutions, forming a whole system that gives each detail its meaning in a living culture. Each culture-trait, each social institution, is intimately linked with every other trait or institution of the society of which it forms a part. It is only in this manner that the investigator can discover how a tribe less civilised than ourselves works, plays, and lives its life, the source of power of its religion and magic, myth and legend, and the controls of taboos, laws and economic obligations acting and reacting upon each other in the daily routine of tribal life.

Another new approach to the study of culture is found in Ruth Benedict's *Patterns of Culture*. This may be called the beginning of a *gestalt* anthropology. Benedict's analysis of the patterns of culture is a new method, as it is concerned rather with the discovery of the fundamental attitudes than with the functional relations of every cultural item. In her analysis of savage life, customs and institutions, she has stressed more on the reactions of the personality to the social framework, its attitudes, inhibitions and fulfilments, rather than on the scaffolding. This needs no doubt a deep insight into the genius of a culture and a knowledge of the springs of action and ethos controlling and determining individual and group behaviour. Benedict has pointed out that a culture, like an individual, is more or less a consistent pattern of thought and action, and that within each culture there are characteristic purposes which stabilise behaviour and consolidate experience. The more intimate our knowledge of the cultural drives that actuate the behaviour of the individual, the more shall we discover that certain prevailing controls of emotion and norms of conduct account for what are apparently abnormal attitudes and behaviour. The heterogeneous items of savage behaviour can accordingly be understood only in the emotional and intellectual background of savage culture. "The whole is not merely the sum of all its parts, but the result of a unique arrangement and interrelation of the parts that has brought about a new entity." Benedict has called the genius of culture its configuration, and shown that the general configuration, as long as it lasts, limits the direction of changes which remain subject to it. Changes in the contents of culture do not mean changes in its configuration, as the latter has often a remarkable permanence.

The genius of a culture or its configuration, to use Benedict's term, is no doubt a stable element so long as the tribe or culture is a closed group. But when two or more cultures overlap and fuse into one, the configuration undergoes significant transformations. The composite culture-complex emerging out of the blending of different cultures depends on the relationships of hostility or comradeship between the tribal groups, on inertia or adaptability, or again, on the dominating role of leaders in different cultures.

The present field study of the culture pattern in the Chota Nagpur plateau amply illustrates this. The configuration of Munda culture has undergone striking changes, as the different branches of the Munda linguistic group are not closed units and interpenetration of culture traits has been easy. Whatever traits have been borrowed have been woven into the general texture of life through a process of assimilation of which the methods and technique are of great interest to anthropologists.

It is generally true that if two cultures overlap they will produce crosses, and if they do not overlap, there will be signs of contact. The several tribes of the Munda linguistic group have either overlapped and led to blending, or the same ethnic group has drifted into segregated units, thus preserving elements of culture which are uniform throughout the Munda country. But they have also come in contact with other communities and cultures. A group of individuals or families migrate to industrial centres or plantations in the off-seasons of agriculture, and return during harvesting operations or stay there for much longer periods, even for a year or two. They come back with new ideas, new methods and modes of dress, and a higher standard of life which they want to incorporate into the traditional pattern of their indigenous culture. Again, we find the immigration into the tribal areas of people belonging to various castes and tribes, high and low, and from different regions who regularly come to work in mines, factories and plantations interspersed in the tribal tract. Industrialism attracts not merely labourers but also a sprinkling of itinerant dealers in foreign merchandise, contractors, supervisors of railway labour and administrative officers. In the first case, there is a new and standard type of culture, the traits of which the immigrants can pick up slowly; and even where the substitution of culture-traits is sometimes forced by economic necessities among individuals or families the effects on the tribal culture as a whole are spasmodic and less disintegrating. As a rule, the culture contact in a distant plantation or industrial centre to which Munda tribal groups migrate periodically, involves loss of some valuable traits characteristic of tribal culture, but such loss is sociologically less significant. In the second case, where we have a mining or industrial enterprise established in the midst of the tribal area which gathers

together a mixed population recruited from different levels of culture, the effects upon the tribal culture pattern are profounder. With a permanent or semi-permanent residence, acculturation becomes much easier. Where there are several culturally similar tribal groups present, as in the mining areas, there is an easy exchange of culture items. But economic forces, prestige of wealth, the lure of luxury, and even the newly acquired sense of morbid excitement inevitably break through the crust of traditional usages, and the entire canvas of aboriginal culture obtains a new colouring. New wants, new attitudes, new pleasures and new vices reveal themselves, and gradually, as there is an exchange of population and attitudes between the mining centres and tribal villages, the changed cultural patterns, epidemic in these centres, spread far and wide. The entire tribal area comes under the spell, as is vividly portrayed in the refrain—

Time has changed, oh brethren,  
 No more engage in merriment by drums, dances and songs,  
 Just seek after the road to your country's good,  
 No more toss your head in dancing Akhara (arena)  
 You are drinking leaf-cup after leaf-cup,  
 Drink no more out of big pots.

Therefore, the one supreme value of the concept of a pattern or *gestalt* is that it enables us to fix upon a selective agency for new traits. In other words, the stability of the pattern acts as the nominative that selects its objectives to form one running sentence of culture processes. The difference between Malinowski and Benedict's methodology consists in a difference of emphasis. Whereas the first is concerned with the functional adaptation both inside and outside a scheme of culture, the latter is primarily interested in its ethos. This does not create any great difference in the technical method of observation, nor in the fundamental purpose of study, which is that of the individual living in active association of give and take with his group and its mores. A synthesis of these two approaches has been my ideal in the present enquiry. In the following pages I have attempted to give a general description of the Munda cultural pattern, not only as a closed group, but also as an open one willing to change under pressure of alien influences but not violently departing from its norms. The resultant blending gives us the picture of the living Munda culture of to-day.

There are 5,342,704 Austric speaking people in India. The Austro-Asiatic, which includes the Munda group, is spoken by 5,333,166, while the Austro-Nesian by 6,542 persons only. The different branches of the Munda group are the Mundas, Hos, Sonthals, Bhumij, and many other tribes who

have lost their language but retain much of their cultural pattern. The Munda-speaking tribes are the most widely known primitive peoples in Northern India, as they have been from very early times migrating far and wide. They supply labour to plantations and factories in Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, and Assam. The pressure of population and a knowledge of distant lands have attracted the Sonthals to the fertile plains of Northern Bengal, while the Mundas, Hos, and other cognate tribes have emigrated to the tea gardens of Assam and are even found to work in the jute mills of Bengal.

The natural environment of the Munda culture is the Chota Nagpur Plateau. It is a well-wooded and undulating country divided and diversified by ranges of hills and traversed by fertilising streams. Here and there one meets with vast semi-globular masses of granite which look like sunken domes of gigantic temples. The Hos live in Kolhan, which is a series of fair and fertile plains, often broken, divided and surrounded by hills. The Birhors live in the hills and jungles that fringe the Chota Nagpur Plateau on the east and the north-east.

The tribal people of Chota Nagpur possess a marked political organisation. The chief features of this are: (1) a territorial sub-division as well as a centralised government, the grouping of villages in Parhas or Pirs, presided over by a headman who acknowledges the authority of the divisional chief; (2) the recognition of the right of the founders of the village who own the land; and (3) a crude hierarchy of tribal and village officials who receive grain remuneration from the villagers in accordance with the part they play in the economic life of the village. The most important element in the Munda village system is the Khuntkattidars or the descendants of the original founders of a village. These enjoy certain special privileges and rights which are interwoven with the religious observances and customs of the people. The headman is generally from Khuntkattidar family, and his Killi or clan is the Marang (large) Killi. The original family which is known to have reclaimed the land first is the Marang Haga (family), and enjoys a dominant position in the social economy of the village.

All these tribes preserve a host of common traditions. They commence with the creation of the world, and specially of the first human pair, and tell of human history, of fire-rain that destroyed all mankind except one righteous pair, how humanity was divided, and how the ancestors of the present-day people have been wandering from place to place right up to the present time.

Although these tribes have taken to agriculture and settled habits, subsistence still depends largely upon hunting and gathering. Women help

their menfolk in the fields, and the digging stick is still used by them. It is a wooden bar used for digging out roots, making holes in the ground etc. Formerly, it was made of hard wood throughout, but nowadays a flat piece of iron is fixed at one end. They also use the ploughshare fixed in a groove on the front of the upper portion. The handle is of different shapes, and there is a beam whereby the plough is attached to the yoke. They still use the bow and arrows. There are many varieties of arrow-heads in use among them.

They use the same sort of household utensils, agricultural implements, tools and weapons, live in the same style of huts and shelters, wear the same kinds of trinkets and jewellery, cultivate the same crops, use similar agricultural methods, and drink the same kind of liquors or intoxicants. They have similar musical instruments and dances and festivals.

In their villages the Munda, the Tamaria, the Birhor and the Ho usually wear the same kind of cloth, and the saris worn by the women are of similar design and these are made by the village weaver. The pottery and the decorative figurines of men and animals are mostly alike. The personal beauty of the women of these tribes is believed to be enhanced by bunches of bead necklaces, nose pins and nose ornaments, anklets, rings on the fingers, and thick bracelets made of brass or bell metal which deck each forearm of the young women from the wrist to the elbow.

The social organisation of the Munda speaking people has not been very much disturbed. The tribal group is endogamous, though inter-tribal marriages have occurred here and there resulting in the formation of mixed groups like the Bhumij-Munda, the Kharia-Munda, and the Oraon-Munda, whose social positions are inferior to those of the parent groups. Each tribe is divided into a number of exogamous Killis or clans, which take their name from some animal, plant or material object. Sometimes the totem is a part of a plant or animal, which latter may be dangerous or otherwise. There are edible totems, and totems like brick, basket and chopper. The clans are patrilineal as well as patrilineal.

The village headman or the Munda is the accredited head of the village elders, and owes his allegiance to the Parha chief, who is known as the Manki or the Parganait. In the village, the Munda is the supreme authority, and his claim to represent the village gains not a little support from the fact that he very often represents the Marang Haga of the village.

The Hatu or village is the unit of territorial organisation among the Munda speaking tribes. In villages having more than one Tola or settlement, they are separated by a path around the outskirts. In all affairs concerning the life of the people, the members of a Tola maintain a sort

of privacy and will not join in the engagements of another Tola unless previously arranged. Occasionally I had to take snaps of groups of Mundas and Hos in Chota Nagpur, and as soon as I expressed my intention to do so I found the people segregating into smaller groups, and under no circumstances could I succeed in snapping members of two villages together. Whenever I remonstrated with them I got the only answer, viz., "We are different." The number of Sasan or burial grounds within the village gives a clue to the nature of the village grouping in Chota Nagpur. In villages where we get more than one Sasan there are more Killis than one, as each Killi prefers to bury its dead or the bones separately. As each Tola has its own burial ground so also it has its own Akhara. Ordinarily, men and women of the same Tola will dance together.

The custom and rites connected with maturity, marriage, maternity and death are practically uniform among these tribes. The same beliefs regarding the role of the father in procreation, the incidence of birth, the sex of the child, and similar customs connected with birth, name-giving and pollution are met with throughout, and although disintegration in these beliefs is evident, the traditional attitudes to these facts of life have not been suppressed. The system of divination by means of grains for the name of the child is general among these tribes. The belief in reincarnation is strong, and the child is named after some deceased ancestor. They also believe that the souls of deceased men need not always be reborn in their own tribe, but may be in another tribe or caste that lives in the neighbourhood.

In marriage, as in other important social institutions, the traditional outlook has not undergone any significant modification. No Munda young man marries before he is able to construct a plough with his own hands, nor is a Munda girl given away in marriage before she can, with her own hands, weave mats with palm leaves and spin cotton. Here and there a few cases of child marriage may be heard of among the tribes, but the customary practice is to allow a free hand to the young folk of both sexes in the choice of their partners in life from amongst members of marriageable Killis or clans. The engagement of a middleman among the Mundas and the Hos to settle preliminaries has been in vogue, but the final selection rests on the young people, and there is a conventional method of obtaining the approval of the young folk concerned. Marriage by purchase is the traditional custom among the Munda speaking tribes. It is the bride that is purchased; and in some tribes, this bride-price or Gonom is so excessive that the number of regular marriages has considerably fallen in recent years while irregular unions have become easy and popular.

The importance of the kinship group in marriage, particularly of the maternal uncle is recognised by all the tribes, and cross cousin marriage was and still is a popular custom. Although joking relationship exists between grandparents and grandchildren, it is difficult to assume that marriage between grandfather and granddaughter was ever practised. The Bala or the betrothal ceremony of the Mundas, the Bapla of the Hos, the Logontol of the Birhors are of the same pattern. The simplicity of the marriage ceremony, the different customs observed during the stage of negotiation, the part played by the kinship group, the participation of the entire community in marriage, the restrictions of intermarriage within certain groups, and the degrees of avoidance within the tribe are mostly alike.

The system of training the youth of the tribe through indigenous organisations is practically uniform in Chota Nagpur. The same methods are used to make young men and women of the tribe useful and serviceable members of the community. In most villages inhabited by the Sonthals, the Hos or the Mundas, the institution of social segregation, as found among the Oraons, does not exist, but the control of the social life within the village, including the relations between the sexes, both before and after marriage, is in the hands of the elders of the tribe who are effectively assisted by the youth organisation of the village.

The ceremonial life of the tribes demands participation of all classes, and absence from attendance is considered a grave offence to the gods and spirits which they propitiate. All the villagers, men, women and children must refrain from doing any work during the performance of these rites, and must silently stand all day as spectators, if their services are not directly needed for the ritual. The success of their hunting excursions and of the agricultural operations is traced to the rigid observance of established rites and rituals, and failure is ascribed to the omission of them, so that the sanctity of their ritual life has remained practically undisturbed. If the procedure is correct, if the priest has followed the traditional methods, if the offerings are unimpeachable, if the prayers have not been misspelt, if the dancers have danced their traditional dances, if they have observed the prescribed taboos, the desired effect follows in their wake.

The village priest or Pahan of the Mundas, or the Deuri of the Hos, or the Naya of the Birhors is the indispensable factor in the village organisation. He is, as amongst the Birhors, the chosen of the spirits, and he alone can propitiate them and keep them in order and thereby avert mischief and misfortune. The idea that the Pahan keeps the village from disturbances from the world of spirits, and the Mahato or the village headman manages the secular affairs of the village, is current among all the tribes. The employ-

ment of the original inhabitants or the founders of the village as priests by the immigrant tribe is a characteristic feature of Munda culture. The tribes place great reliance upon magic, particularly imitative magic. Like many other tribes in India and elsewhere, they have their rain magic. When they want rain, they follow the Deonra or the medicineman to the peak of a neighbouring hill, and the latter with the help of his assistants throws down stones of all sizes and shapes so that the rumbling sound of stones falling resembles the rumbling of thunder, and they then believe that rain would follow. Sometimes water is poured over small boys by the villagers, which is believed to cause rain. They burn straw or dried faggots and the smoke that darkens the sky is believed to cause clouds to pile in the heavens. The efficacy of these practices is seldom questioned, and any failure is traced to acts of omission or commission. The Deonra of the Hos and the Mati of the Birhors are witch doctors and diviners whose activities are conceived as distinct from those of the Deuri or the Pahan, but who are believed to assist the latter in times of emergency. The Deuri is concerned with the benevolent powers, and the Deonra with malevolent or mischievous ones, so that the former is everywhere respected and the latter feared. When the headman of the village acts as the priest, the secular duties are blended with the religious, and consequently, the priest does not enjoy the same order of sanctity; this has led to a disintegration of tribal beliefs, particularly in the religious life of the group concerned. But everywhere else, the priest enjoys a confidence seldom equalled by his secular colleague. When the priest intervenes with his knowledge of the unseen world to bring down rain or check the course of epidemics, he immediately brings solace to the anxious souls. If his intervention is successful, if the latter are blessed with rain, or if the epidemic is brought under control, the people greet and thank him without reserve, and thus his position as guardian of the people is vindicated. If, however, his intervention does not bring about the desired result, village gossip runs quickly over his ineptitude and the implications of his failure.

Witchcraft and sorcery are much dreaded by the tribal population of Chota Nagpur; and it is in the multi-Killi villages that we find it practised more, as the witches and sorcerers get protection from the fact that the interests of the different Killis are often at variance. In villages with one Killi the witches are less harmful to the village, for whenever the people suspect any person as a witch the whole village vents its wrath on the family of the witch. The unfortunate witch has to direct his or her attention to neighbouring villages, and he or she is found to offer prayers and promises of sacrifice to the Dessauli or the presiding deity of the neighbouring village so that the latter may not frustrate the object aimed at. The difficulty of tracing the source of the witchcraft is thus enhanced

by the contiguity of villages; and inter-Hatu disputes arise on this account disturbing the smoothly working organisation of the society. The people thus have little social relation with strangers even if they belong to neighbouring villages. When there is any disease in the family, any loss to cattle or harvest, any death in the family they trace it to jealous sorcery. Whenever they go out to strange places or to neighbouring villages or in marriage parties or to attend law-courts, they are aware of the dangers and are equipped with adequate spells and note the omens that may befall them. As there are witches and sorcerers so also there are witch-doctors and diviners, and at every step they consult these mysterious advisers. The belief in witchcraft has rendered this profession in the tribal region necessary; so the Deonras of the Mundas and the Hos, the Mati of the Birhors, and many similar functionaries recruited from the inferior castes of the neighbourhood flourish as indispensable units of the village organisation. Each Deonra possesses a set of powerful formulas the effectiveness of which comes from their faithful rendition. The language of the spells and invocations is generally non-Austic, which shows either that they are borrowed from their neighbours or that they find the medium of foreign language more efficacious. The secure position of the witch-doctors in the social life of the tribes has led to a multiplication of spirits and gods, and the heterogeneity of the tribal pantheon to day is most evident in areas which are inhabited by members of alien castes and tribes. While the priest is struggling hard to prove the efficacy of their traditional gods, the witch-doctors are inventing new spirits for introduced diseases and new crises. The pendulum at present appears to swing to the side of the witch-doctors. This is how the Deonra has become more important than the Deuri or the Pahan, and shows how the latter is combining both the roles, those of priest and medicineman. The race for popularity has exposed them to temptations and sometimes they take recourse to arrant frauds and knavery.

We have summarised above the important common elements of Munda culture, particularly the traits which are obviously indigenous to it. In other words, we have delineated the essential features of the culture of a given geographical region in which reside a considerable number of relatively independent tribes with similar features of culture. The similarity lies in a core of important culture-complexes held in common. We shall describe in the body of the book how a particular tribe, within this area, viz., the Ho has preserved its pattern and how it has reacted to changes. Primitive culture is dynamic, and changes and modifications are natural; but how these changes occur, who are responsible for introducing them, and what are the chances of survival of these introduced traits, we shall attempt to discuss in the pages that follow.

Since Col. Tickell's Memoirs on Hodesum which appeared in 1839-40 in the pages of the Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, and Col. Dalton's account in his Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal, nothing of any importance has been written on the Hos. A number of articles on the Hos have been contributed by me from time to time in the pages of the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, and Man in India, paragraphs from which have been incorporated in the present monograph. A few articles on Ho riddles, folk-lore and customs have appeared in various numbers of the Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society. In the present monograph all the data have been collected by me first-hand through the medium of the dialect of the Hos, among whom I spent nearly three years from 1924 to 1926. Since 1927, I have spent most of my summer vacations in checking up the data previously collected.



## CHAPTER ONE

### THE ENVIRONMENT

The Hos are concentrated in the Kolhan which is a Government Estate in the district of Singbhum though they are found scattered outside the district. The district which lies between 22' and 23' of north latitude and 86'-53" and 85'-2" of east longitude, forms an important

**The Land** part of the lower plateau of Chota Nagpur. The total number of Hos as recorded in the Census of 1931 is 523,158 and shows a steady increase during the last fifty years. Of this number nearly half is found in the Kolhan. The total area of the Estate including the reserved forests and the Manoharpur tenure is 1919 square miles or 1,228,217 acres. It is bounded on the north by the Seraikela and Kharswan Feudatory States, on the south by the tributary states, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Bonai and Gangpur, which are inhabited by Oriya speaking people, on the east by the Kharkai river and the Bengali speaking Perganah of Dhalbhum, and on the west by the Gangpur Feudatory State and the Zemindaries of Anandpur and Porhat. Lohardaga, the home of the Mundas and other cognate branches of the Austric group, lies to the north-east of the Kolhan.

To the north and south-east, the country is for the most part open and greatly undulating and contains numerous prosperous and well-cultivated villages with hardly any forest. The southern is flat and open country, almost devoid of hills, thickly populated and well-cultivated.

**The Flora** The western and south-western parts of the Estate are mountainous and thickly covered with jungles and are sparsely inhabited. Most of the ranges of hills in the Kolhan are covered with scrub jungle composed chiefly of the Polas and Assun on which Tusser worms are bred. In those areas which are low, cane is found in abundance while the mango tree is interspersed all over the country. Cheretta, arrowroot and many varieties of plants, shrubs, fungi, ferns and creepers abound most in the jungly areas. At Chaibassa and those villages where the Hindus have settled, groves of date and palm trees are found but they are absent in ordinary Ho villages.

The rivers in the Kolhan are really hill streams fordable throughout the year except during the rains. The Koel, Karo, Koena, Bhagirathi, Gumra, Roro, Kharkai and Sanjay are the important rivers which divide and

diversify the whole of the Kolhan. In spite of so many rivers and numerous rivulets the water supply becomes precarious and irrigation from them is hardly possible. It is during the months of July, August and a part of September that most of these rivers become flowing streams and are not possible to ford, though fishing becomes a profitable and an entertaining occupation of the Hos. The little irrigation that is done by the Hos is from the Bandhs or tanks, some of which have been constructed by the local administration and this also is mainly by percolation as the Hos do not know how to irrigate by means of earthenware-pipes at the base of the embankment as is done in Palamau. The forest areas which are mostly in the west and south-west have a good rainfall and are not liable to famine as the north and the south. Besides, forests provide many roots and fruits which supplement the meagre produce from the fields.

The animals that are more abundant in the Kolhan are the deer, spotted deer (*C. axis*), barking deer (*C. muntjac*), four-horned deer, wild buffaloes, the saumar (*C. rusa*), neelgye (*Dalmatis picta*), tigers, leopards, bears (*Ursus labiatus*), Hyænas, jackals, particularly corsac (*Cynalopex insectivorus*). Comparatively rare are the ratel or badger (*Hatelus melivorus*), porcupine, squirrels, the wild dog (*Canis primævus*), the hare, and two varieties of monkey (sara and gye). Wild hogs are plentiful. The varieties of snakes that are frequently found in the Kolhan crossing the village alleys, unmindful of pedestrians, make a formidable list. Besides snakes, the Kolhan contains a variety of insects, poisonous and otherwise. There are ants, bees, wasps, scorpions and centipedes. White ants are most abundant. The queen ants serve as a delicacy with the Hos for they are caught, put in a leaf cup and roasted in a fire for immediate consumption. They are also eaten raw by the Hos. Fish are abundant in the larger rivers. In the rainy season they are found in all the rivers but during the dry season they retire to the deep pools inside the rivers known as Dabs.

The existence of minerals in and around the Estate has encouraged streams of immigrants who have invaded the isolation of the Hos. The district of Singbhum contains very large mineral deposits of iron, manganese ore and copper, while gold, chromite, phosphoretic rock, phosphate of lime, yellow and red ochre, china clay, lime and limestone also occur, and there are minor deposits of asbestos, mica, lead ore, soapstone and slate which attract labour and capital and help in the opening up of the district. The discovery of new iron ore deposits owned by the Bengal Iron and Steel Co. at Pansira Buru and Buda Buru in the Saranda forests, has revolutionised the economic life of the district and vastly improved the prospects of the metallurgical industries in India. The iron ore at places rises to heights of 2,000 to 3,000 ft. above sea level

and runs continuously for 40 miles in a s.s.w. direction from near Pansira Buru through Saranda into the Keonjhar and Bonai States of Orissa. The Pansira Buru contains a mass of high grade hematite (limonitised at the surface) about 400 ft. deep down where the deposit has been exposed by quarrying operation. The ore plunges to an unknown depth and contains 64% of iron. In the opinion of expert geologists, India may be regarded as provided with reserves of high grade iron ore commensurate with as large an expansion of her iron and steel industries as may be justified by the requirements not only of India but of surrounding eastern markets. On account of this and the fact that much of Singbhum's resources are still untouched and unknown, it seems probable if not certain, that future further developments in iron and steel smelting in India will be concentrated in or near Singbhum. This fact brings into the forefront the need of a proper adjustment of the life of the people of the district who are for the most part backward and aboriginal, to the new economic environment created by the change. The cultural change that is inevitable and has already been evident is, and will be, largely determined by the manner in which the inhabitants of the area avail themselves of the opportunities existing at present and those that will be created in the near future. The possibilities of the mining centres have led to the construction of the Amda-Jamda branch line of the Bengal Nagpur Railway in 1923-24 which has facilitated the opening up of the country and encouraged the growth of little colonies of traders and others round the railway stations which are exercising tremendous influence on the social and economic life of the backward communities in Singbhum in general and in the Kolhan in particular.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The names of the Pirs or Perganahs in the Kolhan and those of the rivers flowing through it, as well as many of the Talaos or tanks that are either dried up or contain a scanty supply of water, show that these were known long before the Hos settled in it. The names of many villages indicate the presence of people other than the Hos. In the village of Konslaposi adjacent to the Hindu village of Jagannathpur which stands on the left bank of the river Deo, named probably after the Kansal or Kausalya dynasty, there are two Talaos which are silted up and dry, one known as Sumitra Talao, the other Arjun Talao. The Deuri of Konslaposi is a Bhuiya, which shows that the Bhuiyas were the earlier settlers of the village and were recognised by the Hos as better versed in the spirit-lore of the land, and hence a Bhuiya was appointed as the priest of the village.

That the Hos occupied the hills and woods when they arrived in the Kolhan is perhaps correct. The names of hills in the Kolhan are mostly of Munda origin: Thus Charada-Buru (treeless hill), Kula-Dum-Buru, (Kula—tiger, Dum—dozing) which is a reference to a popular story about a tiger which, while dozing on the peak of a hill was attacked by a Danrachu bird causing the animal to fall headlong over the side of the peak and kill itself, Diriburu meaning rocky hill, Bicha-Buru, a hill containing iron ore, Boda-Buru (Boda—a goat), Kulpu-Buru (Kulpu—interlocked), Dinda-Buru (Dinda—unmarried), Matkom-Buru (Matkom—Mohua), Jiring-Buru (Jiring—long), Kula-Buru (tiger), Barai-Buru (Barai, rope made of sawai grass). Singsao-Buru and Angar-Buru are two famous hills which are connected by a popular anecdote, in which one hill was supposed to send fire to the other, the latter replying by sending snakes which, however, were killed at a place called Bingtapan (Bing—snake, Tapan—to kill), before they could reach their destination. This reference may be to the existence of a volcano, now extinct, in one of these hills, but all names show that the inaccessible regions of the hill were peopled by the Hos—and the names given to these are themselves of Munda origin.

The process by which the Hos and other tribes were brought into contact with the outside world, how they came under the control of the British

Government and how the mineral resources of Chota Nagpur are being exploited by foreign capital and aboriginal labour, how the land laws have changed, how forests were brought under protective form of administration, supply, as it were, the historical background for the understanding of the problems that face the primitive people of the area.

The British connection with the Hos, however, resulted from the trouble between the Hos and the Feudatory Chiefs which made the latter seek the assistance of the then paramount power. The Hos nominally acknowledged themselves to be subjects of the British Government in 1821. In 1831, they joined the rebellion of the Mundas of Chota Nagpur. They took a leading part in it; even to-day their assistance to the Mundas and their resourcefulness in their encounters with the enemy are memorized in immortal verses. Mr. S. C. Roy describes in his monograph on the Mundas the pride of the latter when on one occasion the Hos succeeded in exterminating a whole company of British soldiers and forcing the captain to return to Calcutta alone. The memory of this struggle is still commemorated by the Hos in many popular songs.

The Kolhan came directly under the management of the Government in 1836. There are 26 Pirs or divisions in Kolhan. Some of these Pirs are larger than others and many of these are divided into a number of subdivisions, each presided over by a Manki. Some of the major Pirs are (1) Saranda with 78 villages under 4 separate Mankis, (2) Bara Pir with a total of 131 villages under as many as 13 Mankis, (3) Thai Pir with 94 villages under 9 Mankis, (4) Aola Pir with 73 villages under 6 Mankis. When the Kolhan came under the Government there were 620 villages and during the first settlement of the Kolhan Estate in 1837, there were 622 villages. This has increased to-day to 917 villages. Evidently many of the additional villages were made by clearing the forest land for which rigid forest rules had to be introduced as also by fission of larger units.

A preliminary settlement was made with the Hos at the time when they came under the control of the East India Company. This was on the basis of the number of ploughs and the rate was fixed at -/8/- as. per plough. For resident tenants a pair of bullocks constituted a plough, while for non-residents a plough of land was held to be that amount in which five maunds of seeds had been sown. Col. Tickell's Census of the population of Kolhan and the proportion of Hos in it was calculated on the basis of the annual rack-rent or malgoozari of 1838-39 which amounted to Rs. 6,500/-. By 1854, this revenue demand increased to Rs. 8,523/-. Captain Davies' settlement was made in 1854 and was for 12 years. The number of villages settled increased to 786 and the gross rental to Rs. 23,266/- at the rate of Re. 1/- per plough. In

#### **Land Settlement**

1867 Dr. Hayes introduced a regular measurement and assessment of lands and for the first time a definite meaning was given to plough assessment. 5 Bighas, each of 2,500 sq. yds. were taken as one plough and rent was raised to Rs. 2/- a plough or  $6\frac{1}{2}$  as. per bigha. The number of villages settled were 847. This assessment was only made for rice lands. The four jungly Pirs were not measured. The gross rental after this assessment came to Rs. 64,824/10/-.

Mr. Craven's settlement was made in 1897. The same rate for rice-lands was maintained but upland or Gora land was assessed for the first time. Another distinction concerning rent to be collected from the Hos and Dikus (people other than the Hos), was introduced at the time of Mr. Craven's settlement. The latter could get land at double the rate charged from the former. The gross rental increased to Rs. 177,300/1/3 and from this the usual commissions to Mundas, Mankis and Tehsildars were allowed. This settlement was made for 20 years. Mr. Tuckey's settlement was the last of these successive operations and was completed in 1917-18. The new demand was practically double of that arrived at by Mr. Craven, viz., Rs. 252,351/- which brought the net rental payable to Government to Rs. 177,579/-. This settlement was for 20 years.

The fishery and ferry rights in the rivers within the Kolhan Government Estate, belong to the Government but have been transferred to the District Board of Singbhum.

The history of forest administration in the Kolhan dates back to the year 1892 prior to which all forests were village forests, controlled by the headmen for the benefit of the villagers. They were at perfect liberty to take forest produce, graze cattle and extend cultivation subject to such control. The Hos were a hunting tribe and derived a considerable portion of their subsistence from the forest. Agriculture was still a crude occupation with them, for they had not yet learnt permanent cultivation and oftener than not they resorted to jhumming and mixed sowing which are even to-day practised by some branches of the Munda speaking group.

Primitive people have always been reckless in their husbandry of forests. The advent of the Railway produced a demand for fuel and timber and unauthorised sales from the unreserved forests of Porhat and the Kolhan began to take place. The purpose for which the unreserved forest areas in the Kolhan were constituted was to prevent the villagers from abusing their privileges by the wanton destruction and unlawful sale of valuable timber, since the consequent denudation had disastrous effects on the climatic conditions of the country. It may be pointed out in this connection that the forests of Kolhan were

#### **Forest Administration**

#### **Protected Forests**

declared protected under section 28 of the Indian Forest Act without an enquiry being made as required by that section into the nature and extent of the rights of groups and private persons in and over the land in question.

In 1909 the Government decided to hold an enquiry into, and record the nature and extent of, rights of groups and of private persons over the forest waste lands declared to be protected forests, but the legal difficulties that arose were so complicated that no action was taken on the basis of these records of rights. The rights which the tenants enjoyed before the waste lands were brought under protected forests are detailed below:

**Rights of  
Tenants  
suppressed**

- (1) The tenants of all villages in a Manki's Pir had equal rights to trees and other forest produce in the forests of that Pir, but the tenants of the villages adjacent to the protected forest blocks only, have the said right. The right of the tenants of all the other villages has been extinguished under the forest rules.
- (2) Tenants have always sold handles of domestic and agricultural implements constructed with timber taken from the forests. They used also to sell flowers and fruits collected by them in excess of their requirements. This is not allowed by the protected forest rules.
- (3) The tenants had the right to sell sawai grass and myrobalans to others in small quantities. They possess no such rights under the protected forest rules.
- (4) Tenants could take stone, gravels, limestone, iron ore, soap stone, etc., from the village forests for their own use and for the construction of domestic implements. The protected forest rules do not permit such rights.
- (5) Villagers have all along exercised the right of hunting and shooting in the forests, which they cannot do under the protected forest rules.

These rights could not be conceded and the Government ignored them altogether in the interest of the preservation of the forests. The procedure followed by the Government in demarcating the protected blocks of forests was as follows. It was directed that to every 100 acres of cultivated land the settlement officer should add at least 100 acres and up to 200 acres of waste land, if the latter did not contain any valuable timber, so that the balance of waste lands should be formed into protected forests. At the same time it was recommended that the operation should be subject to the general undertaking that unless these blocks could be made of at least 300 acres or at least half a square mile, it was not worthwhile to make

them. The settlement officer, Mr. Craven, could only give effect to these instructions in 202 out of 911 villages under the settlement. The rest of the villages needed all available land and the small areas of excess were useless when separated. Even this demarcation was not properly carried out as will appear from the letter of the then Deputy Commissioner, Mr. W. B. Thomson addressed to the Commissioner of Chota Nagpur. It pointed out that some villages had been given more waste lands than were needed while others more in need of waste lands for grazing and fuel supply had got less than what was needed or none at all. This fact and the abrogation of the customary rights of the Hos in respect of the forests and waste lands and the restrictions of the large areas of forest over which they were wont to roam and the resulting diminution in the supply of foods that the forests can yield, and finally the phenomenal increase in their number have ushered into existence problems the solution of which is indeed difficult.

Besides the Hos, the original settlers in Kolhan include Oriyas, Bhuiyas and Gowalas. Kumhars and Kamars have established themselves in some villages from very early times. The Bhuiyas settled in Kolhan long before the British rule, but most of them were driven out by the Hos when the latter occupied Kolhan. After 1837, according to the agreement made by the Hos, the Bhuiyas were allowed to resettle in Kolhan.

**The Dikus  
(people other  
than the Hos  
in Kolhan)**

The Bhuiyas are now mostly found in Jhinkpani, Jaintgarh, Jagannathpur and in southern Kolhan where the Oriyas also are found. The Gowalas are comparatively recent immigrants and they are scattered all over Kolhan. The Tantis and Ghasis are also newcomers, and are undesirable elements of the population in Kolhan, as we shall see in connection with hide trade.

There are two classes of tenants in Kolhan, one the privileged class, the other mostly Dikus, who are foreigners. The first class is composed of those tenants who were recorded at Dr. Hayes' settlement in 1867. Foreigners recorded in the settlement of 1897, are permitted to remain subject to rules of good conduct and to certain definite restrictions.

The general principle of tenure of land for cultivation by village communities in the Kolhan is that the land is at the disposal of the community subject to the control of the hereditary headman. No individual can alienate his land, and the headman must not bring in outside tenants, except with the permission of the Deputy Commissioner which will only be given when it is clearly desirable to have more cultivators than there are in the village. Tenants cannot have undertenants, and are not entitled to hold more land than they can cultivate themselves.

There are in and around Chaibassa, and some of the trading centres in the Kolhan, a number of Dikus, Oraons and Oriyas, who live as

labourers, and have recently taken land from the raiyats on the contract system. Kolhan has grown into an important centre for the export of rice, tusser, lac, sawai grass, oilseeds and the importation of salt, tobacco and cheap Japanese and German goods. All this trade is in the hands of Dikus or foreigners, so that any development of the trade and general economic condition of Kolhan, barely touches the fringe of communal life in the villages. On the other hand, if the Dikus were not allowed to settle and tap the resources of the estate it is indeed doubtful whether the Hos would ever have realised the possibilities of the land they live in. Yet it must be admitted that without a judicious control of the settlement and exploitation of the Kolhan by unscrupulous traders and aggressive land-grabbers, it would have long been a hot-bed of discontent and disaffection, as any evil, economic or social, which they suffer from, they are apt to trace to the magic of other people and we have seen how desperate and plucky the Hos are when occasion arises.

Before 1907, no special steps were taken to control the hide trade in Kolhan. The hide dealers were mostly from Gaya and they made advances to the Ghasis and Kumahrs for the collection of hides. The latter are by birth and profession thieves. If they cannot obtain the **Hide Trade** hide by honest means, they do not hesitate to kill, or poison the cattle to serve their ends. Even the Hos learnt this bad example from the Ghasis, so that cattle stealing and cattle poisoning became very common. The system of issuing permits for bonafide dealers in hide was introduced, and in 1908-9, there were 9 dealers who received Pattas and the Pirs were divided between them. Even this measure did not prove successful and cattle poisoning continued as usual. Besides, the price paid for hide in Kolhan was ridiculously low, as the Hos received only 1/- and 2/- rupees for an average sized cow and buffalo hide respectively. While the poor Hos were being paid such low prices for their hides, the hide dealers were doing a roaring trade. Security for good behaviour was demanded of these dealers, and huge sums varying from Rs. 2,000 to 7,500 were offered by dealers from outside as well as inside Kolhan. In 1917-18, Kolhan was divided into circles and the fee payable for the monopoly in each circle was fixed. The total fees payable to the Government from the eight circles came to about Rs. 6,000/-. In 1919, the monopoly of hide trade in Kolhan was put up to auction and was settled with one party for Rs. 13,500/-. Since then the system is continuing.

## CHAPTER THREE

### CHARACTER AND ATTITUDES

If there be any word that the Hos dislike most, it is the popular epithet Kol by which they are known to the outside world. Whether the word is derived from Sanskrit 'Kola,' meaning a pig, (as Dalton has suggested) or from the word 'Horo' which in course of time has assumed different forms, viz., 'Koro,' 'Kolo,' 'Kol,' it is difficult to decide, but it is certain that the word has some unhappy connotation, and is in popular use, a contemptuous term which designates 'all those savages that cumber the ground.' A Ho loathes to be addressed as Kol, and when this happens he will shrug his shoulders and mutter indignantly in protest. Similarly a Ho woman resents being addressed as 'Kui.' Yet the words have come to stay. The land they live in is Kolhan which apparently is a variant of Kol-sthan, (Land of the Kols) so that there is very little chance of the word being dropped from the popular vocabulary. The educated Hos regard themselves as inhabitants not of the Kolhan, but of Singbhum, the land of lions, and when a Ho poet sings the following song he only voices the sentiments of his compatriots.

Born we are on the soil of Lion-land,  
We must act like the mighty lions,  
Come, come, for the service of Lion-land  
To adore and adorn her with all that is good.

In order to give a general description of the physical features of the Hos, it is necessary to mention the following as typical Ho characteristics, though it must be pointed out that there are a large number of people in the Kolhan whose features are different from the general type, and who unmistakably point to a miscegenation which must have taken place either in their present habitat or in their original home before they dispersed. Referring to the greater beauty of the Hos as compared with that of the Mundas, Col. Tickell suggested an admixture with the Sarawaks, whose movements after they settled in the Kolhan have been lost sight of. Another probable explanation may be the admixture of the Hos with the inferior castes of Oriyas who fringe them on all sides. Anyway it seems certain that the Hos

**Physical  
characteristics  
of the Hos**

do not represent a pure ethnic stock though their language is still a dominant one which affiliates them to the Mundari family. Anthropometrical measurements taken from the Hos corroborate the above hypothesis, though it is difficult to trace the elements of their ethnic composition from the physical measurements alone.

The Hos do not present a very powerful appearance. They do not possess deep chests, broad shoulders, and strong muscles, nor any very sturdy physical features. They are usually of short stature, dark complexion with a short, broad and flat nose. The eyes are small and dark, and the hair wavy to curly; beards and moustaches are practically absent, while the chin is narrow, and the lips are of medium size. Their ears are small and finely developed. They possess very powerful white teeth, and seldom suffer from caries. In some cases, a slight prognathism is noticeable, but slanting eyes are very rare.

When Col. Tickell described the Hos in 1840, he was struck by their manly bearing, and their handsome physique, made sturdy by the practice of the bow and their hunting among the hills. "The early use of the bow"

#### **Males**

wrote Col. Tickell, "expands the chest, and sets the muscles, while yet mere boys, and their passion for the chase, which they pursue over their rugged hills, brings their lower limbs into a state of training, which the best Palwans (wrestlers) of the plains of India might envy." To-day, such descriptions of the Hos would be nothing short of exaggeration, for the average Ho is normally a small man. It is only in the interior of Kolhan in the jungly Pirs where the influence of cultural contact with the Dikus has been very meagre, that we find people with the powerful bearing described by Col. Tickell.

To-day the Hos do not use the bow and arrow as they did in earlier times. The constitution of the forests into protected areas has no doubt restricted their activity in this direction, and in addition, excessive drinking of liquor may have told on their health. A comparison of the Hos with the Korwas of Mirzapur, who have for all intents and purposes fallen on evil days, and whose days are virtually numbered, will explain the difference between the Hos and the Korwas. The latter are a set of strong men, thick-set, with deep chests and broad shoulders. At a glance they give the idea of great power and manliness, although they have the same environment as the Hos, and appear to have sprung from the same ethnic stock. The excessive drinking of rice-beer by the Hos explains nothing by itself, as rice-beer has been their main food and drink from the earliest known times, and according to a legend, the drinking of rice-beer dates back to the time of their creation. Besides, rice-beer is a mild drink which even when taken in excess does not affect the constitution so much as is

made out. The replacement of this home-made beer by country liquor has become a serious problem with the Hos. We shall have occasion to mention it in another connection.

Whether through excessive drinking, or the limitation of their activities after the introduction of stringent forest rules, or through laziness and an absence of interest in life, or a sudden change in their system of nutrition, the average Ho is not the same man now as when he was found by the earlier administrative officers. To-day they appear to be a degenerate race of men, with weak constitutions, and a lower expectation of life, in spite of the fact that they are multiplying faster than their ancestors. Old people are few in number, and many people die in their teens as well as between the ages of 30 and 40. Most of the Ho students who had accompanied me on my tours into the Kolhan died young. It is not the writer's experience alone, for the late Head-master of the local high school at Chaibassa, stated that many of the Ho boys had died within two to three years of leaving school. It is difficult to meet very many old men in the Kolhan and the Hos themselves declare that they do not live to old age. This is also one of the reasons why the Hos retain a strong belief in witchcraft, and also a great fear of it. Premature death they trace to the mischief of those witches who command a number of familiar spirits, and with the help of the latter carry out their nefarious designs. The local Hindu doctors cited a number of cases of premature deaths which were mostly caused by fever and acute dysentery. Moreover, when they come for medical aid, they are always at their last stage, so that accurate diagnosis and treatment are not possible.

If the Ho men are weak, degenerate and short-lived, the Ho women possess a fine physique, charming gait and an admirable disposition. Tickell writes, " Their open happy countenances, snowy white teeth and robust, upright figures, remind one of Swiss peasant girls." The girls are full of life, becoming and decorous in their manners, and most pleasing in their looks. The women in Kolhan are indeed a fine species and the graceful way they move, and the attractive looks they usually possess have endeared them to all travellers and writers. Most of the writers of the last century, with the exception of Col. Ricketts, have unanimously commended the beauty and attractiveness of Ho girls. Many interesting descriptions of Ho girls have appeared in vernacular books of travel in Bengal and Behar, whilst the innumerable cases of scandals one hears in Singbhum, of liaisons between Diku men and Ho girls, only adds strength to the contention. Though women perform most of the arduous tasks in the fields, and work as drudges in the house, they have succeeded in maintaining their fine figure and sweetness of temper. Perhaps this

#### **Females**

drudgery, which has been the lot of women in the Kolhan, has proved a blessing in disguise, and it would be a bad day for the Hos if the whole of the Kolhan conforms to the new cry of social reform which promises to restrict the free movements of the women. The zeal for reform is greatest in the urban area and in those villages which fringe the town of Chaibassa. A comparison of the health of the women in these areas, with that of their sisters in the interior and the jungly Pirs, will make it clear how suicidal it is to pursue this aspect of the campaign. To-day women of the higher classes (i.e. of the families of Mankis and Mundas,) who can indulge in the luxury of servants, and whose out-door activities have been much circumscribed in recent years, show a comparative deterioration in health. Many of the diseases which were unknown among the Hos, and were only confined to the Dikus, claim victims among the leisured class in Kolhan. Weekly markets are the most popular venues of social life in Kolhan, but the number of people that attend these markets does not represent in any sense buyers and sellers. There are many girls and youngmen who come from distant corners of Kolhan, not to buy or sell any of their produce, but for the mere fun of attending it, and incidentally, to meet friends, and if possible, prospective mates in life. It is a common experience to find girls from villages 15 to 20 miles distant attending these markets in batches of five to ten, whose only object in attending it, is to meet people and enjoy the fun of watching the crowd. These girls usually come from the interior, for seldom do we find women living in the urban areas repairing to markets five to ten miles away. It is not that the latter are not attracted by distant markets, (although they get all their needs supplied by the local weekly markets,) but because they have become lazy and do not want to exert themselves and also because of the new class-consciousness we have mentioned above. The movement is therefore from the western and south-western Pirs to the northern ones and from the less frequented to more frequented Pirs, and its effect is a steady diffusion of culture traits which we shall have occasion to discuss in subsequent chapters.

Before the Hos came under the present administration, they possessed certain qualities of head and heart, which had endeared them to all alike. Major Roughsedge in 1821 was so pleased with their independent bearing that

**Qualities** he said that the Hos were as much superior to their brethren of Chota Nagpur as 'wild buffaloes to the village herd.' Col. Tickell was so much impressed with their love for truth, their honesty, their obliging willingness and their happy ingenuous disposition, that he would rather see them remain lawless than be brought under British courts of justice which might end in destroying their virtues. It was Col. Ricketts who saw

little virtue among the Hos, and he wrote in 1854, "So long as the Kols continue to be what the Kols are now, any plan which has the effect of preventing an increase in their number is not without advantage. I cannot consider it desirable that there should be more Kols." Yet he admitted that when he first met the Kols they had one virtue, i.e., they invariably spoke the truth. This virtue, according to Col. Ricketts, completely disappeared within a few years after the introduction of courts of justice, for the same gentleman complained that 'All those whom we meet now in Kolhan, lie like other people.' If we accept this statement of Col. Ricketts, (afterwards Sir Henry Ricketts), it is clear that such a fatal change in their outlook had come about within a short span of about 15 years, and the responsibility for this unwelcome change must therefore be thrown upon the administration, as well as upon the people among whom they live or with whom they associate. Col. Dalton, who wrote much later than Sir Henry, did not corroborate him, and even to-day such sweeping generalisations about their nature and characteristics would be extremely overdrawn. The system of indirect rule, as is prevalent in Kolhan, has many drawbacks which has engendered among the Hos certain vices. Later, the cultural contract of the Hos with inferior castes, who have found shelter in Kolhan, and with others who exploit them, has taught them undesirable and dishonest expedients; nevertheless, the vices that Sir Henry reiterates as being general among the Kols, are seldom practised by the peaceful cultivators of the interior, and only find their votaries among a few litigants and touts that frequent the law courts, and among those who have constant dealings with the Dikus in Kolhan. But it is a generally accepted fact that the moral deterioration of the Hos has kept pace with their physical degeneration, so that many would like to see the Hos in their former state of 'lawlessness,' when they derived subsistence from the chase and the produce of the forest, supplemented by pillage or plunder.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### VILLAGE SETTLEMENT

The typical Ho village is built on high ground or ridge in the midst of an undulating surface. Many villages, indeed, stand on flat-topped hills that are dotted all over the plateau. They are situated away from the principal thoroughfares, many of which have been constructed since the area has been opened up by the Railways, and also from the arterial roads that have been built by the District Board, the Public Works Department, and by the Mining Agencies. Moreover, on all sides of these villages, there are huge canopying trees, and luxuriant scrub jungle which hide the houses from sight. More recent villages, however, are mostly built on the banks of rivers, by the side of hill springs, and occasionally on the elevated river terraces.

At the boundary line of the village, stand in irregular formation a number of grey stone slabs firmly fixed in the ground, or a couple or more of large flat stones, the surfaces of which have been considerably worn by the footsteps of pedestrians, and the constant use of them by children while playing. A few steps towards the village, and the visitor will find himself at the threshold of the village cemetery, the Sasan of the Hos, where the ancestors of the village, or of the clan or the killi, and their descendants have been laid to rest.

Most of the villages run from east to west, and the village Sasan may be situated on either extremity. In some villages which are inhabited by members of different Killis, Sasans are found on all sides and many families have their burial ground adjacent to their house. In those villages where there is one Killi the Sasan is situated at the entrance, where the road to the village loses itself. As the houses are congested, the situation of the village burial ground at one extremity of the village allows for expansion, for the bigger the village, the larger is the burial ground, and the larger the stones placed over the graves, the greater the space required for the Sasan. The custom of placing large stones over the graves covering the remains of the dead, makes it necessary for the villagers to co-operate with one another in fetching the stone from neighbouring hills. Again, the size of the stone is determined by the social position the deceased occupied in

**Sasan or  
Burial Ground**

life. As tribal solidarity is being weakened, and as co-operation in such tasks has become a matter of choice rather than an obligation, the size of the Sasan-diri (stone slab) is gradually decreasing, and to-day, even a well-to-do family will feel satisfied if it can place a small stone over the remains of its dead member. In many cases, the remains are placed under existing stone slabs, thus obviating the need of fetching a new one. Thus even with a considerable increase in the population of the villages, the burial ground has not been considerably extended, though in many villages, the number of Sasans has increased and in villages like Chiru, Kokchak, Gundipoa, there are as many Sasans perhaps as there are families.

Whatever might have been the original attitude of the Hos to the Sasan-diri, to-day there is no superstitious regard for these funerary slabs, and no religious respect for the remains of the ancestors interred under them. Men and women sit together on these cold grey stones, eat their meals, tell stories and indulge in various other pastimes. Some of the stones are anointed with oil occasionally, and vermilion marks may also be found on them. No ceremonial rites, however, are performed on these Sasan-diris. In some heavy slabs Ho women have bored sockets in which they pound rice with wooden pestles. On one occasion Jitu of Sikursai had to offer a black hen on the Sasan-diri of his deceased grandfather and pour a libation of its blood mixed with Illi (rice beer) in the name of the Dessauli, presiding deity, of the village. Jitu explained how his ancestor revealed himself in a dream and requested him to offer such a sacrifice. Cases like these are extremely rare.

Every village in the Kolhan is made up of two or more Tolas, and each Tola is separated from the others by a small valley or a clean open space, or a small and narrow passage on either side of which lies a Sasan with the graves of the respective Tolas. In some villages the Village Akhara or the dancing arena of the village, stands in the Quarters centre, and on either side of it, east and west, lie the Tolas. The Manki and the Munda with their relations, and the original families who made the village, live in one Tola, and the tenants inhabit the other, and the village Akhara is always in the former Tola or in the space adjoining it. The village Akhara is an elevated piece of land enclosed on all sides by huge shady trees, banian, pipal or tamarind. A number of large stone slabs at the foot of these trees serve as seats for actors and spectators. The Akhara is also the usual place for public meetings and also for regular sittings of the village council.

In many villages, even to-day, one meets with a huge dormitory house (Gitiora) overlooking this open space, where the bachelors of the village

sleep in the night and lounge during the day. Inside the house, one finds a big mat made by the maidens of the village and respectfully presented to the tribal manhood, a number of musical instruments, and all the offensive and defensive weapons of the inmates. There are a number of pegs on the inside walls of the house for hanging the bows and arrows of the inmates, and most of the requisites for fishing and hunting are also stored there. In some villages this house is absent, and in its place we find the outer house of residence of the village chief serving all the purposes of the dormitory. It is only the bachelors' house that opens out into the Akhara, but all other houses that may be adjacent to it have their backs towards it. There is very little village-planning in the Kolhan, and a stranger must seek the aid of a villager to find his way out of the circuitous and labyrinthine village alleys, which often end in courtyards of houses.

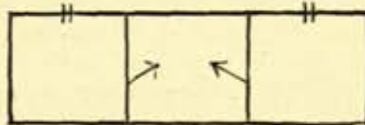
At one end of the village, a little distance from the cluster of houses, lies the village grove or Jahira, which is believed to be presided over by an old female spirit with matted white hair who is often seen on her crutch.

The houses in Ho villages may be classified into three categories.

- (1) Substantial and commodious houses partitioned into two or more rooms:
- (2) Medium-sized houses which are not so spacious, yet partitioned into sleeping and eating apartments:
- (3) Small huts used either for sleeping and eating, or for housing the cattle. The large houses usually have heavy wooden doors, consisting of two

#### Kinds of Houses

roughly hewn planks, each revolving on a socket at one end of the door step. In some big houses, carvings are found on these doors. There are hardly any windows in Ho houses. The sleeping room is usually larger than the dining room but the latter is more important, for it is the Ading of the house where the ancestors of the family are carefully sheltered. There is a raised dais at one corner of the Ading, which is screened off from the kitchen, where daily offerings are made to the ancestral spirits. This room opens out into the sleeping room and there is no entrance to it from any other side, unless the house is a big one and is partitioned into three apartments. In that case the Ading is the central room and can be entered from the adjacent rooms as shown in the following diagram.



The kitchen is not sacred to the Hos, but as it forms a part of the Ading, Ho women jealously guard it against intruders, and none but members of

the family is allowed to enter it. It is customary to offer every dish cooked to the Oa Bongas (ancestral spirits) before it is served to the members of the family, and the latter have to wash their hands and feet before they can approach the kitchen. On one side of the Ading is the sleeping room, on the other is the store where the little household effects and provisions are kept. Each family possesses two or more Bandhis (cylindrical baskets), into which paddy for future use is stored, which are kept in the store room. In many houses therefore the store room has no door except the one opening into it from the Ading.

The houses are built of mud, thatched with grass, or roofed with tiles, as means permit. The walls are painted, some black, some brown, some red, and afford an example of neat workmanship. They are also artistically decorated with drawings. Some of these drawings resemble simple sketches of children, some are crude drawings of animals and plants, and of men with bows and arrows pursuing game in the forest. Though the designs may be crude, attempts to represent every little detail of the animal or plant drawn are discernible in every picture, so that what we know as realistic art is found amply in these mural decorations. The Hos are clever in drawing geometrical figures, and most of these are accurate in details. The paints they use are neither expensive nor scarce. The black paint is prepared by burning faggots of straw, the ashes of which are mixed with cowdung. The red or yellow are obtained from red or yellow earth found on the sides of hills, and from vegetable colouring matter. In many houses, the walls are made of stout and well-joined stockading work, covered with mud, and neatly plastered over with cowdung, or red or yellow clay. Every house has a verandah, small or large, according to the size of the house, supported on wooden posts or curved pillars plastered with mud. In the interior of Kolhan, mud walls are rare, and the sides of the houses are made of wicker, sawai grass fitted to bamboo frameworks. Mud walls and tiled roofs are found to-day in the interior of Kolhan, mostly in the possession of village chiefs, and Mankis of Pirs, and a few substantial cultivators who are the pride of the village.

As we proceed from the south-west to the north and north-east, from the rural to urban centre, we notice a change in the technique of house construction. Some families in Dumbisai and Sikursai possess houses which compare favourably with the bungalows one meets all over northern India. The rectangular houses are replaced by square ones with high roofs tiled all over, and doors and windows take the place of wicker substitutes. The crude Charpoys (beds) made of sal saplings and ropes made of sawai

grass give place to stronger beds made of Sesum and Sal, and chairs made of cane or wood replace the indigenous Gandu (crude stools made of sticks and rope).

Every family has a small wooden cage for housing pigeons, resting on tall bamboo posts and thus projecting high above the house. Poor families in Kolhan possess only a single hut which serves as a bed room, as well as store, while cooking is done in the open courtyard or in the small verandah adjoining the room. At the time of childbirth this room is used as a lying-in-room, and the children, if any, are removed from it, the room being left entirely for the accommodation of the husband and the wife. Prosperous families are not sparing in the construction of houses and a family often possesses more than three or four big houses.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CLOTHING AND DECORATION

In a tropical climate people are not found with any superfluity of clothes on their person, and the Hos living as they do in a warm and moist climate, do not occupy themselves with much dress. Yet we cannot say that they go about in a state of nudity, or that they put on leafy garments which the Juangs in the Orissa jungles still prefer to cotton clothes. The lower castes who live in the Kolhan, and the pedlars and contractors (who are so frequent now, particularly in the mining areas) seldom wear any upper garment to cover the portion from the waist upwards. In winter they put on a woollen rug, or a sewn Katha or an Italian Shawl to protect them against the cold, which is often very severe. The Hos have little to learn from their immediate neighbours, though missionary influence has effected certain changes in dress among the Christian converts. Proximity to urban centres like Chaibassa or Jamshedpur has not encouraged the use of many new articles of clothing, and styles and fashions in dress have little appeal to the Hos.

Yet if we compare the mode of dress and decoration prevalent in the Kolhan to-day with that of a few decades back, we shall see what great strides the Hos have made in this matter. Writing about the mode of dress prevalent in Kolhan, in 1854, Sir Henry Ricketts says, "Though ashamed, they with few exceptions wear no more clothes than they did when they had yet to learn that something more than a few leaves was customary out of Singbhum." Col. Dalton also describes how the men and women of the Hos (even those that are wealthy) have no concern for their dress at all, especially in the remote villages.

Before the introduction of foreign clothes in the Kolhan, a Ho woman would remain satisfied with a coarse sari, three cubits by two, made by the village Tanti or weaver, and a man would only wear a Doputta and a neat narrow strip of cloth called Botoi which is very short (about 2 ft. by 6 to 10 inches) tied round the loins, a small portion being allowed to hang in front. The sari covered the portion from waist to the knees and under the sari was worn the Botoi. Inside her house, the Ho woman wore only the Botoi for seldom did she possess more than one sari, which she

put on when she had to go out. The portion from the waist upwards was left exposed, and even to-day, the Jhula or jumper is worn exclusively by Christian converts. During the last few years, fine cotton fabrics, Japanese and English, have slowly penetrated into the interior parts of the Kolhan, and the natural disinclination of the people to wear these imported stuff, has been conquered with astonishing quickness. It is not unusual now to see even old men in old clothes, particularly second-hand shirts, tunics or jackets which are occasionally doled out to them by philanthropic agencies. However, the aged people have still a particular liking for customary rags which they prefer to longer dhooties or even Botoi. The women are also sparing in their use of clothes. When they take their bath in the river, or the village Bandh, they remove the cloth and enter the water in Botoi or very often naked. Nor are they ashamed to enter the water along with men. Exposure of the bust of Ho women does not appear to excite unusual interest among young men, who might be seen plunging into the water side by side with them. Men and women are found to behave in an admirable manner and seldom do they indulge in indecent jokes or suggestive gestures. It is only when men other than Hos, tourists, hide-dealers, labour contractors, and small traders come to the village that the Ho women have to 'behave.'

The Hos are great admirers of flowers and any lack of dress is amply made up by floral wreaths and floral ornaments. Those used most commonly are the Mohua, the Palas and the Sal, while creepers of various kinds adorn their graceful limbs. In the dancing arena, or Akhara, of the village, night after night, girls come tastefully decorated with flowers and jewellery and many bead necklaces and armlets, and their attractive dress elicits loud appreciation from the young men. The girls possess lovely black hair sometimes reaching to the knees or lying in curls round the shoulders. When they move out of the house, the hair is tied in a knot on the back of the head. The most attractive mode of hair dressing is a large disc-like knot at the back of the head, which is usually covered with flowers or garlands of creepers. They take elaborate pains to dress their hair, and the effects of the bright red colour of Mohua (*Bassia latifolia*) and the pale yellow of the Sal (*Shorea robusta*) flowers, add charm and distinction to their beauty.

A change in the mode of dress is now met in the areas round about Chaibassa, and the Diku villages of Jagannathpur, Jaintgarh, Kotgarh and Manoharpur. Here various modifications have been effected in recent years, but these are not as yet general and only a small section of the people have adopted them permanently. Others use them on festive

occasions or when they go to other villages on special errands, at marriage parties, or when attending fairs or the meetings of the reformists in Kolhan.

Men wear Pichouries, or Barkies, i.e. Chadars, Bented or turbans, and carry napkins, or Gamcha. The Sutai, or jacket is sometimes worn by men, specially those who have been outside the Kolhan, and worked in mines or plantations, or as coolies in survey and settlement operations, in and outside Kolhan. Children up to five years, usually go naked, but those of the higher classes, use Khaki shirts which sell cheaply in the weekly markets. The educated Hos, (i.e. those who have read in secondary schools or colleges), don shirts and banians, and I have even found silk underwear being used. These cases are very rare and when the boys return to their villages they gradually revert to their original dress. The imported patterns of dress are still tabooed on ceremonial occasions, when the members of the village, or of the family, have to take any direct part in propitiatory rites, or in sacrifices to the numerous spirits, or godlings, who rule their destiny. Nor are they allowed to put on these clothes during certain social ceremonies, as they are believed to undermine the solemnity of the performance. But those that wear costly stuff like silk shirtings and silk banians, or use socks and shoes, are distinguished from others by an epithet borrowed from the popular vocabulary, viz. Babu. Thus, as I could see, changes in the customary dress have come to stay in Kolhan, and at present they are hindered by financial difficulties. Even the substantial classes are not above want and while articles of conventional necessity are difficult to procure, luxury in any shape cannot have much scope. The Swadeshi movement has spread its ripples to Kolhan, and the reformist section in Kolhan, being nationalist at heart, the desire for finery has been stifled to some extent.

The Hos do not like very elaborate ornaments. A simple wooden bead necklace, a small ear-ring and a pair of bangles are all a young man will wear, while older men seldom put on any such decoration. Karas, or wristlets made of brass or iron, rings of iron or copper are also worn by men. Women wear anklets or Andus. The wearing of them is extremely painful, yet women are extravagantly fond of them. The Guna or Nakfuli (i.e. nose pin), Murkhi or ear-ring, Hisir or necklace, Sakom or bangles, are the ordinary jewellery worn by women. The following ornaments are also favoured; the Tada or bracelet for the upper arm, Ma-sakom or spiked bangles which serve as offensive weapons for women, Katari or very thinly spiked bangles, Gingri-sakom or brass choories, Mudam or small rings for the fingers, Bachindi or

silver or brass pins. Kapa and Jhimjhimia are seldom seen now. Men wear charms (tied round the neck or arms by means of black strings), against snakes, tigers and other dangerous denizens of the forest, while roots of wild plants and creepers with charms muttered into them by the Deonra (witch doctor) are also tied round the waist as a protection against miscreants and sorcerers whose influence is much exaggerated in Ho society. On festive occasions, the women adorn themselves with garlands of plaited flowers, wristlets and armlets, artistically made of Mohua and Sal flowers. The hair, as has been said before, hangs in curls round the head. Men tie a white tape or a strong creeper round the head. Just above the right ear, fastened to the tape is a small wooden comb, which they very often use to dress the hair. Cheap glass bangles, both Indian and foreign, and small necklaces imported from Japan have found their way into the Kolhan, and the women are very fond of them. Gold ornaments are seldom found and only well-to-do families possess tiny pins and rings made of gold. Silver is replacing nickel, and rolled gold articles are very much admired by wealthy families.

Besides the dress and ornaments we have detailed above, tattooing is a common form of personal decoration. Though it has become less popular among men, women are still fond of it, and it is done when they are quite young. It is seldom practised by boys who attend schools or colleges, though they sometimes inscribe their own initials on their forearm. Tattooing is done in the village markets and weekly bazars. Though there are certain customary beliefs regarding tattooing, which the elderly women know, the young girls who volunteer themselves for such decoration know little of their sanctity. Quarrels often arise between mother and daughter regarding the designs to be tattooed, though in the end the daughter has to yield. The usual explanation given by the mother in support of a particular design is that "all your aunts, sisters and cousins have this design and they are happy wherever they are; you should follow their lead." Women tattoo their faces, particularly their foreheads, while men tattoo their limbs, and sometimes their breasts. Tattoo marks on women are believed to be necessary as absence of tattoo marks is sinful, and it is believed that if there is anything that survives after death, it is these marks. The soul is identified by these marks. The tattoo marks in a village or among the members of one sept are not all of uniform pattern. Patrilocal residence makes it obligatory for girls of one sept or of one village to live in different villages after marriage, so that in one family there may be different varieties of tattoo marks. Usually three or four designs are popular in one village, and the choice is restricted to these. Innovation in designs is not frequent, and is seldom accepted without mis-

givings. Tattoo marks found on men denote either distinction won in hunting or other tribal activities, or are simply decorative symbols. Whatever they are, when the body is prepared for cremation after death, these marks are kept exposed. Mutilations and cicatrices are seldom noticed among the younger generation, but tattooing in the case of women is accompanied sometimes by dilating the lobes of the ear or the alae of the nose—especially important for the Hos being the latter form.

## CHAPTER SIX

### FOOD AND FOOD TABOOS

Primitive social groups are aptly called food groups, for the size of the groups depends to a large extent on the mode of food supply. Each stage of culture has its peculiar solution of the problem of numbers in relation to food supply, the mode of subsistence determining the social organisation of the group. Any increase in numbers must keep pace with improvements in the technique of food production, as otherwise, there is every chance of destroying the social stability which is the pivot of economic progress. There has been a tremendous change in the economic environment of primitive tribes in India. Hunting tribes have given up hunting. The semi-nomadic tribes who lived on fruits and roots and occasional Jhuming of their forest-clad environment, have become permanent cultivators. Some have no land and are eking out their miserable existence as labourers in the village, and in the neighbouring industrial centres. Consequently many of the customs and practices, that were necessary at an earlier stage have become useless, and therefore meaningless to their cultural life. With the restriction of the large areas of forest, over which the Hos were used to roam, and the resulting diminution in the supply of food, a change in diet among the Hos was called for. But they have yet failed to respond to the needs of the hour, as we shall find below.

The gradual increase in number among the Hos without any corresponding increase in the food resources, or improvement in the technique of food production, has lowered the standard of comfort, and many of their present troubles are traceable to this deficiency. Their vitality, and the splendid co-operative organisation for exploiting the natural resources of their physical environment (to which competent authorities have given unstinted testimony) have suffered much, and the Hos are themselves to blame for what has happened.

If we ask a Diku about the food the Hos take, he will tell us that they take every kind of herb, insect, grub, animal, scorpion, toad, reptile, crow, vulture, adding that even carrion does not come amiss to them. The scarcity of certain species of birds and animals in Kolhan, and the absence of some are all traced to the dexterity of the Hos as archers and trackers.

In one village where I spent a few nights, I was surprised not to hear the howl of jackals, which is a characteristic of Indian village life at dusk. A Hindu resident when asked for an explanation said that the Hos have eaten them up. The general dislike of the Hos by the caste Hindus in Kolhan is based to a large extent on this belief. Social difference between two groups in India is accentuated by differences in food and occupation. In many cases, the fact of common diet and common occupation has often reduced the barrier between certain groups with different caste appellations, nay, in others it has led to a healthy social adjustment between them. It is difficult to say when beef was tabooed by religious prescriptions, but all castes to-day abjure beef, though eating pork is still a matter of choice with a number of the lower castes in India. The Hos rear pigs and eat pork, but they also eat beef when available. Thus they stand outside the pale of Hinduism proper, though the families of Mundas, Mankis and other substantial cultivators, have given up pork and beef. The social reformers are loud in their denunciation of this 'offensive stuff,' and they have left no stone unturned to see that the people really abstain from pork and beef. Their efforts have undoubtedly succeeded to some extent, though the poorer classes still eat their customary food. Again, unlike most of the Hindu castes, they keep fowls, and offer these as sacrifices to the host of spirits presiding over land, air and water. As they are still doubtful about the wholesale expulsion of these spiritual entities, and as the efficacy of the adopted rites and ceremonial practices of the Hindus has not been convincingly demonstrated, they prefer to follow their traditional practices along with their adherence to those of Hinduism. So, even to-day, the higher classes in Kolhan rear fowls, though they may not eat them, and offer them as sacrifices even if they do not keep them. With this exception, they follow all the prescriptions that are obeyed by the Hindu castes. The result of this so-called cultural progress in Kolhan, is manifest in one important direction, viz., in the restriction of their dietary, and the effect of this is perhaps more retrograde than is apprehended by the most conservative of reformers in the Kolhan.

Most of the primitive tribes who have taken to agriculture and a settled life, even to-day, derive much of their subsistence from the produce of the forest and the spoils of the chase. The Hos, when they occupied the Kolhan, drew mostly on the latter resources, though they cultivated their land and gathered their harvests. Agriculture was not so vital to their existence then as it is to-day, and they derived what they could from the fields to supplement their gleanings in the forest. Even now agriculture has not developed to any efficient

#### **Food and Diet**

#### **Rights of Chase**

degree, and little intensive farming, manuring or careful husbandry is noticed in Kolhan. There are a number of Talaos or tanks which are meant as reservoirs of water for watering the crops, though they are not to be relied upon as famine preventive works as they depend upon rainfall. Even these the Hos do not make much use of. Many of the tanks that existed before they came into the Kolhan, have been neglected, or purposely drained off, to enable them to sow on the rich bottom of these partially dried tanks. Before the forests were brought under the protective system of administration, every Ho had the right to forage for food in the forest, and follow the trail of animals, and such was his dexterity in the art of tracking game, that he would always come back with a heavy bag. The dietary was rich in flesh food. They took every kind of meat except the flesh of monkey, bear, snake and tiger. The animals they hunted and relished as food were wild buffaloes, pigs, saumer, grower, porcupine, red deer and barking deer, while peacocks, jungle fowl, and pigeons were trapped and domesticated to supply them with food during the rainy season. To-day, the Hos look wistfully to the woods, and when they get permission to hunt at certain periods of the year (though very rarely), they avail themselves of the opportunity with commendable enterprise. Occasionally they slyly enter the protected forests, cross the fireline, and stealthily carry down the hills their much prized game, but more often than not, they are detected and punished. Thus the possibility of a rich variety of animal food has disappeared once for all, and unless the Hos take to rearing food animals and to poultry breeding, or change their system of food supply by adopting new methods of preparation, and newer materials from the vegetable world, the deterioration of their health will continue.

We have seen how the supersession of their customary rights in the recently constituted forests and their desire to follow Hindu practices, which has meant an arbitrary restriction of their diet, have narrowed their choice of food, and we shall presently discuss their present system of dietary and the mode of preparation of their principal food dishes.

Food varies according to classes and groups. There are two classes of people among the Hos which we have mentioned already. The one, which we may term the higher class, consists of the Mundas, Mankis and their relations. There are also some substantial cultivators who, by merit and perseverance, have improved their economic status and are now respected by the people. The latter supply the village elders and are very influential. They are also included in the first class. The other consists of all those Prajas or ryots, who did not belong to the original families, and were their servants, or camp-followers. They form the bulk of the population. These two classes

seldom intermarry or interdine, and there are many points of cultural difference between them.

In the boarding houses of middle vernacular schools, the Ho boys prepare their own food, and one invariably finds them divided into food groups, four or five boys forming one batch. On enquiry, one finds that there is no arbitrary grouping among the boys, and that the groups are based on considerations of rank and affluence. The son of a Manki will form his own group with other Mankis' sons, and in the absence of the latter, with the sons of Mundas, and with those of substantial and well-to-do farmers whose position in the society is known to his parents. He will certainly refuse to dine with a boy of ordinary parentage, or sons of tenants of his own or other Pirs. How serious the class prejudices are, and how ready the people are to perpetuate this class distinction, will be evident from the following instance cited by the Headmaster of one of those schools in Kolhan. There are nearly fifty Ho boys in the Students' Hostel. They are all housed in one dormitory and there are only two kitchens for them. As the boys have to prepare their food and then attend school, it was found that the preparation of their food takes much of their spare time, and they could not take part in athletic activities on which the Headmaster was very keen. He found that there were eight different batches, preparing food simultaneously, and as the kitchens could not accommodate all of them, many of the batches cooked their food outside. This arrangement was of course possible during the months of the open season, but in the rainy season cooking must be done within the house. So it was that the four ovens inside the rooms were kept engaged for hours, and half the day would be spent in preparing food and eating it. One redeeming feature of this business is that the system of cooking is very simple, and the most that the boys cook is a pot of rice and some lentil soup. On investigation, however, it was found that the sole difficulty of grouping them in larger batches was their ignorance of each other's identity, or social position. The sons of Mankis and Mundas refused to eat with those of the parjas, and there were some outcastes with whom no one would take food. The Headmaster found that by careful handling, it was possible to reduce the groups to three in number, the one consisting of the sons of privileged classes in Kolhan, the other those of the raiyats and labourers, the third of outcastes, who were only two in number. The most interesting result of this reorganisation, was the grouping together of cousins both paternal as well as maternal, who did not know each other and were therefore separated into different food groups.

This social exclusiveness explains the diversity of food that has become customary among the two groups mentioned above. The first group has adopted a number of dishes from the caste people, and has learnt to use

spices and condiments which are now regarded by them as indispensable ingredients of cooking. The second class still prefer to keep their indigenous system of preparing food undisturbed. During my ethnographic tours I took food with all classes of people, obtaining invitations unobtrusively as guest of rich and poor alike. Experience revealed that the two classes differ much in their tastes, inclinations and propensities. Poverty alone does not account for all this difference. The price of the ingredients is such as can easily be afforded by the people. Besides, they are grown by the villagers for sale or barter.

There are, however, two features which are common to the dietary of the two classes. The one is a natural dislike for milk and its products, the other is the universal use of Illi, or rice-beer, which, as we have already pointed out, is still the staple food and the universal drink of the Hos. There is no taboo on milk, for I have never come across any superstitious idea connected with milk in Kolhan, though some rational explanation is given by the elders of the tribe. They agree that milking of cattle is a crime, for it is equivalent to depriving a child of its mother's milk. Other explanations are that the cattle are grazed in the forest and the snakes which are abundant there are known to drink milk, so it may prove fatal to man. The most ingenious explanation was given by a youngman who had recently succeeded his father as the Manki of an important Pir. He says that as the snake is the protector of the Nagbansi Raja of Chota Nagpur, who is of the same race as the Hos, and as snakes live on milk, the Hos have tabooed milk for the benefit of the snake. But nowhere in the Kolhan is milk regarded as excrement as amongst some Mongoloid tribes of Assam. The utility of cattle in the Kolhan has been greatly reduced by this fact as well as by the gradual abandonment of beef as a popular item of food. They are now meant only as a measure of value in deciding the Gonom, i.e., bride-price. The little scratching of the fields done in Kolhan is not a hard job for the cattle, so they are still given over to the Ahir, or the village Goala, who makes his living out of them. The Hos keep an account with the Goala and generally do not take any care of the animals.

Rice-beer or Handia named after the pot (Handi) in which it is brewed, is known by different names in Kolhan, such as Illi and Diang. This home-brewed liquor is not only an universal food of the Hos, it is also a sacred thing. The idea that the provider of food is a god to those for whom it is provided seems to be applied in this case. When it is the staple food, the life-giving fluid of the Hos, it must be regarded as sacred, and its preparation is associated with certain rites and ceremonies. The story of the creation of the Hos throws some

#### **Two features of the diet**

#### **Preparation of Rice-beer**

light on the origin of this important beer. Singbonga, the supreme god of the Hos, was offended by his creation, and he created an atmosphere of leaping flames which burnt to death every species of living organism, including men. When Singbonga realised the consequence of his fury, he was sorry for what he had done, and approached all the lesser spirits to ask them if they knew of any living soul. It was Nageera, the river goddess, who said she could bring out two souls she had hidden under the sheet of water if Singbonga would promise not to do them any harm. When that was conceded, Nageera produced a couple, a brother and a sister, and out of this primæval pair, Singbonga wanted to repopulate the world. But it was soon discovered that the couple were not attracted to each other sexually, so what else could the High god do but to teach the couple the preparation of a kind of beer, known to-day as Illi! When they partook of this intoxicating liquor, they forgot their relationship, and out of their mating came forth the ancestors of men, of the races and castes that people the world. Illi is therefore a sacred drink of the Hos, for Singbonga the god of gods taught men to make it.

This beer is brewed in every house, and on ceremonial occasions, when the need is large, certain families who are reputed to be expert brewers are asked to do it for the entire village, or the particular family or families requiring it. The usual method is to boil rice in a large earthen vessel (Tundi), until it is boiled into a thick paste; all the contents of the Tundi are then poured on to a small mat and allowed to cool. A piece of Ranu (a fermenting substance locally made) is powdered and is spread over the paste, and the whole is again put into a new Tundi, and kept on one side in a corner of the Ading for three days. After three days or so, there is a concentrated fluid floating on the surface of the Tundi; this is known as Rasi, and is very strong and intoxicating. This Rasi is taken out and when mixed with water produces the Diang or Illi. When the Rasi is extracted, water is added to the residue, and the contents of the Tundi stirred with a wooden ladle. The latter is then strained through a cane sieve and a white liquor drains through. This is the usual mild beer known as Handia, also called Diang. The remnant of the rice paste, the precipitate, is used as bait or Mehra for fishing. Every evening, or on alternate evenings, Ho women prepare this life-giving fluid and the children and men sit in the courtyard round the women and watch them do it. The first leafy cup of this beer must be presented to the ancestors in the Ading, and drops of it are scattered round the Tundi in the name of hosts of spirits or Bongas. The beer is then poured into two or three pots and taken back to the Ading where it is stored for the 24 or 48 hours it is required to last. There is a wooden ladle for distributing the beer, and the men make the required number of Pulias or leaf-cups which are also kept by the side

of these beer pots. The original pot in which the beer is brewed is carefully kept aside, and it is taboo to distribute the beer for consumption from this pot. The beer must be poured into a second vessel and distributed from that. The woman who prepares the Illi is required to observe certain rules of ceremonial purity. She has to take a bath immediately before she begins to prepare it, or she changes her dress wearing a clean sari, which in some families is kept for the purpose. Young children are not allowed to touch the pots. When the Diang is made, men do not speak to the women while they are preparing it. The women also keep silent and do not respond to any query that may be put to them. These tabus and rites are seldom violated, and if they are violated, the Diang is sure to taste bitter and be harmful to the consumers. Other rules make it obligatory for a family to offer Diang to all persons assembled at the time of distributing it to one or more members of the house. Then they must keep some Illi in the house, as it is unlucky to run out of it. The third rule forbids lending any of the beer to neighbours after dusk. The last is a general tabu found all over northern India, that no neighbour or friend may borrow any white liquor or its preparations, as for example, milk, curd, etc. The prohibition among the Hos is based perhaps on the fear that it is possible for the family which lends it, or the family who may share it afterwards, to be injured by the influence, through the liquor of witches and sorcerers.

It must be mentioned here that the Hos usually take one full meal a day, the rest being made up with rice-beer, fruits and roots, and anything else they get from the chase, or from their friends who may distribute their surplus. Aged people are still found to subsist only on rice-beer, and occasionally a meal of rice. A crude preparation of meat by roasting minced meat in leaf-cups thrown into the fire and eaten hot also serves as a change. Some families in Kolhan take their principal meal in the morning and some in the evening, while people who live in the urban centres and attend offices as peons, bearers or menials, take one meal in the morning, and one in the evening after they come back from their duties. There is no tiffin in either case.

The following list of dishes was compiled during my tours:—

#### LOWER CLASSES: MORNING MEAL.

- (1)  $\frac{1}{2}$  seer of boiled rice prepared the night before, and allowed to stand over till morning with water added to it, known as Basi, one or two chillies, two onions, a small pinch of salt—Illi.

- (2)  $\frac{1}{4}$  seer of Basi as described in No. 1 with salt but no chillies. Mohua cake made of Mohua flower crushed, dried, pulverised and made into a paste with water, and baked.—Illi.
- (3) Venison boiled in water with salt added and made into a curry, taken with cakes made of mango seeds. The mango seeds are put in a dragnet and kept under water for a week or so, when the peels decompose, the inside kernel is washed in water, dried in the sun, powdered into flour, mixed with water to form a paste, rolled into sheets and baked in the oven.—Illi.
- (4)  $\frac{1}{2}$  seer of boiled rice prepared the previous night, allowed to stand, without adding water, with leaves of Pipul tree, or Sajina boiled in water. Starch of tamarind seeds boiled in water which makes a delicious beverage.
- (5) Boiled rice with leaves of *Lathyrus sativus* boiled in water. Fruits of Sal trees, pulverised and made into small thick cones.—Illi.
- (6) Mohua cakes made by the process described in No. 2, with a gruel made by boiling Sajina sticks in water with added salt.—Illi.
- (7) Boiled rice with salt and red ants put into leaf cups, thrown into fire, and when the cups begin to be scorched, taken out, and the roasted ants inside serve as first-class delicacy.—Illi.

#### EVENING MEAL.

- (1) Rice and lentils cooked together with chillies and salt.—Illi.
- (2) Rice, fish fried in oil, with pieces of dried tamarind.—Illi.
- (3) Meat of game birds, or pork roasted in fire. The process is similar to the one described in No. 7 above, but the meat is minced, put into leaf-cups and put into the fire where they are scorched.—Illi.
- (4) Dried ribs of beef, soaked in oil, put into the fire and roasted with Lamba or seeds of *Mimosa scandens*, and also sorrels.—Illi.
- (5) Chicken or beef roasted in fire, maize and brinjals boiled with rice.—Illi.
- (6) Mashed yams with mutton or goat-meat boiled with chillies, onions and salt.

### THE HIGHER CLASSES: MORNING MEAL.

- (1) Chapatis made the night before from wheat flour, with salt or molasses.
- (2) Rice boiled the previous night with water added to it, chillies, salt and dried pulse juice, made into a paste.—Illi.
- (3) Mohua cakes, with curried venison, and fried brinjals.—Illi.
- (4) Rice cooked with brinjals and pieces of pumpkin.—Illi.
- (5) Chapatis and vegetable curry with pumpkin, brinjal and Sajina sticks.—Illi.
- (6) Roasted pigeon with rice boiled with lentils mixed with curd.—Illi.
- (7) Rice and tamarind cooked together with leaves, flowers or fruits of the Sajina.

### EVENING MEAL.

- (1) Rice and Dal or pulse juice.—Illi.
- (2) Rice and curried fish with brinjal, yam and spices.—Illi.
- (3) Curried chicken and Chapatis (rare).—Illi.
- (4) Game birds and mashed yam and mohua cakes.—Illi.
- (5) Dried fish or mutton with onions, chillies, turmeric powder and rice.—Illi.
- (6) Deer (or porcupine) roasted or curried, with boiled rice (rare).
- (7) Rice with curried eggs and lentil soup.

The above represent some typical dishes in the Kolhan, and the varieties that are described do not mean that the same family varies its menu from day to day. Nor do the dishes resemble those that one would expect to be served on a European table. Most of them are very crude preparations, and they have yet much to learn in seasoning the curries and adjusting the ingredients to the standard requirements of such recipes as are obtainable among their more advanced neighbours. Repetition of the same food for days and months is common. The same meat prepared in the same way was offered to the writer for days together, and that in the house of a substantial cultivator. Further, there are certain seasons when fishing and hunting afford a plentiful supply for their food requirements, and during these periods the Hos gorge themselves to satiety, while in other periods they live on starvation diet. This improvidence is more characteristic of the lower classes as the substantial section has learnt methods of storage and possesses money to procure them for future needs. In spite of this, we find more variety in food among the lower classes, for in their constant state of want, and with their efforts to satisfy their bare physical needs, they have to make experiments with their food which lead

very often to the discovery of new methods of food production (as for example the preparation of flour from many vegetable roots). The higher classes possess more stable methods of food production, but their efforts and experiments are limited by the prescriptions they have deliberately borrowed from their Hindu neighbours.

Children are not fed in accordance with any prescribed system of nutrition, and their food varies with the locality. Though we find to-day a few successful cultivators using cow's milk for infants as a result of contact, milk never formed a part of the regular diet of the Hos. In cases of illness only milk is prescribed, and that medicinally. Even then goat's milk is preferred. Children take a long time to wean and usually three to four years elapse before the child learns to partake exclusively of the tribal diet. To teach the child, the mother gives him a small bone to play with, he bites it and learns its use. He is given a little rice-beer to sip in a leaf-cup, or a few grains of cooked rice are placed in a leaf-cup which he learns to pick up and put into his mouth, while the mother watches him with admiring eyes. Often she makes a ball of boiled rice and holds it in a roll to his mouth and he bites it at regular intervals. But the first real change at weaning is to Illi which the Hos regard as a food, as well as drink. When the child grows up to be a boy, he goes out with his bow and arrow, and shoots at small birds that perch on twigs, and he puts the spoil into the fire, roasts, and eats it. He learns also to catch insects, grub and birds, which he shares with his companions. He follows his father, brothers and cousins into the forest, climbs the trees, and collects fruits and roots which supplement their limited diet.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### ECONOMIC LIFE

It has been seen how the rights of hunting in the forests have been circumscribed by stringent forest rules, how the land revenue demand from the Hos has increased, and how the population has grown, particularly during the last thirty years. The people now have to compete with the Dikus in order to widen the scope of their employment, by exploiting through new occupations the economic possibilities of their physical environment. With the gradual displacement of hunting, many of the customary rites and practices associated with it, have disappeared; but the spirit of co-operative activity, and their ideas about joint ownership and joint efforts are still manifest in their daily economic undertakings and their periodical engagements of feasts and festivities. The uncertainty of the chase as a means of food supply necessitates a number of precautions calculated to secure its stability and involves a dependence on a number of factors over which the Hos have little control. These requirements and the idea of dependence on unforeseen factors remain as they were, and the same prescription which served to secure a control over their means of food production is adhered to in respect of their vital need, viz., agriculture. This is how the magical rites and beliefs, the worship of ancestral spirits, and the propitiation of the innumerable Bongas by regular prayers, chants and sacrifices, find adequate recognition in their socio-economic life.

To an agricultural people, land is the most important factor, and labour, capital and organisation are dependent on the amount of land available, and on the nature of the soil. The Hos are favourably situated so far as the second factor is concerned. They have not to struggle hard with inhospitable soil, as is the case with some less fortunate tribes in the neighbourhood. The lands are divided into different classes according to the degree of fertility and the kind of products raised in them. There are three classes of lands in Kolhan for agricultural purposes: (1) Bera, (2) Badi, and (3) Gora. The Bera is low land and is very fertile. The Bera paddy is sown in July and August, immediately after the rains, and is harvested in January. Badi paddy is sown in June and July and is harvested in October and November. Gora lands require a couple of months for each

#### **Different kinds of Land**

crop. The produce of the Bera land is the main concern of the Hos for that determines the economic condition of the people. The crops grown on Badi and Gora lands merely supplement the main yield from the Bera lands. A Ho usually pays -/10/- as. per bigha for Bera, -/7/- as. per bigha for Badi, and only -/4/- as. for Gora lands.

We have already referred to the land tenure of the Hos. Subject to the communal control exercised through the Munda, the land is passed on from father to son. A Ho cannot dispose of his land in any way he chooses. The land does not belong to him absolutely, it is

**Land Tenure** hereditary and inalienable, and must descend to his sons and grandsons. If a Ho has no direct male issue, the land goes to his brother, or next of kin, and if there be no kin, to the village community represented by the Munda. If a man dies leaving a widow, or a daughter, she is entitled to maintenance from the next male relative who takes the land and receives the Gonom on the daughter's marriage. Sons are entitled to certain shares of the father's land, whether hereditary or acquired. No matter how small the holding may be (unless too small), each son has a right to claim a partition. The eldest son receives a larger share, the younger sons equal shares of the remainder. A father may divide his land among his sons during his life time, retaining for himself a portion, or giving up entirely and living with one of his sons. At the marriage of a son, the father may give him a portion of his lands to set him up, and unless this is a large share, it does not preclude his having an additional share on his father's death, to equalise his share with that of his brothers.

The custom of allowing the eldest son a larger share than his brother is not uniformly followed, for numerous instances have come to our notice in the course of our enquiries in which the property, movable as well as immovable, has been equally divided between the sons. In a large number of cases, daughters also have had a share in the father's property, with the full approval of the village Panchayet. Considering the number of grown up unmarried women that are met with in every Ho village, it is but right that these women should have a share for their maintenance in their parents' property. When a Ho marries more than one wife, the children of the first wife are generally entitled to a larger share of the family property than those of the other wife.

The rules of succession among the Hos are incompatible with the provisions of the Indian Succession Act of 1865 (X of 1865), so the Hos have been exempted from the operation of the Act retrospectively from the passing of the Act, "provided that the notification (No. 550, D. 25, 1913, Ind. Gov.) shall not be held to affect any person in regard to whose rights a decision contrary to its effects has already been given by a competent

civil court." This exemption was made on the recommendation of the Government of Bihar and Orissa to the Government of India, Home Department (vide letter No. 2093A of 24th March., 1913). In order to give the benefit of exemption to those who have been converted to Christianity, and who still continue to follow their tribal customs in the matter of succession and inheritance, the word Animists has been replaced by the word Aborigines.

A closer observation of these customs regarding succession among the Hos, would lead one to the conclusion that although they have not reached that standard of legal definiteness and progress which characterises the two main schools of Hindu Law, (viz. Mitakshara and Dayabhaga), they represent a nearer approach to the Mitakshara than to the other school. The reason may be traceable to the fact that the Dayabhaga school is applicable exclusively in the Province of Bengal, whereas Mitakshara obtains in all other Provinces. As to the matter of similarity regarding the laws of succession existing between the Hos and the Mitakshara school, the following points are well worthy of notice. The sons are entitled to claim the partition of the property from their father, as obtains among the Hos, according to Mitakshara school, but only where the principle of joint ownership of the father along with the sons and heirs, is recognised. According to the Dayabhaga law, the father has absolute ownership of the property, so that the sons cannot claim any partition of it, and he, unlike a Ho father, is entitled to dispose of his property, both self-acquired as well as ancestral, in any way he likes. The contingency of the eldest son receiving a larger share than the others, does not find any place in either of the schools. With regard to females, although they are not irrevocably barred from inheriting property, their right is circumscribed in many ways by these schools. Thus a Hindu woman is permitted by them to inherit the property of her husband, father or son, etc., under certain conditions, but her interest in it is limited, inasmuch as after her death the property passes not to her heirs, but to the next heir of the person who bequeathed it to her. Further, a Hindu woman can succeed to the Stridhan (female property of which she is the sole owner) of another woman which she can alienate or dispose of in any way.

The economic basis of life among the Hos, is agriculture, though occasional hunting and fishing form important diversions from the monotony of an uneventful occupation. The year is divided into three seasons; and there are twelve months of the year with different activities distributed over them according to the needs of agriculture.

**Economic  
Basis of Life**

## SEASONAL CALENDAR

<i>Seasons.</i>	<i>Characteristics of the Seasons.</i>	<i>The Broad Economic Activities of the Hos.</i>
Upunchando-ria-rampai	March, April, May, June, Summer Season. Absence of green leaves. People sleep under trees.	Ploughing. Repairing of embankments by the entire village. Construction of new houses and repairing of old ones. Collection of bamboos and wood for fuel and building purposes. Women collect fuel, and Mohua. Where pulses are grown they are harvested in this season. Thatching of houses done by men alone.
Upunchando-jarga-jargi	July, August, September and October. Rainy season, muddy roads, the rivers become flowing and people do not move.	Ploughing, levelling, transplanting, and the bringing of new lands under cultivation. Women transplant paddy plants, and do the weeding. People have to live on a spare diet. Mulga Sag and rice form the staple food. Fishing in the rivers.
Upunchando-Usuturo, (Utal Putul)	November, December, January and February. The people have to sleep inside their huts and cover themselves with straw. When they sleep under straw, it makes a crackling sound (i.e. why the season is called 'Usuturo' and 'Utalputul.')	Threshing is done by men if bullocks are used. If by treading, it is done by women. Winnowing is done by men. Husking is a woman's job. Men make Bandhia of grain baskets. Fishing, bird catching, making of mats, etc.

## ROUTINE OF MONTHLY ENGAGEMENTS

<i>Names of Ho Months.</i>	<i>English Calendar Months.</i>	<i>Economic Activities.</i>	<i>Festivals, etc.,</i>
Maghe Chando.	Jan.-Feb.	Harvesting of pulses and cereals.	Maghe Festival and marriages. (Andi).
Matkam ..	Feb.-Mar.	Tilling of the field, collection of Mohua.	Marriages.
Baha ..	Mar.-Apr.	Sowing of seeds in Bera lands.	Baha Festival.
Baba Her ..	Apr.-May	Sowing of paddy in general for transplanting in low lands, and sowing in Gora lands.	Previously marriage was allowed in the early part of Baba Her, but due to Hindu influence, it is not favoured, as it corresponds with the Hindu month of Chait in which marriages are forbidden.
Hero ..	May-June	Weeding in the Gora or uplands, making embankments.	Hero Festival. Sacrifice of Boda to the village Dessauli.
Goma ..	June-July	Transplantation of paddy. Weeding in some fields. Repairing of embankments.	Bahtauli Festival.
Indi ..	July-Aug.	Sowing of Kurti (urd), Sarguja and tilling of Gora lands.	Jamnama Festival.
Jamnama ..	Aug.-Sept.	Cutting of Gora, paddy and Gundli (a kind of cereal).	The Jamnama Festival, i.e. of partaking the new crop.
Baba Irr ..	Sept.-Oct.	Harvesting of paddy. Threshing, collecting of paddy in the Kalyan, sowing of pulses, Musari and Gehu.	Kalam Festival.
Sardi ..	Oct.-Nov.	Harvesting of paddy from the low lands, and the same occupations as detailed above.	
Kalam ..	Nov.-Dec.	Hay is brought home and stacked for use.	Kalam (Kalyan) Festival. The worship of Dessauli, Singbonga, and Marang Bonga.
Makara ..	Dec.-Jan.	Tilling of the Gora lands. Ploughing in the cold is called Rabang-nail (cold plough).	

There are a number of fairs in different parts of Kolhan which the Hos visit during the slack season, and where they spend their time in dancing and drinking and in other pastimes. The fairs are distributed all over the country, and provide interesting diversions for the agriculturists of Kolhan. Some of the important fairs are at Jojohatu, 25 miles from Chaibassa, held for a week on the occasion of the Hindu festival Chat or Ponai Parav, the fair at Lagechata, 10 miles from Chaibassa, held for 3 days on the same occasion, and also others at Kamarbasa, Purnea, Dumuria, Chaunpore, Bingtapan and Lota, which are the most popular centres for such periodical congregations. Besides these fairs, there are important weekly markets, which attract the Hos from distant corners of Kolhan.

The chief attraction in these markets, besides the buying and selling of agricultural produce and the petty needs of the rural people, is the liquor booths, which sell cheap intoxicants. Here men and women from different parts of the country meet one another and drink and dance until they become intoxicated. They also serve as centres for matrimonial negotiations, and many of the Apartipi (marriages by capture) and Rajikhusi (marriage by mutual consent) matings are planned and effected at these markets and fairs. The educative interests of hats and fairs are also immense, and the diffusion of culture traits, indigenous or borrowed, is much facilitated in these gatherings. Husbands come to find their runaway wives, and wives come to seek their husbands, widows come to catch their men, and youngmen find their partners. Old people come to meet their friends and acquaintances, and the village Mundas meet their tribal heads, and elders decide cases of social lapses. The local administration issues summonses or Purwanas, in these weekly markets, while social decisions and legal enactments, if there are any, are announced by the beat of drums. Even the village postman attends, and finds it convenient to dispose of his bag by sitting at a corner of the hat. Messages can be sent through persons who represent practically every corner of Kolhan.

Despite the forces of disintegration in their economic and social life, co-operation in economic undertakings forms even to-day the salient feature of their daily life. It is certainly not a survival of their communistic mode of living, nor is it a reflex of their gregariousness. It is, on the other hand, a form of voluntary association, a type of co-partnership by which the economic possibilities are better realised, while at the same time, reducing the monotony and tedium of daily routine. In all their economic activities, sporadic or regular, there is the feeling of solidarity and cohesion, the idea of mutual obligations

#### **Fairs and Weekly Markets**

#### **Palliative Concomitants**

between the units forming a group, as well as between two, or more groups following the same occupation, or participating in the same economic undertaking. When a group of people is seen fishing together, collecting fuel, cutting bamboos, or felling trees, it is scarcely felt that they are unrelated, or do not possess the same interest, and a joint interest at that, or that each is working for himself instead of for a common pool, or a corporation. When they fell a tree, chop off its branches, and transport the wood, the labourers, though they may belong to different families as is commonly the case, behave as members of one joint family and the fruits of their labour are distributed among them without any fuss or hitch. When the Hos go to fetch bamboo from the forest, the whole route is lined with carts for transporting it to the different villages, and these carts are loaded in the order of their position, whoever the owner may be. This makes joint labour possible, and the whole atmosphere breathes of friendliness and sympathy, which make work pleasant. This explains the gay disposition of Ho labourers, both in the fields and in the forests. Women labourers working in the fields, or for a daily wage in construction works, are always in high spirits, and when they come to work in the morning or leave for their village after the day's work is ended, they march in groups, singing songs and keeping step. Thus the pleasure of working in company stimulates and relieves the monotony and tedium of protracted efforts. The rhythm of work is maintained by songs, as in the time of transplantation of paddy plants, or in the act of carrying loads. The songs and riddles, the discussions of topical news, of experiences in towns, in markets and fairs, of dreams and the decisions of the village Punch form what has been called the palliative concomitants.

The Hos recognise the merit of specialisation in the arts and crafts, which are indigenous to them. They also know how to encourage such specialisation, and seldom interfere with the occupation of specialists.

**Specialisation** Some women paint houses and draw artistic designs on the walls. They are engaged to do this work for others, but are not usually paid for their labour in kind or cash. Labour of this sort is paid only by labour in other directions. Sometimes, such specialists do work for others for their prestige and no exchange of goods or labour takes place. Certain families in the village have the reputation of being competent brewers, and in times of tribal feasts or marriage ceremonies, they are approached to brew liquor for the function, but no consideration is made for their labour, the social recognition acting as a stimulus for such participation. To-day, the Hos do not associate artistic skill with magic, and participation in such skilled work is no longer held as the infringement of patent-rights. Basket making and rope making are not done by experts alone. Every Ho can do it, and in

case of need, he does it. But if there are some landless families in a village who make their living by basket making, or by making rope, the Hos would rather barter it for grain than make the same themselves. A Ho knows that he can, if he wants to, make the things he requires, and he has ample leisure to do so, but he will refuse to undertake any work which he knows may displace somebody who makes his living out of it. The difficulty of introducing supplementary occupations, which are now done by a handful of people in Kolhan, and for which a market exists within and outside Kolhan, is based in this simple consideration, and it will take some time before the Hos can be taught to adopt other occupations which will add to their standard of comfort and raise their economic status.

The system of paying wages in cash is not indigenous to the Hos. The Hos work for reward in kind, and many of their joint activities and economic undertakings are based on ideas of mutuality of obligations. Thus, the

#### **Wages for Labour**

substitution of payments in cash for payments in kind has disorganised the working of the systems of distribution, which were based mainly on transactions other than the direct exchange of goods for goods. There is a disparity between payment in kind and payment in cash for labour with the local area. A Ho will gladly work for one Paila of rice, while money wage which may buy one and a half time the measure will not satisfy him. The employers therefore find it still economical to pay in kind, though the option is usually given to persons who may care for money payment. Money has still a limited role to play in Kolhan, and it is this fact that ensures the continuance of the system of payment in kind. The usual method of securing provisions is the system of barter with paddy or salt. The needs of an average agriculturist are limited. He has paddy, and other necessary grains in his 'store pit'; he requires clothes, and occasionally ornaments, for which he must pay cash, besides the annual Malgoozari or land revenue which is payable in money. He exchanges paddy or rice for tobacco, lentils, salt, dried fish, dried meat, Ranu for making Diang. For vegetables, he has to pay either in rice or in salt, Earthen utensils and pottery are bartered for paddy. He can get fishing hooks and line for paddy too, so that most of his ordinary needs are satisfied by barter, and money enters but little into his affairs. The introduction of money economy in place of barter, due to a large extent to the opening of mines, factories and railways, and the propagation and collection of lac and cocoon, has shaken the basis of their economic life. An improvident people like the Hos cannot be expected to wait and spend their money in any judicious manner. It is an usual sight in hats and markets in Kolhan, in Chaibassa town itself, on pay day, to find the Hos spending their hard earned money on petty toys and trinkets, aerated waters, cigarettes, and cheap soaps

and scents. A bottle of lemonade priced at an anna is sold for two or three annas to the Kuis, or Ho women, by adding some colouring matter, and there is a scramble near the shops for drinking such stuff. A family which possesses no land and pays a nominal house tax of five pice only, was found to possess a bottle of rose syrup costing -/12/- as. or more, which shows to what extent they can go if they possess money.

The problem of the outstill system has focussed some local interest in recent years. As soon as the Ho labourers are given their wage in cash, they spend much of it in drink, which is sold very cheaply at important labour centres, and the outstill system has introduced a pernicious habit which is ruining the health and shattering their social life. The labourers, who receive money wage to-day, are lured by the cheap liquor, and are ruinously tempted to part with their earnings at the sacrifice of their food and clothes. Conditions in the mining centres are even more dreadful. The non-official members of the Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council, in 1934, prayed for an enquiry into the effects of the outstill system in the coal areas, and other districts, but the Council decided otherwise. The Hon. Minister in charge of Excise declared that the outstill system was giving both food and drink to the poor labourers, whose wages have gone down on account of the economic depression. But the Hon. Minister did not realise that the facts contradicted his statement, as was evident from his own admission that the outstill system was yielding more revenue than before and that this increased revenue was being paid by the poor labourers from their reduced wages, to the detriment of their food and clothes.

The effect of this policy on the domestic life of the labourers will be clear from the fact that while the working people used to drink only on Sundays or Mondays before, they are now drinking almost every day, on account of the cheapness of the liquor. The effect on the health of the labourers is no less alarming. The strong Mohua liquors which is sold to these people, is brewed and sold the same day, with the result that any excess in drinking affects their vitality, and impairs their physical health. This aspect of the outstill system in connection with the mines will be discussed in a subsequent chapter.

Most of the occupations of the Hos, as has already been pointed out, are done on a co-operative system, and payment for services is made in kind, or by contributing to a common feast, which is partaken of by the employer and the employed. Thatching or repairing houses is done by a few people in the village who have the reputation for skilled workmanship, and a Ho can always secure their assistance by nominal payment in kind.

Thatching is usually paid for by giving a few pots of Diang which may be requisitioned by the labourer according to his needs. When the work involves continuous labour for days on end, a Boda, or he-goat, may be offered. In case the labourer does not possess lands of his own, and if thatching is his occupation, he is paid in kind (i.e. in grain), according to the means of the householder.

Whoever has seen the Hos ploughing, must have noticed how different the system is from that customary in other parts. A Ho will use a number of ploughs simultaneously to till or furrow the fields, and would seek the aid of his villagers, even if he can do it himself with one plough. This does not allow all the plots in the village to be prepared simultaneously, and a longer period is required for preparing the fields for the sowing of seeds. On the other hand, it makes it possible for every cultivator to ensure the best possible attention for his plot of land, and at the same time, keeps him busy over a longer period than would otherwise be the case. In the matter of weeding, transplanting, and harvesting, the same procedure is followed, and work in the fields becomes interesting rather than irksome.

The Hos always make a distinction between those who work in the fields, and those who do not. If they work for somebody who does not assist them in their own fields, they always insist on some form of payment. Thus, a cultivator who cannot, or does not, plough his own fields, but requires the services of the villagers, has to 'lead a he-goat' to the field, in order that they may assist him in ploughing and preparing the field. This is Merom Eirkeda, without which the Hos refuse to assist such farmers. The actual price of a he-goat is only about 2/- rupees, and if one has to engage a number of workers and ploughs, one's expenses come to much more than the price of a he-goat; but this arrangement is still customary in the Kolhan, in spite of the introduction of money economy. The goat is killed and the meat distributed among the people who assist in the field work. The system of co-operation customary in Kolhan does not mean that all the villagers assist each other, or that it is compulsory for a Ho to participate in the economic activity of his neighbour. It is all arranged mutually, and participation is voluntary. Nor is it a fact to-day that the organisation of economic life is confined only to the Killi itself, for even members of a multi-Killi village form voluntary groups, and co-operation becomes spontaneous. It is not true of men alone. Women also form similar groups, and help each other in the work for their livelihood.

Fishing is always done in groups. Men, women and children join in fishing, and there is an interesting and well-recognised method of distributing the catch, which leaves nothing to be desired. The owner of

**Co-operation in Fishing** a Dab, or pond, issues a timely invitation to all the neighbouring villages through a crier, or by the beating of drums, that on a certain date he has decided to open the Dab for fishing, and that all interested are welcome. Groups of people from villages around, far and near, come with nets, and other fishing apparatus, and pitch their temporary leafy booths on the banks of the river, or on the sides of the pond, the night before. Next morning the owner of the Dab, or the lessee, propitiates the Nage Bonga or the river spirit. The village Deuri offers a hen, a couple of eggs, and a white hair-comb, to the Nage Bonga, after which, all the people assembled for fishing sprinkle water over them. Although people from several villages come for the same purpose, each village keeps together while fishing, so that the catch of each group remains separate, and is not pooled with the others. Women form their own groups, and the men combine their own nets and traps to catch fish. There is a spirit of rivalry between the different villages, and the whole affair becomes an entertainment, rather than an occupation. Men and women are constantly regaled with Diang.

The fishing may be continued for more than one day, in which case, the catch is daily distributed in accordance with the customary laws. The owner of the Dab, or pond, gets half share of the catch, whether he takes part in fishing or not. He, in his turn, may distribute some portion of his share to his villagers, and to any person who may have rendered some service to him in connection with the fishery.

#### **Distribution of Shares**

As every villager does not possess nets and traps, he may borrow from those who do, but the owners of the nets are entitled to a share of the borrower's catch. This is ungrudgingly admitted. After giving half the share of the catch to the owners of the Dab, the remaining catch is distributed among the members of the village, who have shared in the fishing. If there are four persons from one family, the family is entitled to four shares, and thus the whole catch is distributed on a recognised fixed principle. The fact that several villages co-operate together in fishing does not produce any chaos, as each village keeps its catch separate and after giving half of it to the owner, the rest is brought to the respective villages, and distributed in accordance with the usual rules. Disputes in fishing arise on account of over-crowding, as well as the anxiety of each group to secure the best position in the Dab. The decision of the owner of the Dab, however, is seldom challenged, and the latter's sense of responsibility leaves little to be desired. There is one other fact in connection with fishing, which requires mention. Wives accompanying husbands on these fishing excursions, and sisters accompanying brothers, do not as a rule assist one another alone, for the whole undertaking is jointly done, and the women help men, irrespective of their relationship, though

assistance is confined to the village or Killi group. Where a woman assists her husband or some relation, and does not identify herself with the group, she does not count for distribution, and both together receive one share only. At the time of distribution of the catch, the conduct of each participant is recited by some leading member of the group, and due notice is taken in allotting individual shares.

Fishing provides great thrill, and the few weeks before the fishing excursion takes place, the villagers get busy with their nets and traps, repairing and reconditioning the old ones, and making new ones. They send messengers to the owners of Dabs and tanks, to enquire about the possible dates for fishing, and are always informed of the condition of the Dabs, and the fishing prospects.

The division of labour in fishing, like that of agriculture, is based on certain conventions which are strictly adhered to. Women usually carry pots of Diang, and men carry the nets and traps. Children carry the receptacles for fish, and such indispensable requisites as rope, bamboo-chips, tobacco, Borah-sengel (burning rope made of straw), and the like. Fishing in deep water is done by men, and women find it more convenient to use the Jimri, and often the Muchu, which are effective in slowly running water. Men use different kinds of nets, Jangid, Kumbar and Raba. Bamboo traps, rectangular in design, are placed by men and women at the orifice or exit of the water in a dam, so that while water is allowed to pass out, the fish remain. Like nets, there are different kinds of receptacles for different kinds of fish. The Hos know and understand the nature and habits of the fish, and they are so skilful that they can tell from the bubbles in the water which kind of fish is making them. The damming of water by bamboos and logs of wood, and poisoning the water with poisonous wild fruits and roots, is the most convenient method of catching fish in the river, though this method is slowly being given up. When the water gets thus poisoned the fish are stupefied, and rise one after another to the surface, where they are received in the receptacles. It is not the effect of poisoning alone that renders the fish liable to be caught but men, women and children plunge into the water and make it so muddy that the fish move up desperately and are netted by the fishermen.

The preservation and storage of fish is done with great care in the Kolhan, and dried fish is a delicacy with the Hos. The dried fish not only serves as food at times when other fish is not available, it also provides a means of barter for other commodities. Fish is exchanged for paddy, salt, earthen utensils, baskets, and receptacles for fish, and so on. There are some fish which quickly de-

#### **Division of Labour in Fishing**

#### **Preservation and Storage of Fish**

compose in the sun, so the Hos eat them immediately, either roasted or fried. Those that can withstand the sun and dry quickly, are preserved for future use. The entrails are first removed, and the fish then cut into pieces, and hung in garlands in the yard until they are perfectly dry. Even after they are dried, and stored up in the Ading, occasional sunning is required to keep them from being attacked by worms. There are some fish which the Hos keep alive for some time. These fishes are found in muddy water, and when they are caught, they are straightaway transferred to big earthen pots containing muddy water, with grass, algæ, and small fishes thrown in for them to live on. Dried, preserved fish, are also used as occasional gifts to relations and friends, and as a treat for guests.

The most important crop raised by the Hos, and which forms their staple food, is rice. Various qualities of rice are grown, each requiring different conditions. Rice is the crop most suited to the climate of the Kolhan, as there is abundant rainfall during certain parts of the year,

**Agriculture** viz., the monsoon period when little irrigation and manuring are required for a bumper crop. The soil is usually fertile, particularly in the Bera lands, and transplantation forms the most important method of cultivation in Kolhan. Both transplantation and broadcast sowing are known, the latter form is specially suited to Gora lands. The Hos realise the need of replenishing the soil by using manure, but they seldom use it except in Gora lands. In some fields they sow leguminous crops, which serve as natural fertilisers, while in some fields they use rotten straw, dead leaves, alluvial earth from tanks, and other waste matter. They also leave some land fallow, for a year or so, and allow the cattle to graze and fertilise the land with their excreta.

Ploughing is done jointly by a number of ploughs used simultaneously over a small plot of land. Before the advent of the rains, the land is occasionally ploughed to break up the earth, and also to keep down the weeds. Immediately after the first heavy showers, the land is finally ploughed for transplanting the rice plants that are grown in low and wet land. In the Gora lands, when the seeds take root and send up small shoots, the plot is ploughed again to destroy some of the thickly grown plants and to ensure a vigorous growth for the others. The system of making ridges and terraces, where the land is not flat, makes it necessary to repair any breaches in them, and the Hos take special care to keep the fields in a state of constant repair. If the ridges are not repaired in time, water may flow out of the fields, and this would make their own fields dry, and destroy neighbouring fields by an overflow. Water in the fields is regulated according to the needs of the crop grown, and when there is surplus water

in the field, the Hos cut a channel through the ridges to allow some part of the water to run out, and replace the earth to cover the channel up.

Weeding is done as soon as the plants grow to a height of six inches or so, first by using the plough, and secondly, by plucking with the hand. Transplanting and weeding are traditionally the work of women, who work in groups, and move from plot to plot till all the field is weeded. Watching the crops becomes necessary when they begin to ripen, and when they are harvested, and deposited in the Kalyan. Damage to crops is done by wild cats, cattle, and certain agricultural pests. Scarecrows become a necessity, and improvised leafy sheds are also put up so that a watch can be kept on the fields at night. Villagers take turns in this, and as soon as any alarm is raised by the beating of a tin can, the rest of the villagers run to assist the watchers. Threshing is done by men, if bullocks are used; if it is done by treading (which is the usual practice among the poorer farmers), it is done by women. When bullocks are used, the paddy stalks are placed on the Kalyan in bundles over which the bullocks are driven round and round. Winnowing is done by holding aloft the grains with the husks in a basket and letting the wind blow off the chaff as it drops, or by fanning the grains with a winnowing fan.

The paddy is taken in baskets to the courtyard of the house, where it is disposed according to certain customary rules and the urgent needs of the household. The first consideration is given to the ceremonial thanksgiving to the Bongas. A small portion of the produce is measured into a basket as an offering to the Bongas, which is kept in one corner of the Ading. The remainder is divided into two big heaps, one is stored in a Bandhi, placed inside the store room from which a portion is kept for seeds, the other is kept handy for immediate requirements. Of this latter portion, a share is sold for cash to pay Malgootari, and the rest serves for payment in kind, for services rendered to the family by the villagers, and for the ordinary domestic needs of the family. Before the family partakes of this new crop, a ceremonial offering of it must be made to Singbonga, and the Dessauli, and to the ancestral spirits sheltered in the Ading. The services of the village artisans, the tribal priest, and the village Deonra are paid in kind, but little uniformity exists in Kolhan about the proportionate shares of these recipients. The Kamar or blacksmith is paid according to the service received from him by individual families.

The following table will illustrate the division of labour in economic activities between the sexes. There is no rigid sexual division of labour in Kolhan, and excepting for the use of the plough and the bow and arrow,

few other occupations are forbidden to women. Many of the men's occupations are done to-day by women, while the former sit as idle spectators.

#### DIVISION OF LABOUR.

<i>Men.</i>	<i>Women.</i>	<i>Children.</i>
Making of embankments, ridges and digging earth. Manufacturing of musical instruments, bows and arrows, weapons for fishing, nets, traps, etc.	Carrying loads. Carrying earth. Supplying stones, gravel, earth, etc., for repairing dams and making ridges.	Bird catching and fowling, tending of cattle. Fishing in shallow water and carrying receptacle for fish.
Manufacture of Bandhi and baskets. Making of leaf-plates and leaf-cups for distributing food and Diang.	Plaiting of mats and baskets. Barter and sale of agricultural produce and marketing.	Collecting M o h u a. Helping father or mother in agriculture and domestic work.
Rope making.		
Fresh-water fishing, hunting and bird snaring.	Fishing, drying and preserving fish.	
Cutting and felling of trees and bamboo. Driving carts or dragging Sagar. Thatching of houses, making of wicker hedges and wooden doors, carving, etc.	Making mud walls, plastering and painting them. Weeding, transplanting, harvesting, threshing, husking rice and oil pressing.	Collecting lac.
Ploughing, harrowing, winnowing, watching. Planting of trees. Fetching the Sasandiris. Propagation and collection of lac, of cocoon. Curing leather for using in musical instruments.	Fetching water, collecting fuel, cooking, collecting Mohua, drying and storing Mohua and Kusum, etc.	
Cock-fighting. Labour in mines and plantations.	Sale of lac. Collection of forest produce. Needle work. Working as wage earners in mines and in constructional work, in digging, etc.	

The list of occupations tabled above may give the impression that the men do as much work as the women, or more. In practice, the Ho men enjoy more leisure than women, and one is tempted to call them idlers.

#### Sexual Division of Labour

The women toil hard from morning to night, gather fuel, clean the house, collect Mohua, and other forest produce, go to the market or distant hat for sale or barter, wash clothes, prepare Illi, carry loads, work for wages in the urban areas, and on

return fulfil all the maternal and domestic obligations. The men have certain busy seasons in the year, when they have to work in the fields, take part in the collection of lac and breeding of cocoons, in fishing and hunting. But there is no continuous programme of work for men, though there are plenty of diversions. Music, dancing, visiting friends in other villages, attending hats and fairs, and lounging in the village headman's house form the main routine of Ho men. Cock-fighting is the most popular recreation of the Hos in Kolhan, and each householder has a number of cocks which he trains for this purpose. This keeps the Hos busy for some time during the day, and when the season for cock-fighting comes round, they forget all their duties and obligations in their craze for sport.

The principle of division of labour between the sexes in Kolhan is not clear, as the line of demarcation between different occupations is not sharp enough. It is only in agriculture that such dovetailing of employment is found. Ordinarily, the energetic, exciting and often arduous tasks, are done by men, while those involving patience and monotony, are left to women. It is also found that in all the economic occupations we have enumerated above, men lead, women follow. The ploughing is done by men, the breaking up of the clods is done by women. Sowing is done by men, transplanting and weeding by women. When bullocks are used, they are driven by men over bundles of paddy in the Kalyan (threshing floor), after which women have to gather the paddy from the chaff and carry it home. The distribution of the produce, like its apportionment, is arranged by men, and women carry out the instructions. They take the produce for sale to the markets and fairs and bring back what they need in exchange. The men clear the forest, and women follow them for gathering fruits and roots. The hunter or the fisherman brings home his game, or his catch for the women to cook, dry or preserve. When the lac is collected and brought home, the woman takes it to the market. The men plant fruit trees and vegetables, the women collect fruits and sell them in accordance with the needs of the family. When men do the rougher work, women supplement their labour.

It is difficult to compare the lot of women with that prevailing among other primitive areas in India. There are tribes like the Tharus, among whom woman's position in society is much better than in any known primitive society in India. The men are really drudges, slaves to Tharu women. Women go to the markets, men carry the loads, women buy things, men carry them home, women fish, men carry the receptacles for the fish (Ugawa), women hunt and lead men to the forest. In the kitchen, Tharu women treat their menfolk as untouchables, they are not allowed even to enter the kitchen. The case is different in the Kolhan. Whatever rights and privileges the women of

#### **Position of Women**

Kolhan possess, they are all earned by service, by hard work, and drudgery, and because they are indispensable to the household. Where women are not toilers and bread winners, they are ridiculed, regarded as anti-social, and even witches. When work in the field is not remunerative, and when the Hos require money to meet urgent needs, they will send their wives and sisters to work in the mines, themselves remaining in the village, ministering, as they will tell you, to the needs of their ancestral spirits in the Ading. So long as it is not indispensable for the Ho men to work, so long as they depend upon the labours of their women-folk, they prefer to remain idle and content with a hand-to-mouth existence. In spite of sufferings, and imminent starvation, the Hos will idle away their time and engage either in completely unproductive pursuits, or in petty and trivial occupations, which seldom bring them nearer to the solution of their food problem. Yet, with all this, they appear happy and contented.

There is no elaborate system of economic taboos in Kolhan to-day, and the adoption of men's occupations by women or vice versa, is not viewed with much alarm. Their daily contact with their neighbours, the Oriyas and other Dikus, has taught them the customary practices of these people, in respect of their main occupation, agriculture, and they attribute now, less importance than before, to their own traditional rules and supernatural pains and penalties. Yet there are certain taboos which are inviolable. Ploughing is a man's occupation, and a woman will not touch the plough; if she does, the plough is believed to lose its virtue. That is why ploughs are not taken inside the house, but are placed shoulder to shoulder under some big tree, near the village Sasan. Each plough bears the mark of the owner, and when the cultivators require them in the morning, they take their respective ploughs from the heap. Similar restrictions obtain in the use of the bow and arrows. Even a young boy will not allow his bow to be touched by his little sister, lest it loses its efficacy. When he has to touch his sister, or has to take her in his arm, he places his bow on the branch of a tree out of her reach. Nobody discusses this taboo. It is a tradition known to young and old. It is so obvious that questions on this subject appear to them superfluous, and even ridiculous. Less rigid are the restrictions on fishing nets and traps, and on the use of musical instruments. Yet, if girls try their hands on musical instruments, the men look at them reprovingly. One of the many reasons that were cited by the village Munda of Chiru why a certain girl was not married though her parents were well off, was that she could play on a Mandol and was fond of it. This was a thing regarded as unholy, and therefore ominous to the family to which she might affiliate herself by marriage.

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Women during their menstrual period will not take part in any productive enterprise—will not work in the field or prepare Illi in the house. But such is the arrangement among the women, and such a degree of goodwill and co-operation exist among them that the work in the house, as well as outside, seldom suffers, and an outsider will seldom realise that there is any inactivity on the part of any individual woman. Observance of this taboo is insisted on by women, and they know when and how to insist on it. Among the occupations forbidden to women on supernatural grounds, the rearing of cocoons is perhaps the foremost. It is taboo to touch a woman while engaged in rearing cocoons. The men retire to a quiet part of the forest, make their temporary sheds, and follow their profession unhampered by happenings outside. During the period, the men live on special diet, and practise strict sexual continence. Stories about the violation of this taboo, and how the entire crop was destroyed as a result thereof, are recited by the Hos to serve as warnings to the people.

The gradual disappearance of economic taboos among the Hos, and the change of attitude of the men with regard to the household arrangements and the principal economic occupations, which has made women economically more important to the family, have no doubt encouraged women to encroach on the men's domain. The Ho does not believe in sharing the burden of supporting the family with his wife, but rather would he depend more and more on his wife's sinews for its welfare. He has tightened the reins so far as his relation to his wife is concerned. The economic independence of women in the Kolhan therefore has not been a great help to the cause of her social emancipation. She remains a drudge, a tool, and a "mere female," in spite of her contribution to the family livelihood.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### SOCIAL ORGANISATION

The Ho village may be inhabited by members of one Killi, or it may contain two or more Killis, though one of them happens to be the dominant one. The Munda is usually from this dominant Killi, and as such, his influence within the village derives not a little support from the leadership of his own Killi. Ho society is divided into a large number of Killis or septs, many deriving their name from some animal, plant or material object. They have been described as totemistic, and many of their beliefs have been collected by earlier writers to explain the taboos and superstitions they are expected to possess, about their totems. Sir Herbert Risley tried to explain the origin of totemism by an analysis of totemic beliefs in India, but he could not account for the absence of religious regard for tetems in India, which is an integral part of totemism in other parts of the world. Yet he believed that the religious side of totemism was in disuse, and totemism in India possessed only the social side (i.e. exogamy). Members of a totemic sept cannot marry within the sept, but have to marry outside. Exogamy is a characteristic feature of Ho social organisation. The members of a sept or Killi cannot marry within the sept. Thus we have what is generally known as totemic exogamy. It is only in villages where there is one Killi or several Killis, which are only divisions of one major Killi, like the Purty, that marriage within the village is tabooed, otherwise, as in Konslaposi, Kotgarh and other multi-Killi villages, marriage within the village has never been tabooed by the society. The most effective taboo in respect of marriage is the rule of Killi exogamy, and it is still the principal feature of marital organisation of the Hos. Exogamy has nothing to do fundamentally with totemism in India, as exogamy is a widespread form of social organisation found in most societies, primitive or advanced. Risley has mentioned differnt types of exogamy, and it is found in some form or other, in all tribes and castes in India. The higher castes in India are exogamous but eponymous. The Naga Khels in Assam too, are exogamous. It is also certain that worship of trees, animals and material objects, does not prove totemistic beliefs, nor do the innumerable restrictions about food and drink constitute totemism. The monkey is sacred to the Hindus, and they seldom kill one.

In several parts of the United Provinces, the monkey is made a scapegoat, and is ceremonially killed, and buried on certain days of the year, but they will never think of killing one on other days. Similar restrictions are customary about the killing of snakes, cats, owls, and other animals. Thus we find that dietary restrictions, religious or superstitious attitude to animals, plants and material objects, or even the rule of exogamy, do not by themselves prove the existence of a totemic cult. The totemic names that are found among the Hos, do not mean that the animals or plants denoted by the Killi, were worshipped, propitiated or venerated by them, or that there were any dietary or other restrictions connected with these animals or plants.

Dr. Hutton has reintroduced Frazer's conceptional theory to explain the origin of totemism, though he admits the inadequacy of the theory. He writes, "It is, however, likely from every point of view that while it (totemism) may have originally started with the conception theory in ignorance of the fact of paternity, it has been encouraged and perpetuated by the ideas of life matter, a separable soul, transmigration and probably other connected ideas, and that a number of these have contributed to totemism as still found in India." It is true, as Dr. Hutton thinks, that once the idea of totemism is started, it would be kept alive, and fed by ideas and sentiments, not adequate in themselves, perhaps, to start the theory. It is also true, as Dr. Hutton further remarks, that the psychological considerations, sometimes urged as causes of totemism, cannot be regarded as the actual causes, since ideas must have some ultimate reference to observed experience, but they will contribute to the retention of an idea, which would not otherwise survive. If the ignorance of the role of paternity has given start to the institution of totemism, then the latter should have been a universal feature of social organisation.

When we analyse the stories connected with the origin of totemic names among the Hos, as well as among other cognate tribes, we realise how the innumerable Killis of the Hos have come into existence. Most of these stories explain how the totemic relation has emerged out of a dire necessity at a time when human help could not be requisitioned, or was of little avail. The association of the Hos with animals and plants can be easily explained, as in a pre-agricultural stage, it is the animals and plants of the forest that engage the perpetual attention of the people, and so any connection they may establish for immediate relief must be with these animals and plants. In an agricultural stage, on the other hand, the connection with cattle and with natural objects, such as the sun, the moon and the powers presiding over rain, storm and the like, is the more appropriate, and we know that agricultural people all over India, worship

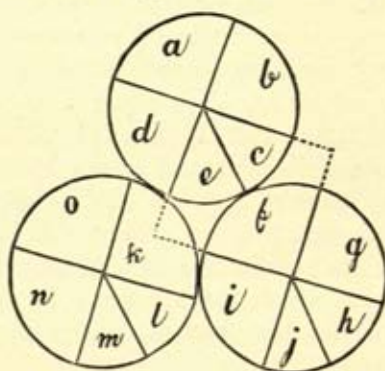
natural objects in preference to sylvan deities, and the fauna and flora of their forest habitat.

Sir Herbert Risley gives the names of 40 Ho septs, but there are many more which have escaped his notice or are of recent origin. Of these septs, some have animal and plant names, the rest are either names of localities or eponyms, while a few represent some portion of totems, e.g., Kudedah, the juice of black-berry. Most of the totems are not items of food, and there exist few dietary restrictions among them. The beliefs that one finds with regard to totemic objects among the Hos, may be traced to a recognition of the assistance the totemic animal or plant is supposed to give to the members designated by it, and also to the fact that the totemic object is still regarded as guardian angel of the clan. Totems such as Kaundinya or tiger, Tubid or mouse hole, Hasada or clay, snakes, bamboos, baskets, bricks and arrows do not explain that the totemic bond is connected with dietary restrictions. Even if the association with animals and plants started as an accidental connection, as we have suggested, there yet may evolve a superstitious or religious regard for animals and plants in accordance with the theory of transmigration of souls and connected ideas current in popular Hinduism. The Hos later became permanent cultivators and since they could not explain this association, as many of the customs and practices necessary at one stage of economic life become useless and redundant in another, they might have been influenced by the popular belief in the possibility of their descent from animals, and plants, and as such, may have learnt to venerate them, or even worship them. At present, however, there is no trace of any such worship or veneration, nor do the people believe in their descent from these animals or plants. These sept names are nothing to them beyond names designating a consanguineous group of persons, and the only taboo that is obeyed by the Hos is that members belonging to the same sept do not marry among themselves. Cases of such marriage occur in the Kolhan, but the contracting parties defend these alliances on the grounds that they are strangers to each other, and do not share the same Sasan. It remains the rule, however, that members of the same sept living in the same locality cannot marry, and any liaison between a man and a woman of the same sept is severely punished, and the family is branded as Kajomesin.

We have described how marriage within the Killi is not possible among the Hos, and we have also shown that the Hos are divided into a large number of exogamous septs. Yet, it is not true that a man belonging to one Killi can marry or does marry in any of the 50 or 60 other Killis that one meets with in Kolhan. All these Killis are not unrelated groups. The Purty Killi has

seven subdivisions, and marriage within these sections is prohibited by custom. There have been cases of such marriage, but they are not favoured by the tribal society. Many of the Killis have been split up into smaller fragments, and marriage between these smaller groups is not tabued. Except those Killis that are common between the Mundas and the Hos, others, whose corresponding divisions are absent among the Mundas, or the Sonthals, are in all probability of later origin. When the Hos left their brethren, the Mundas, and arrived in successive groups at the present habitat, they developed a new social order characterised by exogamy among the new Killis, and also by a territorial endogamy. The division of the Mundas into smaller Killis, due to an increase in their number, has been explained by Mr. Roy. He writes, "As time went on and generation multiplied, each Killi became enormously enlarged and the unwieldy brotherhoods came to be further subdivided into separate Killis. The subdivision was probably expected to avoid the necessity of the members of one Killi having to travel a long way off into the domain of another Killi to seek wives for their sons and husbands for their daughters." Thus it appears that even Killi exogamy is not absolute, and in course of time, when there is an unusual increase in the numerical strength of a Killi, the latter may, and actually does, split up into two or more groups.

Besides the Killi exogamy, there is a further customary restriction which can be explained by a diagram. If we plot the marriages of a particular locality on paper, we find that they indicate also the direction of territorial



organisation in Kolhan. There is no deliberate matrimonial grouping perhaps, as there is no prohibition for marrying outside the groups, but the people prefer to keep their alliances within certain territorial limits. For example, if there are three contiguous Pirs, and each of these Pirs, for convenience' sake, contains five villages, with one Killi in each village, we have three groups of villages, viz., a, b, c, d, e; f, g, h, i, j; k, l, m, n, o.

As every Killi is exogamous, and must therefore marry outside, the extent of intermarriage will depend largely upon the permutation and combination of these 15 units, though they may go farther afield. In actual practice, when we plot the list of marriages by generations, we find that the limits of intermarriage are artificially restricted. Proximity to each other is usually the determining factor, and as we trace the marriages through the generations, we find that the marriages of the oldest generation living were all confined within the smaller circles and rectangles, while as we trace forward to the present time, the circles tend to enlarge themselves till the local barriers are completely broken down. The oldest marriages were mostly confined to near groups, and generally within the Pir. The present marriages are mostly outside the Pir, and include alliances between a and n, h and n, c and j, and so on. The advantage of the older system, if such it may be called, was the formation of a matrimonial group within closer groups by exchange marriages and preferential matings, thus evolving a sort of extended village grouping, which served to develop a reciprocal economic partnership among two or more contiguous villages. The rapid development of communications, and the opening up of inaccessible areas in recent years, have made it possible to enlarge the circle of alliances, and to-day, the whole of the Kolhan is a social unit ; and yet it is strange that marriage to-day is more difficult than it was before.

The Hos are a patrilocal and patrilineal people. When they marry outside the village, the wife must come from outside, as residence is patrilocal. Women among the Hos do not inherit, they have only the right to be maintained by the family of their birth or of adoption by marriage. They identify themselves with the interests of the family, so long as they live with their parents, and after marriage, with the Killi of their husbands. As the Andi (ceremonial) form of marriage is becoming difficult owing to the prevailing rate of Gonom, and in many cases, is being replaced by mating or Apartipi (capture), and Rajikhusi (mutual consent) forms, the wife has to be formally admitted to the society by a ceremonial feast. There are many couples in Ho villages who have never contributed to any tribal feasts or shared in any ceremonial gathering to solemnise their partnership, and their social disqualifications have not been removed on that account. In those cases of Apartipi and Rajikhusi where the parents of the girl demand and are satisfied with Gonom, the public transfer of cattle, and of money, constitute the right to identification of the wife with the family and Killi. In cases of Anader (intrusion) and in those cases of Apartipi and Rajikhusi where no such transaction takes place, tribal feasts constitute an indispensable preliminary to patrilocal residence within the village. So long as a

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bride is not formally admitted to the Killi, she has certain disabilities with regard to the family, the Killi, or the village. The family Ading is the most sacred enclosure within the hut, and a woman must be formally admitted to the family, and the Killi, before she is allowed to enter it, and perform the daily rites traditionally prescribed. The fear of ancestral spirits becoming enraged at irregularities of this nature and causing harm or mishap to the members concerned make it necessary for the bride to be formally admitted to the family. The festivals of the Hos are private as well as communal. There is the communal worship of the Dessauli and Singbonga, by the village Deuri, and also worship done by the families themselves. It is at such periods that the wife has to be formally admitted before she can take part in the rites.

So far as the family Ading is concerned, in cases of Anader or Apartipi, if the bride is not a Kajomesin (out-caste), a ceremonial offering of a cock to Singbonga by the bridegroom, or his parents, leads to formal admittance of the bride to the family. In cases where the bride is a Kajomesin, the Ading is tabooed to her, and it is the husband who has to perform the rites connected with it. Thus, Renga of Kotgarh village is living with a Kajomesin wife, and though Renga is on very intimate terms with his wife and children, his wife occupies a separate hut, and the family Ading attached to the main house is looked after by Renga himself. When Renga is away from the village, his paternal aunt (i.e. father's brother's wife), looks after the daily ministrations to the family ancestors, while his wife and children have to supply what is necessary for the performance of the customary rites.

When the Maghe, or Baha festivals come round, and the whole Killi or the entire village participates in the ceremonial feasting and worship, a bride, who has not been formally admitted to the society, may be so admitted if the particular family offers a sacrifice to the village Dessauli, and contributes Illi and rice towards a communal feast. No particular quota is insisted on by the Killi and the attitude in such cases, is rather sympathetic than prejudiced. It is only when one of the parties is a Kajomesin that special rules are devised by the punch, but each case is decided on its own merits, and no rigid rules exist as to procedure among the Hos.

So long as the bride does not take part in public festivals of the Killi, or of the village, and does not undertake to minister to the ancestral spirits in the Ading, a Ho can marry and live with a Kajomesin wife. Bamra lives with a Kajomesin girl, Subhani in Konslaposi, in the Bantra Pir. The latter is not allowed to cook food in the family Ading, and has her separate hut, where she cooks and lives with her children. Subhani, however, has no

tribal rights, and is an out-caste. During the Maghe festival last year, Bamra offered a cock to Singbonga before he was allowed to participate in the village worship. Gangaram, Manki of Bantra Pir, proposed that Bamra's wife, Subhani, should be admitted to the society, as otherwise his children were being put to great difficulties. A few elders of the village supported this proposal, as Bamra is an indispensable labourer; he is very skilful in the construction of houses, and he has to get up on the roof of every house for repairs, and however he may avoid his wife, he cannot escape pollution. The members of Bamra's Killi unanimously opposed his wife's admission to the Killi, and Subhani has not therefore been admitted. It is true that Subhani moves more freely to-day than she used to do before, and it is hoped that in a few years, the disabilities will gradually disappear.

Thus we find, when a village contains more than one Killi, the authority of the village in social affairs is subordinated to that of the Killi concerned, and in the case of any important issue affecting the interests of the latter, the elders of the Killi have the last word. It is also certain that in economic activities when the entire village is involved, the authority of the village elders is supreme and absolute. There is no clash of interests between the village and the Killi, when the entire village is inhabited by one Killi, with a sprinkling of families belonging to other Killis, who do not possess an efficient organization among themselves. But in those villages of the multi-Killi type, as for example, Kotgarh, Gundipoa, Hatgamaria, Machgaon, and Konslaposi, such clashes as occur have resulted in the weakening of the authority of the Killi. As an offence against the Killi is not usually a general one, and even if the members shun an individual family, the latter may associate with the families belonging to other Killis. In some villages, where the Munda and the Manki happen to wield sufficient influence, offences against the Killi, even when there are more Killis than one, are dealt with severely, and in such cases clashes of interests and confusion of control of this kind, rarely occur.

## CHAPTER NINE

### FAMILY AND GROUP SOLIDARITY

Though the family as a segregated unit existed in earlier days, and was not lost entirely in the Killi, nevertheless it was not a self-contained unit. The interests of the family found their fulfilment in the larger interests of the Killi. In spite of this, we know that there is a division of function between the family consisting of husband, wife and immature children, and the wider family consisting of a larger group of persons, or the entire Killi. Production of food is still a corporate responsibility of the extended family but after food is distributed among the individual families, it is the function of the latter to see that the food is economically used. The children belong to the family but their education and training are matters which must be decided by the wider family group or the Killi. An individual may violate an established usage or taboo, but the wider family group has to account for it, and it sees to the compliance of the member concerned with the punishment meted out by the Killi punch. Illness in the family is primarily a private matter, but the wider family group, or the Killi, has the right to take any action necessary to prevent a recurrence of the same. The worship of gods and spirits, is done on a communal basis, as for example, when the entire Killi, or the entire Hatu, performs sacrifices and observes feasts and festivals, but the individual family has its own obligation in the matter, and after the communal worship by the Hatu or the Killi, to which each individual family has to contribute in cash and kind, every family has to perform its own worship in the family Ading. Again, most of the relations existing between the family and the Killi, are based on the principle of reciprocity and a family receives assistance in proportion to that which he renders to others in times of need. Marriage, death and festivals among the Hos are apparently communal affairs, as the rites and ceremonies connected with them, are performed by the Killi or the entire Hatu. When the Killi kinship was stronger than it is to-day, there was a common Jangtopa (the annual ceremony of the dead) for the whole village, and each villager had to contribute his quota to the expenses of this communal performance. To-day the annual ceremony has been replaced by individual celebrations after each death in the village, but the expenses of the ceremony are still met by subscription, and the same quota system

continues to-day. The reciprocity of obligations is more finely developed in case of marriage, where the bride-price is also paid by the entire village, not to mention the expenses of feasts and festivities in connection with marriage. As the Killi kinship is overshadowed in many villages by a new alignment of kinship between families united by marriage, the contribution of the different families related by marriage has become more important than that of the Killi, though the same principle of mutuality of obligations governs the co-operative pool. In those villages where the dormitory still stands as an institution for the education and training of tribal youth, it is the custom to send the children as soon as they attain a certain age to the village dormitory, the boys to the bachelor's hut, and the girls to the hut for unmarried girls. In villages which do not possess a girls' hut, the girls are distributed between the widows of the village, who have huts to spare. The bachelors' hut is in charge of a captain, while the hut for girls, if any, is in charge of an elderly duenna, who is expected to superintend the morals of her charges. The children get their meals in their parents' house, but sleep in these dormitories. The maintenance of the dormitory house is the concern of the families, and thus each family has to contribute something towards the expenses of this tribal institution.

Although the Hos live in families, sometimes one man living with his wife and children, and sometimes a group of brothers or agnates sharing the same house, and participating in common economic interests, the basis of social organisation is the Killi or sept. The Killi partakes of the nature of a clan, and is the same as the father sib of the American anthropologists. All the members of a Killi are united together by a bond of kinship, and marriage within the Killi is prohibited. The members of one generation behave towards one another as brothers and sisters, while all men who are of the same generation as one's father are addressed as Gungu (father's brother), and respected as such. As residence is patrilocal, the wife comes to live with her husband and his people, and she identifies herself with the latter's Killi. In all activities of an economic order, the interests of the Killi are fundamental, and those of the family are subordinated to that of the former. The members of the Killi must conform to the code of behaviour customary to it, and in case of any breach of this code, they forfeit the right to protection by the Killi. In many villages of the uni-Killi type, the interests of the Killi coincide with those of the village, so that disaffiliation from the Killi leads to alienation from the village as well.

Though the Hatu and the Killi may be identical in many cases, yet there is a difference between the two. The Killi is primarily a social unit,

while the Hatu is a political unit. The Hatu is presided over by a headman or Munda, while the Killi has its authority vested in its elders. The Munda is responsible to the Manki who is the divisional headman, as also to the administration of which he is a functionary, while the Killi punch is responsible to the Killi itself. The former is nominated by the Government from among the original or Khuntkatti families, but the latter is elected by the people.

A Ho, therefore, recognises three kinds of kinship or relationship. First, he is a member of a family and he has his rights and duties as such. Secondly, he is a member of the Killi, and is bound by its rules. Thirdly, he is a member of the Hatu which carries with it certain privileges and obligations. We have seen in the previous chapter how in some Hatu of the multi-Killi type, there is a clash of interests possible, and how this clash leads to a confusion of ideals. Such troubles as may occur from time to time are the direct outcome of growth of a sense of competition among the different units of the village, engendered perhaps by cultural contact and a greater knowledge of their immediate economic possibilities. The chances of friction, however, are reduced to a minimum by a closer co-operation between the authorities of the Hatu and the Killi, and in all cases of breach of the customary rules of conduct, the village headman is assisted by the elders of the Killi.

To an outsider a Ho village appears to be a social, as well as a political unit. The land is at the disposal of the village headman, and the rent is payable to the latter. The village forest is supervised by the Munda, with the assistance of his Dakuas or bailiffs. The Munda is responsible for any crime within his jurisdiction; he possesses the power of a head constable and exercises it. In cases of epidemics in the village, he organises vigilance parties, and supervises the arrangement for warding off the epidemic or transferring it to other areas. He is appealed to in all secular cases in the village. With the assistance of the elders of the Killi he decides the date of festivals. He attends the marriage parleys, and advises the villagers about their duties and responsibilities. He is also the trusted patron of the youth organisation of the village. His house in many villages shelters the dormitory, where an independent house does not exist to accommodate it. Besides this, he has his political and administrative duties. So the village is normally the most important institution to which the Hos are required to owe allegiance, and yet it is not the first and foremost obligation of the Hos. The Killi is often more exacting than the village, and in matters of religion, and social relationship, a Ho is extremely loyal and faithful to his Killi ideals.

**The Killi  
and the  
Hatu**

**The Hatu  
and the  
Munda**

The emotional bonds of childhood with the members of the family, depend largely on the share the latter take in the protection, as well as in the control of the nutritional process. This, among the Hos, is inseparable

**Family and Killi** from the idea of the regular worship of clan ancestors which are sheltered in the Ading. Thus with the dawn of intelligence, the child comes in touch with an institution which

exercises a profound influence on his mind. The segregation of the Killis into Tolas brings about a closer tie between the children of the same Tola, and therefore of the same Killi. Before they come to share the rights and duties of membership of the Hatu, (which they do at an advanced age, usually after they marry), and start a plot of their own, their association is mainly with the members of their Killi, whom they know as father and father's brother, brothers and sisters. The prohibition of marriage within the Killi, and the customary method of obtaining wives from without, help them to realise the nature of kinship between the members of the Killi. Further, the ceremonial propitiation of the Dessauli by the Killi, and the worship of the Oa Bongas on such occasions, simultaneously with the elaborate ceremonies performed by the entire village, explain the interrelation of these two institutions. The names of children are always names of members of the Killi, living or dead, and there is a continuity in the process of selecting names. The terms for brother and sister apply also to the father's brother's children or those of his Killi mates, though terms for father and mother denote only these persons. Usually the village is a larger unit than the Killi, and the hunter, or the fisherman, distributes his surplus catch, as a rule, among the families composing the Killi, and not to the entire village. The members of Killi also follow many industrial pursuits together. The propagation and collection of lac are usually done by members of a Killi working together. The breeding of Tusser is done by batches of people who in most cases belong to the same Killi, and not by individual members; the building of houses, constructing of dams and channels for irrigation purposes, ploughing, sowing, weeding and harvesting are carried out by the Killi working as a corporate body. Thus there arises a bond of association between the members of the Killi, which is hardly equalled by that existing among the members of the Hatu, although from the point of larger interests, the Hatu should be the dominant group. In fact, the precise relationship between the Killi and the Hatu depends on the relative size of each, the degree of economic interdependence within the village, the nature of the political control exercised by the village Munda, as well as the composition of the population within the local area.

In some villages, adjustment between members of different Killis is now a matter of choice, and common economic participation in the larger

interests of the Hatu, is attended by bickerings and friction between two or more Killis. The fact of living in the same area is not always enough to sink the animosity arising out of traditional feuds or to reduce the social distance between constituent Killis, and it is in such cases that the authority and prerogative of the village chiefs are constantly exercised to effect the normal working of the social machinery. To-day the peaceful life of the interior has been stirred by the cultural waves from other parts. The seasonal emigrations of labour outside Kolhan, and the flow of labour from other parts to the mining and industrial centres in Kolhan, have shaken the stability of primitive social organisation. The lure of urban centres, and the counsel of litigants and touts, have encouraged disaffection against the local authorities. The disintegration in social and religious beliefs and customs, has reduced to some extent the importance of joint worship, and ceremonial feasts and festivals. The numerical increase among the Hos and the consequent lowering of the standard of living have introduced a keen sense of rivalry and competition within the village, while the reduction of the number of traditional occupations, due to a change in the economic environment and the absence of others which could well replace these, have led to a breakdown of the co-operative machinery which hitherto had afforded the key to their social stability. The kinship ties which we have described in detail above, have, therefore, all undergone modification.

To-day, the family has become the dominant element of their social organisation. This does not mean that the institution of the individual family did not exist among the Hos before, or that the social bond created by the common interest of the parents in one another and in children, as well as their economic partnership was loose in earlier days. It only means that the interests of the family are regarded to-day as of greater importance than that of the Hatu, or of the Killi. As competition replaces custom as the dominant economic motive of a society, rivalry, jealousy and suspicion between the members of the group are inevitable, and a reorientation of social life on the basis of self, rather than the group, disturbs the form and destroys the function of social organisation. Thus a change in outlook is widely manifest in Kolhan, and the phenomenal social solidarity of the Hos, mentioned by the early ethnographers, shows signs of weakness. Yet the legacy of their Killi, or clan discipline and social cohesion, has not disappeared. A Ho family may live independently, it may be a definitely segregated unit, it may constitute a unit with husband, wife and immature children, apart from the remainder of the community, but the land is owned and cultivated jointly by a group of brothers or agnates, the rent is paid by the head of the family, who is the oldest male member living, the family property other than land consisting of cattle, money and

movable possessions, is held in common, and even the family ancestors may be worshipped under the same roof. An example of this family grouping may be cited here. Lachman of Konslaposi has three sons and two daughters. Tupra, Barakuar and Disu are his three sons. Tupra has three sons and three daughters. Barakuar has three sons and one daughter. Disu has only one son. There are three houses in the family where Lachman with his wife, three sons and their wives and children live. The daughters have all been married. Lachman and the three sons cook their food separately. Disu shares the same house as his father, and his wife cooks for Lachman. The other brothers live in separate houses. The Ading of the family is in Lachman's house, and all dishes prepared by the different families are offered in this Ading before they are taken by the members concerned. Except this and the possession of the family property by Lachman, each family is independent of the other.

This makes the Ho family of to-day resemble the joint family we find among the high caste Hindus. It is held by some that the social formation, on such lines, in Kolhan is due to cultural contact with the Hindus, and is thus a borrowed trait. Joint family connotes joint food, which, however, naturally is absent in this case. But this system of family organisation may be the natural consequence of a change from the stage of direct appropriation of food to a stage characterised by permanent agricultural life with rice as the staple grain. Rice cultivation, as the principal agricultural occupation of the Hos, requires permanent corporate activities to ensure stable supply from the tillage of land so that the idea of group association for economic purposes, such as exists among the Hos, was perhaps a necessary condition of the change from nomadism to settled agricultural life.

Again, the earlier methods of capturing wives from neighbouring Killis and the consequent feeling of animosity between warring neighbours are things of the past. The absence of communications and the fear of importing the magic of other Killis into the village, no longer exist in Kolhan to the same extent. Women who could hardly come back to their own village after they were married to other villages, do come periodically to live with their parents. Family life has evidently become more complex to-day than it was before. At the same time, a new alignment of kinship which we may call the 'extended family' to avoid confusion with the 'Hindu joint family,' has become possible between families, rather than between Killis. This has been possible because the Killi has become a very large group by multiplication, and its influence on the individual family has consequently weakened.

## CHAPTER TEN

### MATERNITY AND MOTHERHOOD

We know very little about the rites and customs of childbirth among the Hos, or of any pregnancy rites, or the nature and paraphernalia of the lying-in-room. We are told by Col. Tickell that the husband and wife remain in the house, and the children are sent away with provisions. In case of violent pain recourse is made to divination, and sacrifice of a cock, a goat or a sheep is made. Col. Dalton also mentions the cooking of food by the husband, and in the case of difficult parturition, the appeasement of the malignant spirit by sacrifices. The fact that the husband has to cook food shows the complete segregation of the family. It is not only during childbirth that the Ho husband has to cook food but also during any illness of his wife. As the Hos used to possess a single hut which accommodated the man, his wife and immature children, the same room had to be converted into a lying-in-room, with the result that the children had to be sent to other houses. In those villages where there was the dormitory house, there was no difficulty in housing them, but otherwise, it was the customary duty of the man's brother or his nephews to keep them.

Maternity or motherhood is much respected by the Hos, and the expectant mother receives perfectly adequate attention from the members of the Killi and the Hatu. The Hos watch with interest the gradual development of motherhood. They assume a responsibility for the safety of the woman in hope and the woman as mother. The sympathy displayed and help rendered by the women of the village to the new mother and her family give an idea of the mutual relationship between the members of the kinship group. As soon as information spreads that a particular woman is pregnant, the villagers exercise a secret invigilation seldom noticed by her. When she stirs out of the house or goes to the forest unaccompanied to collect fruits and roots or to gather fuel for cooking, she is watched from a distance. The husband and other members of the family give all attention to the woman; all her needs are promptly attended to and all her desires are satisfied. They will undergo any amount of personal inconvenience to render her every possible comfort.

When the pangs of childbirth are coming on, the Ho husband procures some widow as midwife to whom he has to pay a nominal fee. A midwife

is not essential now as female relations of the husband undertake to help the family in need.

As the Hos observe Bisi or pollution for eight days, the husband has to cook food in one corner of the lying-in-room. The Ading being also the kitchen, is tabooed during this period. The preparation of this room or of

**Pollution** the hut which is specially constructed for this purpose (a new custom which is becoming general in Kolhan; the higher classes possessed more than one house so that segregation of the mother was possible; the poorer families find it convenient to have a temporary hut to accommodate the mother and her child while the children may remain in the house) is made by the husband a few weeks before it is expected to be occupied. The Hos use wooden Parkum in their sleeping rooms but in the confinement room, the floor is used as bed and is covered with Syoo or Doomboo grass or hay which they renew every day or as often as is required. The other half of the floor is kept for a burning fire which is the most useful requisite of this room. The walls of the room which are usually made of thatch plastered over with mud, with bamboo posts at regular intervals to support them, are decorated with a number of tools, weapons and cowries. The last are imbedded in a lump of earth or cow-dung and earth made into a paste and placed against the wall. Weapons such as Sar and Asar (bow and arrow), Kape (battle axe), Roompa (trident), Ganaree (small net), a few nails, and torn and worn out leather, are hung up against the walls inside, while outside the hut, the walls are covered with thorny bushes and Sontas made of branches of Hessa Daru (Pipul). Thus the burning fire, the iron tools, the thorny bushes, the magically seasoned Sontas or sticks, are meant to protect the woman and her child from the evil eye, and the evil spirits; and the cowries, the Ganaree and the branches of the Pipul tree are fertility emblems.

The elaborate preparation of the confinement room, the tools and weapons that are included in it, the decoration within, and the sacrifices that are performed by the husband before the wife enters the room, are extremely significant as they ensure safety to the mother and the expected child. It does not mean that child mortality is non-existent or rare, but the Hos believe that the human power is limited, and that in spite of one's best efforts, accidents do happen, and will happen. It is the inadequacy of their methods to cope with the mischiefs of a hostile group of Bongas that explains the cases of child mortality, and though knowledge of such agents has increased, the methods invented to deal with them are still archaic. There has developed a sort of distrust of the efficacy of their methods, and a loss of faith in their customary expedients. Unfortunately, medical aid rendered in the important villages of Kolhan, in hospitals and charitable

dispensaries, has not been sufficiently convincing, as the cases that come to the hospitals are often very bad ones, or the medical officer in small centres is not equipped with the necessary apparatus. A single case discharged from the hospital without adequate relief, goes far to strengthen their misgivings about the efficacy of the new system. Again, cases of cure are not believed to be due entirely to the treatment given to the patient in the hospital, because tribal prescriptions have not been totally neglected by the members of the family concerned.

Three kinds of irregular labour are noticed among the Hos. (1) Cases of abortion ; (2) cases of early pain and consequent delivery ; (3) cases of severe pains attended with spasm in ordinary labour cases. The chances of life for the child in all these cases are meagre.

#### **Irregular Labour**

Premarital intimacy makes it necessary to take recourse to abortion, and the Ho women know how to effect it. Girls with such misadventures are usually liable to such troubles, and the only remedy the Hos prescribe is to wear a charmed amulet designed by the village Deonra or by some old woman who is reputed to have received the recipe in some mysterious way. In some cases, the remedy has proved successful, and the children of such women are subjected to wearing similar amulets till they marry. The secret of these amulets may lie in a number of restrictions on the movements of the women concerned, which accompany the use of such charms. The second type of cases is not very frequent, and the Hos believe that a little attention by the husband and the observance of certain prescribed rules are sufficient to reduce their incidence. It must be noted in this connection, that a Ho woman, unlike her sister among the Dikus, enjoys almost unfettered freedom of movement and work, and though the villagers give particular attention to women in hope, careless disregard of social rules meant for their protection leads to mishaps. Unless a Ho woman is in a state of well advanced pregnancy, she hardly restricts her movements and she walks up and down the village, carries loads from the forests or pots of water from the village Bandh or river, and eats wild berries and roots without the slightest scruple. The village elders know it, and when such cases occur, the husband or the eldest male or female member of the family is indirectly reprimanded. The prescription consists in the sacrifice of a red fowl, and the brewing of a pot of rice-beer, which are offered to Churing-bonga or any other Bonga the Deonra may suggest. In both these cases, the remedies are often ineffective, and though the Deuri and the Deonra may chant their powerful hymns and incantations and offer sacrifices to the Bongas concerned, the safety of the child is difficult to ensure. The Hos believe that such cases of premature labour do not lead to any fatal consequence to the mother ; for the delivery of the child, whether

alive or still-born effects a miraculous escape for the mother. If the child remained in the womb till the full period it would cost the mother's life. There may be some obstetric truth in this belief.

The danger comes most in cases of timely pains, and the Hos are extremely afraid of such cases. Various methods are tried by the Hos to help the mother in her crisis. When the pain becomes intense, some female relation of the former brings a metal plate, or Thali, and in the presence of the woman draws a figure of human shape on the plate, the effect of which is believed to be smooth and speedy delivery without any injury to the child, or its mother. When the woman is in an advanced stage, a small piece of Biskanda (a medicine for the relief of pains) is tied round her waist, which has the effect of keeping down pain or discomfort during parturition. When all attempts fail and the woman is in a state of acute agony, the Deonra is summoned in the courtyard, and he cites weird mantrams, and moves in slow and solemn paces round the hut. The carcass of the sacrificed fowl killed by the Deonra is waived over the body of the woman and then thrown into the neighbouring river.

Pregnancy rites consist in certain rules which the mother has to observe, and certain practices from which she has to abstain. The rites are few, no doubt, but the restrictions are many. The Ho women do not strictly conform to these tribal prescriptions, and though the restrictions

#### **Pregnancy Rites**

may be implicitly obeyed in the case of first pregnancy, they have little hold on women who have successfully tided over the first experience. As soon as the first symptoms of pregnancy are noticed, the family sets apart a red or grey fowl, to be sacrificed to the Churing Bonga (a mischievous spirit believed to cause trouble to pregnant women), just as the Mundas would offer sacrifice to the Gara-bonga (who is believed to watch over females in their delicate state and preside over childbirth). The Mundas offer sacrifices to a benevolent spirit, but the Hos do it to a malevolent one. From this time on, until the child toddles about or until it is weaned, the woman is not allowed to take frequent baths. She does not enter the family Sasan. She does not stand on the Sasan-diri. She does not go alone to the tank to fetch water. She does not stir out of the hut after dusk unattended. She does not pass under any string or rope and is not allowed to brew Illi. She is not allowed to cook and offer food to the family ancestors in the Ading. She cannot touch a Bunassee or fishing hook or a Mahajal (i.e. a kind of fishing net). She cannot eat the Met (eyes) or Alang (tongue) of fish. She cannot eat Bootie (navel), Hatang (brains), or Joroye Lye (entrails) of animals. She cannot eat Beer Seem (jungle fowl) or Billi (eggs) of birds or fish. She abstains from dances and sexual intercourse. She cannot use red ochre for painting or decoration and she does not tread on

the feet of others, superior or inferior to her. She does not kill insects, and even avoids them. She does not pass under Neem and Jojo trees, and does not cook with the fuel of the Oolee tree (mango).

In some cases, it is now possible for the woman to leave the village of her husband and go back to that of her parents as soon as the symptoms of pregnancy are known. This is important, as it allows the girl to fulfil certain

**Casual  
Migration  
and its  
Effect**

obligations she owes to the ancestors of her own parents. When a child is born after a long interval after marriage, or after a few cases of still-born children, the parents promise a sacrifice to ancestral spirits when the son or the daughter is expecting his or her child. In the case of the sons, patrilocal residence makes such sacrifice possible, but in the case of the daughter, the parents have to do it in her name, although she is living in a different village. But promises are better fulfilled by the person concerned, so that the girl in the parents' house, can personally perform or direct the sacrifice. The sacrifice of course takes the form of a fowl or a pig, usually the former, which is killed by the Deuri and dedicated to the ancestors, and the parts of the bird or the animal, head, liver and tail are boiled together, and eaten by the family after it has been formally offered in the Ading. In case the girl is not allowed to migrate to the village of her parents, which is still the rule, she has to offer the same sacrifice in the name of the ancestral spirits. Very often, however, the sacrificed animal and other offerings are sent to the village of her parents through some servant or messenger.

Rigid adherence to customary usages among the Hos finds its loyal champions among women, and a Ho dares not interfere with customs and folk-rites observed by women. His education and change of outlook may raise some protest in his mind against many unintelligent and apparently futile practices, but he is afraid, lest by his intervention, he should bring some disaster to the family. We find in the lying-in-room and outside many objects and emblems which are of little utility to the mother, or the child, but they are regarded as indispensable, and therefore provided. Juria Purty or Pendrasali, a young Ho student, told me how he tried to interfere in these customary practices in his family, and how he was held responsible for the death of his youngest sister. He was in his home when his mother gave birth to a girl, the youngest of a family of seven children. As an intelligent young man whose outlook has undergone considerable change by association with his teachers and friends of progressive communities, he realised the futility of the superstitious customs and practices observed in his family, and he was determined to end them in his house. He first attempted to convince his parents by telling them how his teachers spoke lightly of their

social institutions, how they were hedged in by useless codes of conduct, and how other societies were progressing in spite of the fact that they did not observe any such elaborate rites and practices, but he could not convert them. His father was heard to say that he should not join his school after the summer recess. But he did join. When he could not persuade his parents of this, he took the law in his own hands. He began to put obstacles in the way of the performance of certain essential rites. The custom of beating the walls of the lying-in-room with Sontas to scare away the evil spirits who are believed to hover round the room, was not observed. Certain rules regarding purification and sacrifices, were not obeyed, and yet the child survived and grew up just as any other healthy one. He considered it a triumph, but at the age of eighteen months, the baby died of bronchial affection, and no one had the slightest doubt that the child died as the result of his acts.

The Hos are very fond of children, and they regard a child as a gift from Sing-bonga, and call it 'Sing-bonga Emetana.' They are not ignorant of the role of the father in procreation. At the same time, they believe in a

**Barrenness** number of traditional stories about the origin of man, of the  
**and its causes** ancestors of the clans, and of spirits fecundating women.

On many occasions I was told of children being born to particular couples by the agency of ancestral spirits, and on replying with similar stories about children being born in the absence of the father for a year or more, they failed to notice or criticise the incongruity of the statements. In cases of difficult parturition, when all known forms of redress fail, the woman is asked to confess whether she has had any dealings with any man other than her husband. If so, it becomes necessary for the safety of the child, as well as of its mother, to offer a sacrifice to the Deesauli in the name of the adulterer. Such cases are fortunately rare, and in the three cases that occurred during my stay in the Kolhan, the women were in their first pregnancy.

While spirits are believed to fecundate married women in the Kolhan, they are also regarded as the cause of barrenness. In the village of Noagaon, three miles from Jorapukur, Ajjan Tamsoi lives with his wife. They have been married for four years and have had no issue. Ajjan and his wife slept in the same room and both dreamt every night that they had sexual intercourse, not with each other, but with strange persons. Ajjan had coitus with a woman who appeared to him every night as soon as he went to bed, and Ajjan's wife had the same experience with another man who used to come to her in her dream. In the mornings they were quite unable to account for this, and though they could not escape nocturnal emissions, their attempts at intercourse were regarded as frustrated through

the influence of spirits. Ajjan and his wife for four years had no physical contact. They appealed to the village Deonra. The latter advised them to offer a number of sacrifices, and for one year they propitiated all the known and unknown Bongas that were suggested by the Deonra. In the end, they were told by the spirits in a dream that they were pleased with the sacrifices and were leaving them. On the morning following this declaration by the spirits, Ajjan and his wife showed signs of possession, and in that state they carried a Petari, a bamboo basket, to a distant place outside the village boundary and left it there. Since then Ajjan and his wife were happy, and had a male child born to them last summer.

Near Putida, a Government agricultural farm, the wife of Markand Deogam who is only 22, dreams that she cohabits with a bearded man every night although she is barren. Whenever Markand desires intercourse with her, he feels himself restrained by a strong man who holds him by the arm and throws him down the Parkum. Markand has been propitiating the spirits, but with little success. The village Deonra said that he was seriously considering this case and was confident that it would be cured in due course. Cases like this occur frequently in Kolhan, and there are certain rules to be observed, and certain sacrifices to be made by the woman concerned, before she can be cured. Women who have had children after marriage do not have such experiences. Disu of Konslaposi has two wives. The first is barren. She is possessed by Churda, an evil spirit, who is supposed to have coitus with her. As no remedy could cure her, Disu does not live with her. Instead, he married her sister, by whom he has children. How far these beliefs and practices are due to a homo-sexual fixation is an interesting and profitable line of enquiry, for the institution of village dormitories definitely fosters homo-sexuality. There is a system of fagging in these dormitories. The smaller boys serve those of larger growth, shampoo their limbs, comb their hair and play the part of girls. The effect of homo-sexual practices is felt long afterwards and barrenness may be a consequence of such post-pubertal indulgence.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### BIRTH AND NAME-GIVING

We have said that the Hos appoint midwives to look after delivery cases. Very often, the eldest female member of the family, and sometimes of the Killi, assist. In a number of cases, the husband and the future mother entered the lying-in-room, and the children were removed to the house of their paternal uncle, or of the maternal uncle, if the latter belonged to the village. Provisions were sent with the children, so that the family which accepted them for the time being had little to lose for this social duty. At the time of first pregnancy, however, some sort of assistance is needed, and is ungrudgingly given by anybody who has some reputation as a midwife. It is also quite common for the husband's mother, and if the woman's mother has no children under weaning age, it is usual for her too, to look after the woman. When the child is born, the mother takes it, while the midwife, or the father, cuts the umbilical cord with the sharp edge of the sheath of the maize plant. Midwives now frequently use a knife held in the fire before use to render it antiseptic.

The body of the new-born child is wiped with a piece of clean linen, and the afterbirth is then cleared by the midwife, or the husband, whoever it may be. The placenta and the cord are not immediately buried but are placed in a new earthen pot, and kept aside for a couple of days. If then the child shows no sign of illness, the pot is removed from the room and buried deep in the courtyard of the house. Special care is taken to see that these remains are not devoured by animals or removed by any malicious person.

Immediately after the birth of the child, the father prepares warm water and the new-born child is washed all over. The midwife then takes some oil in a small metal cup, or in a potsherd, and warms it in the fire, sometimes adding a small portion of garlic. She has to massage the child all over with this warm oil, for this is believed to keep the child free from cold.

On the first day of childbirth, the mother is given lentil soup (Kurti) and the father a few Pulias (leaf-cups) of Illi. The mother is not allowed to eat fish for eight days, as they believe that if she eats fish during this period the child may suffer from worms or insects in the belly. Meat

eating by the mother during this period is tabooed as otherwise she may suffer from puerperal fever attended with diarrhoea. The mother usually remains three days in seclusion, but may sit at the doorstep of the hut to speak with members of the village who come to pay social calls. The father may go out to fetch water from the river, or Bandh, or some female relatives may bring it for him, in which case the water is poured into a vessel kept in front of the confinement room. Cooking is always done by the husband inside the hut, and during the days of pollution the couple are practically confined. The door of the hut is kept bolted from within and except for daily evacuations, they seldom stir out. There are no special rites other than those we have already described. The midwife remains in the house for a couple of nights, and if there are no complications, the woman is left to the care of the husband who sleeps with her. In case the husband is away, some female relatives look after her.

The birth of a child is a happy incident in Ho life, and the news is rapidly circulated all over the village. The elders of the Killi come and congratulate the couple, so do most of the villagers. The father comes out and greets the visitors by saying, 'Sing-bonga Emetana.' The mother from inside the room shouts out if there is any mark on the person of the new-born baby resembling any relative living or dead. The visitors often discuss the troubles that the couple had to undergo, and how they bore them. In case of well-established families, special dances are held, and the villagers are regaled with large quantities of Illi.

The period of Bisi (pollution) varies in Kolhan. Those who have introduced Oriya priests to officiate in their indigenous ceremonies and festivals follow Hindu prescriptions. The rest practise eight days' pollution.

#### **Bisi or Pollution**

On the morning of the eighth day, the child's head is touched with a Deshi razor, and washed in tepid water. It is then allowed to be handled by the members of the Killi. The father also shaves his head and beard, and takes a ceremonial bath with his wife. A pot of Illi is kept ready for the family by the other members of the family, or of the Killi, and the couple offer Illi to all ancestral spirits and Bongas before they themselves partake of it. The rest of it is then distributed among the members of the Killi. Even if the pollution ends on the eighth day, the ceremonial feast which admits the couple to the society does not take place on the eighth day. This depends upon the phase of the moon. If the child is born on the dark half of the month the ceremony must take place on the lighter half, so that, sometimes, the purificatory feast is postponed a fortnight or so. The hut is ceremonially cleansed before the purificatory feast. The walls are painted with yellow

or red paint, and the floor rinsed with cowdung solution. If the hut is a temporary shed erected for the purpose, it is demolished immediately after the mother transfers herself to her own house. All the members of the Killi are treated to a sumptuous feast in which it is usual for the members to contribute in kind. A he-goat is killed and many pots of beer are consumed. Without this feast, the child is not expected to survive, though originally, the feast perhaps was meant to admit the couple to membership of the Killi.

Col. Dalton writes, "At the expiration of eight days, the banished members of the family return, friends are invited to a feast and the child is ceremonially named." Col. Tickell who wrote much earlier has the following: "When the child begins to stand or waddle

**Name-giving** about, the parents think of naming the child." We have seen that the ceremonial purification of the family is not effected after the eighth day. It is true that the partaking of the Illi means a formal admittance to the Killi, but the family still remains aloof for some time, until the Deuri fixes a date for the purificatory ceremony.

The name-giving, therefore, does not take place at the expiration of eight days, nor is it postponed until the child begins to stand or toddle about. The ceremonial naming of the child is an important occasion, though its importance diminishes with the increase in the number of children to the family. It is the Deuri who selects an auspicious date for the naming of the child, and the day is celebrated with feasts and rejoicings. Perhaps Col. Dalton confused the Ho practice with that of the Mundas. The latter perform the name-giving ceremony after the Chati-hulang which is held on the eighth day after childbirth. The Hos do not perform it immediately after the Endachatu, which is the ceremony corresponding to the Chati-hulang. Name-giving among the Hos may be held on the 21st day, or on the 30th day, for the fixing of this date depends on certain definite considerations. The custom of Sakhi, which was very popular in Kolhan in earlier days, has something to do with the naming of the child. It is usual among the Hos, for a person to stand as the namesake or Sakhi of a new-born child, and if any person offers to stand as such, the name-giving is simultaneously performed with the Sakhi ceremony. The Sakhi has therefore to agree to the date. But the Sakhi ceremony is still performed after the name-giving ceremony in many cases, and the former may not take place before the child can toddle about. The principles on which these two ceremonies are based are different. Among the Hos, as well as among the Mundas, the child is usually given the name of a deceased relative, but the Sakhi is a living relation, a villager or a mere friend. The Sakhi becomes a friend of the child because of his friendship with some deceased

member of the family, or of some obligation he owes to the family. If a man wishes to stand as Sakhi to the child, and informs the family concerned, his name, which may also be the name of some deceased relative, is tried in the usual process of lot described below. If it succeeds, he stands as Sakhi. To-day, the Hos do not always name their children after their deceased relations. The selection of names in Kolhan shows an interesting change in their attitude. Names like, Koka, Kande, Reya, Damu, Dulu have given place to Kanu, Durga, Madhusudan, Bikram Singh, Ram and Laksman, while Jingi, Suku, Mani, Budani, have yielded to romantic names such as Phulmani, Suryamani, Chandmani, Taramani, and similar names borrowed from their Hindu neighbours. The names given to-day to Ho children do not reflect any peculiarity of the child, its birth, or its parents. The selection must be made in the usual way, and when it is decided upon, it is sealed by sacrificing a cock to Sing-bonga. The Sakhi custom has also lost its popularity, perhaps for economic reasons. The Sakhi binds himself to help the child in every possible way, in sickness, distress or poverty, and the friendship is strong, and life-long. Such friendship, if it is genuinely offered, entails obligations which are difficult to comply with.

There are a number of customary methods of naming the child in Kolhan. In case the child bears any marks or moles, such as were on the person of a deceased relative, the name of that ancestor is usually given to it. If no such physical similarity is observed, they take to drawing lots. The Deuri attends by invitation as also other members of the Killi. The Ading is swept clean, and the male and female relatives with the couple (parents) sit round an earthen pot full of water. Before the process of drawing lots begins, the Deuri invokes the ancestors of the clan to witness the ceremony, while the oldest male members pray to the ancestors of the family. Next they drop grains of husked rice into the water, and one of the relatives suggests a name which may or may not be that of an ancestor. At one ceremony attended by me, the name suggested was that of a school master of the local M. V. school. Now, in order to be accepted, the grains must be even in number when thrown in a handful. In this case they were odd, so the name had to be rejected. As each grain of husked rice is dropped into the water, a name is suggested by the relatives present, after which a second grain is thrown; if the second grain touches the first and they both sink to the bottom, the name is selected, if not, the process is repeated, care being taken to remove the second grain every time the attempt proves unsuccessful. While the lot is being drawn some of the relatives take Sonta or sticks magically seasoned during an eclipse, and begin striking them against the Ading in order to scare away any evil influence from the child.

Another method is to take a number of grains in the palm of the hand, and ask somebody to suggest a name. The relatives are asked to say whether the number of grains on the palm is odd or even; if it is even, the name is accepted, if odd, the process is continued. There is yet another way of naming the child. The eldest male member of the house takes four grains of Urid in the palm of the hand, and rubs them till they become soft. The father of the child has to suggest a name, and one of the four grains is dropped in a pan of water placed before him. If the grain of Urid floats on the water, the name is accepted, if it sinks, another name is suggested, and a second grain is dropped, until all the four grains are tried. Should all the four seeds sink, the ceremony is postponed till the next month. In the latter case, sacrifices have to be made to the ancestral spirits to save the child from any harm.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### GROWING UP

Whoever has lived with the Hos for any length of time must have noticed how the women do most of the work while the men sit indoors, or in the courtyard of the village headman smoking Ficcas, and playing with children with earthen balls and wooden sticks, or showing them how to make arrows and to shoot them. We have said that weaning among the Hos takes place at 30 to 36 months, and even after this, occasional suckling is not denied to children. But unlike many tribes, the Ho mother is not constantly associated with her child during the whole period of suckling. As soon as the mother is fit to take part in domestic work, which she usually is after eight to ten days, she shares with her husband the duty of keeping the child. Rarely is she seen walking with the baby strapped to her back, though as soon as she finishes her work she takes over her charge from the father, and hugs it or holds it on her lap. From the time the baby is six months old until it is 2 or 3 years, the child moves from one to another, from mother to father, and from father to elder sisters or brothers if any, to allow the mother to do her house work. When the father is also busy, specially during the agricultural season, or when he goes out of the village, the child may be clumsily carried by its small sister who may be six or seven years old. Often it is put down on the ground under a tree, or the shadow of a house, and the sister may run off to play with other children, only to come rushing back whenever the baby seizes something nearby to put in its mouth. The mother may come occasionally to see how the child is doing, and to suckle her baby during intervals, but most of the time from morning till evening the child is with the father, sister or brother. There is no fixed routine of sleeping, waking and meals for the baby, and the Ho mother times her attention to the child in accordance with the cry of hunger. The sister stills the baby's cry and hunger by sounding a *Dama* or *Nagera*, by singing songs, or by screams and laughter, and often by putting her finger to the mouth of the child, and also by hugging it to her breast just as her mother does. Sometimes, the child becomes so fond of the sister that it refuses to return to its mother, and the latter has to put her nipple to its mouth before it is physically transferred to her. This relationship with the sister grows more and more, and

for the first five years or so, the child becomes her pet. It often happens that the sister wants to get away and join her playmates, and she handles the child in such a way as to make it feel uncomfortable and want to change its position. Mothers are often heard to complain against the rough handling of the sisters and warn them every time not to treat the baby unkindly, yet the child remains most of its waking hours in the company of its sister. In spite of the fact that the Ho mother has little time to spare for the child and as her association with the child is occasioned by its nutritive needs, the children are very affectionately reared, and the father, and small brothers and sisters of the child, perform as tenderly as the mother herself, all the small services it needs. Children sleep on the backs of their small sisters, or on their laps, while the latter sit in company with other girls and listens to stories told by the old women.

As soon as a child has passed three Maghe festivals (that is the usual way of counting years in Kolhan), or when the mother feels she has conceived again, the child is deliberately weaned. There are no weaning rites in Kolhan, but there is a widespread belief among the mothers that when they conceive again, the breast becomes unhealthy to the child. It is not always possible for the mother to induce the child to leave the breast immediately she wants it to, but she has to explain to the child that it is not proper for a big boy of three to be hugged at her breast, or that her milk has turned to poison and must not be taken by him, or she paints the nipple with a coat of Neem paste so that the child leaves it in disgust. Some children of four or five years of age want to be fed from the breast before they go to bed at night, but public disclosure by the mother of such conduct has often achieved success, as children are ashamed of this being known to their playmates. This shows how social disapproval and ridicule play an active part at such a tender age.

The difference between boys and girls becomes more and more pronounced from the fourth year or so. While children seldom put on any clothes before they are seven or eight, girls begin to wear a piece of rag round their loins, earlier than the boys. While the Ho girls and Ho boys in their teens are attractive to look at, Ho children seem positively ugly. The exposure of their bodies to the sun and rain, their constant playing of muddy and dusty games, the hurried meals which they take with particles of food and drink falling and sticking on their bodies, make them look quite disgusting objects at times. But as soon as the boys take to the use of bows and arrows, and walk in batches of four to five, in search of small birds, or follow a peacock from one patch of jungle to another, clapping and shouting, they look smart and becoming. Hours and hours

are spent very happily by their playing popular games, such as Kanju, Kasa, Hota-danda and Tukaodanda. Their temper is extremely mild and agreeable, and quarrels between boys of the same age are infrequent. The smaller boys follow older ones and their fathers at times, while girls keep to the company of their mothers or of older girls of the village. There are

### Popular Games

certain sports which are regarded as boys' sports, and certain others reserved for girls. Some of course are played by all. The girls very often stay at home and help their mothers to collect wood, carry water or follow them to the fields and act as nursemaids to their small brothers and sisters. The boys learn to make bows and arrows, build toy houses, skip with ropes made of sawai grass, learn to play on the drum, Mandol and cymbals. At night when the young men and women of the village dance at the Akhara, smaller boys and girls stand in rows behind the dancers and imitate the steps. They very soon become expert dancers. When they go out with their elders to the fields or to collect Mohua and other jungle produce, they take their Rutu and Banam with them and between the periods of work, they weave garlands of flowers, put them round their head and neck, and play the flute like the traditional cowherd of Hindu epics. The boys watch their parents, light a fire and roast meat in small Pulias or leaf-cups, and when they shoot birds or trap them, they also light a fire and spit them on long sticks and smoke them and eat them on the spot. Toy musical instruments are rare, the boys have always access to the tribal store after they are brought out by some members and placed in the Akhara. Before the commencement of the dance and after the completion of a round, smaller boys practise the drums, and sound the Birdirings. On festive occasions, when the villagers dance day and night, the boys continue to play these instruments whenever the chance is offered them during intervals, with ceaseless energy.

All Ho boys and girls know how to swim. They start in shallow beds of rivers when their mothers come to fetch water, and during the rainy season when water stagnates in small hollows, or depressions, on the surface of the land, or in Talaos, they are taken by their parents and taught to swim. When the fishing season comes, and the villagers organise fishing parties, the children are allowed to accompany them with small nets and receptacles for the fish, and also with a rod and hook. One method of fishing popular among children is for two boys or girls to take a piece of linen and stand against each other, and with one end of the linen above the surface of water, they close up the water by the other end dipped into it and catch small fish. At the age of seven or eight a Ho boy becomes adept in fishing, bird-catching and swimming, and learns ploughing, sowing and weeding as well as herding. The Ho girls get up

early in the morning, sweeps the yard in front of the house, keeps her small brother or sister while her mother rinses the floor of the house, cleanses the utensils, fetches water, and distributes food to the family. Hunting as an occupation no longer exists in Kolhan, so that there is no organised attempt on the part of Ho society to teach it to the boys.

The rules of etiquette are taught to the children by the parents, and on many occasions I have heard a brother complaining about his sister or a sister about her brother, that they have not complied with the rules of decorum. Among other rules, a small child is taught to obey a member of a Killi, to listen to his advice or warning, he learns how to bow to a person who is older than himself, or to massage his elders if he is asked to. He is also told to share his food with his brothers and sisters, and to distribute it to others if there is a surplus. He is taught to show respect to the village Munda and to all the elder members of the village, male or female. He learns also to honour the guest of the family or of the Killi, to look to their comforts, to refrain from annoying them, or inconveniencing them in any way. A mother may be seen hugging her son, and pressing him to her breast and saying aloud, "Renga has done this, my son will never do it, my son will be obedient, my son will be honest, obliging and capable, will be blessed by Singbonga, no harm will ever touch him, no illness will overtake him, no man will spite him, no sin will touch him."

There is to-day no initiation ceremony for boys or girls in Kolhan, only marriage paves the way to social status. Most of the villages do not possess the dormitory house, which even to-day affords a training ground for the boys of the Oraon villages. In those villages where a common house for the boys of the village exists, there is little organisation amongst the inmates, and it is only a sleeping room for those who do not find adequate accommodation in their own houses. Even if there is no dormitory house in a village, boys may, and actually do, sleep together in batches of ten or more in different houses within the village, and there arises a bond of friendship between those who share the same house at night. The elders of the village will tell you where the boys of the village are to be found, and in all the activities of an economic order, they are found to associate together, and act like a corporate body. Each of these groups has a leader who is not elected, but who possesses a personality and a capacity for leadership, who selects his followers and directs and controls his comrades for diverse purposes. As soon as a boy is eight to ten years old, and if he has not already afforded proof of being mischievous and wicked, the leader of a group sends a message to him to

come and join them. Unless he has already decided to join some other group, he is given the opportunity of sharing the company of that group for a few days, after which he may leave it or affiliate himself to it permanently. It is not always true that every village must have a number of such groups. There may be only one such, even if the members are distributed among different houses. It depends entirely on the personality and the tact of the leader, two qualities which may not go together. In those villages where we have a multiple grouping, feuds and hostilities are not unknown between different groups, and the intervention of the village headman and the elders is often required to soften such antagonism. Yet, this is probably a healthy sign of life so long as such grouping is not based on the principle of classes, in which case, friendly relations between rival groups become impossible. But in villages with two or more Killis of equal strength, there is either no such grouping or there is segregation of boys of the same Killi. It is in such villages, that strained relations exist between the youngmen which in later years take definite shapes, and may end in criminal offences.

Although Ho boys learn most of their tribal occupations when young, they are not required to toil hard for their bread and from the age of ten to the time when they perform the Bapala ceremony (betrothal), their life is very easy and comfortable. So long as the parents are alive, they do not worry about food, clothing or shelter. It is only when the parents die, that they are brought face to face with realities. There are hundreds of songs in Ho language bewailing the death of parents, and extolling with pride the comforts of an established home with parents catering to the needs of the children, and demanding little of their co-operation for economic needs. The Ho boys and youths care more for Dama, Dumang and Susung (i.e. drums, dances and songs) than for occupations which are expected to assist the family. The watchword of their life is best conveyed in the following song, so popular in Kolhan:—

Rasikana ba somdi,  
 Nen jibon mena reba rasikana kong,  
 Nen jibon mena reba rasikana kong,  
 Kabu nameya somdi,  
 Nelekan rasika do kabu nameya kong,  
 Nelekan rasika do kabu nameya kong,  
 Kabu tarina somdi,  
 Nole hasa leka do kabu tarina kong,  
 Buru daru leka do kabu sagouh kong.

\*       \*       \*       \*

Let us be merry my dear,  
 Be merry as long as this life lasts,  
 We shall not find  
 We shall not find such joy,  
 We shall not live forever my dear.  
 Like the earth we shall not be lasting,  
 Like trees we do not shoot out into new leaves.

The daily routine of a Ho young man, from morning to late night may be summed up in the following sentence, eat, play, eat, play, eat and dance till the stars change their places, and the darkness of the night fades into the twilight of morning. As soon as the red rays

#### **Daily Routine**

of the rising sun reach the tops of the hills and trees, Ho boys and girls leave their beds and attend to a number of daily engagements which they fulfil without grumbling. Tending of cattle is still done by the village Ahir, but in those families which keep their own cattle, the youngmen look after them. They bring the cattle out and goats, if any, and tie them outside the sheds. Then they clean the pigeon cage, and release the fowls from the pen. Next, they retire for evacuations and one by one proceed to the bank of a river or Talao for their morning wash. Here they brush their teeth, wash their hands and feet and come to the village Akhara or the Sasan, where they discuss their daily programme. While the leader plans a scheme for the day, other boys sit in groups, smoke Ficcas, narrate their dreams and tell their experiences, or indulge in riddles. Kande's son (Kokchak village) Durga once told his playmates, how his father who was away for a long time, appeared before him in a dream with a cock in his hand, and how he was afraid of his father. Next morning, however, he learnt that his father did not come. His mother heard the dream and offered a cock to the Dessauli, as she believed that it was a command from her absent husband. Strangely enough, Kande returned to his village within a week.

When the programme is fixed, the meeting is adjourned and all the boys disperse. They go back to their respective homes, eat their meals, and lead the cattle to the venue for the meeting. This is usually at the outskirts of the village or at the boundary of the forest, where there is a tall canopying tree. The cattle graze in the neighbourhood, and the boys keep an eye on them. Here they take to playing games, climbing trees, gathering honey, felling bird's nests, collecting berries, shooting birds and tracking animals in the forest. The girls may follow them to collect wood for fuel, and also participate in some of the mixed games. Thus during the agricultural season, when ploughing is over, and men need not

go to the fields, the women attend to them after they finish their household duties, and boys and girls retire to another part of the village for play and work. The doors of all the houses in the village are bolted from outside, men sit in the house of the village headman or of the Deuri, and the entire village appears deserted. As the sun inclines to the west, first the women come back and resume their work in the house, then the men with the smaller children, and lastly the young men and women from the forest, with the cattle, wood, and flowers and fruits. After they take their meal, which is usually served at 2 or 3 in the afternoon, the young men assemble again at the Akhara, or the Sasan, while women take charge of their young ones, or go out again to gather fuel, or retire to the Akhara to see the children play. The boys and girls play their favourite games while their parents watch them. As the day glides on to the night, the players disappear in the twilight and return to their respective homes. They take their light repast, and as the drums in the Akhara sound the tune of welcome, they come out of their homes, and each gathers his or her friend, and file in pairs to the Akhara. The girls are tastefully decorated with bead necklaces and lovely garlands of flowers round their heads; the tune becomes quicker and livelier, and the gloom of the night is lifted by the crooning of the girls. The drums continue to beat till midnight, the flutes and cymbals keep company till the party gets thinner. When midnight approaches the dancers leave the Akhara, but some enthusiasts still remain till the village Munda or some elderly member of the village appears on the scene and tells them to stop and go to their beds. On all sides of the Akhara there are flat stone slabs, on which men and women past their prime may sit, and mothers put their sleeping babies on pieces of mat, and enjoy the music and the rhythmic dance.

It is at dances and at games that the discipline of the groups we have described above is manifest. Boys and girls who infringe the rules of tribal etiquette, or defy the orders of the seniors, are not allowed to take part. On many occasions, I have seen girls decked with flowers, eager to join in, with eyes swollen and tears rolling down the cheeks standing as spectators in the Akhara. When questioned, with choked voice they replied that they did not feel well or they did not want to, amidst the whispers and smiles of their friends and playmates. In a small village not far from Chaibassa, I presented a few rupees to the captain of the village dormitory, which still exists there, though there is little internal organisation, and less effective control over the young men of the village. A large quantity of Illi was brought by the young men, and at dusk, people began to assemble for the drink and the dance to follow. When the dance commenced, there was a huge uproar, and the songs were getting louder in

#### **Discipline in Dances**

volume as the dancers were being frequently regaled with the drink. Two modest girls, with watery eyes, suddenly addressed me from behind and on turning back, I found them silent and blushing. I asked them what had happened. They did not explain anything but only asked me to request the captain to allow them to participate in the dance. As I did not think that permission was necessary, I asked them to join in which, however, they did not. I called the captain, who was in a joyous mood, and asked him to concede to their request. He suddenly turned grave and looked at the girls. The girls lowered their heads and I could realize the situation. But the girls were permitted to join at my request and I still remember the happy faces I saw then.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### SEX AND MARRIAGE

The Hos consider pairing as essential to fecundity. They recognise the importance and desirability of mating, so much so that they would not like even inanimate things to remain unwed. Just as men and women who are unwed and live singly are regarded by the Hos as socially less effective members of the community, so also the trees, and other natural objects on whose bounties they have to depend so much, become useless unless ceremonially mated. Thus tree marriages, marriages of natural objects such as the sun, the moon and the earth are customary in Kolhan. Every species of plants and creepers has sex. The gods of the Ho pantheon are male and female, and when they make offerings to them, they try to cater to their taste as man and woman. Sing-bonga has his wife Oteborom, and some say, Chando-bonga. The village Dessauli has his consort in Jahira-buru (the spirit of the grove). Before the fields are to be furrowed, the earth (Oteborom) is ceremonially married by the Hos to the sun, or Sing-bonga, and the blossom of the Sal trees indicates the coming of age or puberty of the earth, when marriage means the possibility of reproduction. When they go out fishing, they 'marry' the nets and receptacles for fish and before undertaking a hunting excursion, the spears, bows and arrows are ceremonially wed. The fact of this mating is recognised as fruitful in economic undertakings. When the Sal flowers blossom, the earth appears like a bride decked with garlands of flowers, ready to unite with the resplendent sun from whom she receives all her energy. The part of the sun is played by the Deuri or priest, and his wife plays the role of the earth, and this divine marriage is performed every year before earthly marriages can be arranged. All Ho marriages are celebrated after the divine marriage.

The Hos appear to have regulated their sex life by an alternation of obsession and inhibition. Sex is indirectly inhibited for a considerable period of the year on account of this customary rule of marriage. When the Hos work in the fields during the busy agricultural season, they taboo all sexual intercourse in the house. When they go out hunting or fishing, or for rearing cocoons, they practise strict sexual continence. Intercourse between husband and wife is tabooed for

**Sexual  
continence**

two or three years after the birth of a child. This rule to-day is more often broken than observed, and it is probable that the fall in the number of polygynous marriages in Kolhan is due to the lack of rigidity in the observance of this customary prohibition. Polygyny is still a recognised institution among the Hos, and the number of wives indicates the affluence of the husband. A man is seen to boast of his ancestor who had more wives than one, and when he is asked why he has one wife, his answer is that he cannot afford more. The following table prepared from one village, Kokchak, will give some idea about the popularity of polygyny in Kolhan:—

Number of families.	Number of houses.	More than one wife.
28	1	2
23	2	5
18	3	4
11	More than three	4
80		15

A man usually tries to find a bride outside his village, but failing it, he may seek alliance within the village. As there are many uni-Killi villages, marriage within the village is not possible. Members of a Killi cannot marry among themselves. Any violation of this prohibition is taken as incest, and in earlier days, extreme steps were taken against such an offence. A Ho does not marry outside the tribe as a rule, but there is to-day no legal or social prohibition against his doing so. Those who work in the mining and industrial centres, in or outside Kolhan, contract such alliances, and when they come back to their villages they are not outcasted by the society. Temporary emigrants from Kolhan who leave their land behind, and come at short intervals to work on the land again, enjoy certain privileges which are denied to the permanent residents of the village. The tribal laws and usages in their case are not so exacting as in the case of the latter. The reason given by the elders of the village is that persons who work outside cannot strictly adhere to tribal prescriptions in their place of work, besides the tribal gods have less interest in their welfare. If they violate established usages, they do not endanger the safety of the village, but permanent residents cannot afford to take such risks. The explanation lies perhaps in the fact that such labourers have less respect for social authority, as they can always escape to their places of work.

A man usually marries within the Pir or within a reasonable distance from the village. When a man marries in the Andi form, his children are usually married to the family or Killi of his father-in-law, failing which, some sort of compensation in kind and money is paid to that family. This makes it possible to exchange Gonom between two families united by marriage, and also helps to reduce the amount. When a man dies, his wife lives with the younger brother of the deceased husband as his wife, but there is no ceremony to solemnise the union. This custom to-day is not very much favoured by the Hos; still it is an economic necessity for the widow. A widow does not inherit among the Hos, nor does she go back to her parents. The children, if any, after their marriage do not live with her. The daughters will be married out, and the sons live separately with their wives. The widow, if she remains with a married son, becomes a drudge in the latter's family, and her relations with her daughter-in-law are seldom cordial. When she marries the younger brother of her deceased husband, she can maintain her control over her minor children, until the latter set up separate establishments on marriage. The family property and land are controlled and cultivated by the father's brothers who are the habitual guardians of the children. If a widow becomes the father's brother's wife, the members of the family need not adjust themselves further, for they accord the same respect to the woman in both positions. Formerly when a man married and begat no children within two to three years, he had a customary right to marry his wife's sister without paying further Gonom, but this right is not now admitted. A substantial reduction in Gonom is, however, made by the father-in-law, which makes it still economical for a man to marry his wife's sister. In case of Apartipi union, if the man who has married one sister wishes to marry another, he has to pay both the bride-price for the former, which he had not paid perhaps, and also Gonom for the latter which makes it rather difficult for him. In most cases, the sister is first invited to the house, or brought in the usual Apartipi method, and kept as the second wife. The relations between sisters sharing the same house and the same husband seldom grow difficult according to the unambiguous statements of many individuals who live with two wives, and are said to be far better than those between co-wives who are unrelated. It is a common practice in Kolhan for two or more wives to share the same hut and sleep in together with one man. In some cases, when one of the wives has grown old, she is allowed to live apart with the children. The Hos often marry girls who are much older than themselves, and the difference in age between husband and wife may be considerable. As the wife in such cases ages earlier than the husband, the latter then seeks to marry his wife's sister,

which is not greatly resented by the first wife. Widows are allowed to remarry but they usually marry widowers. In one case, a widow married by the very rare Anader form.

A Ho may marry his mother's sister, mother's brother's daughter, the widow of his deceased maternal uncle, his father's sister's daughter, even his sister's daughter. But marriage with the father's sister's daughter is not much favoured by them, nor that with the sister's daughter. An analysis of marriage relationship between members of one Killi, viz., Laguri, in Konslaposi, shows that all the marriages of the Killi were confined to two Killis only, so that there appeared to be a tri-clan grouping for matrimonial purposes. Thus, Laguri, Simko and Babonga Killis of Bantra and Kotgarh Pirs, form a matrimonial group. In other Killis also, though such grouping is not consistently practised, most of the marriages of a Killi are confined to two or three. There is, however, no bar to marrying outside the group, and there is no customary prohibition that the Ho elders remember.

The rules of Killi exogamy are, however, strictly obeyed, and although cases of breach have increased in recent years, and the punishment prescribed for the offenders has ceased to be deterrent, the horror of the traditional taboo has not disappeared. The village elders are extremely indignant at such breaches of tribal laws, because any offence in the village is believed to be ominous and is regarded as a cause of all natural calamities, or of economic distress, immediate or distant. The village elders still remember and recite the methods that were used to deal with such incest cases, and these were extremely cruel. Packed in a Bandhi, the offending couple were carried to the peak of a neighbouring hill, and were thrown down the slopes of the hillside, till their bones were smashed into atoms. A funeral was observed afterwards by the village to mourn the loss of the departed couple, but their ashes were not interred in the Sasan. The violation of this taboo was a crime as well as a sin. The violated taboo avenged itself, as it were, and the violator was sure to meet with his deserts even if the society did not take cognizance of the fact. In case there was no automatic punishment within a reasonable period, the role of the society in such cases was to find out the criminals and punish them according to the tribal code. Even if the society was not aware of it as the offence might be committed without the knowledge of other people, the violator did not escape. Perhaps in the earlier days, the society had not to initiate any proceedings against the offending couple, as the gravity of the offence itself weighed upon the couple concerned, and they expiated themselves by suicide, or by surrendering to the punch.

Cases of incest to-day are not infrequent in Kolhan, and the following case will explain the attitude of the people and the methods that are being prescribed by the society to meet the offences.

In April, 1925, I accompanied my friend and assistant, Juria Purty of Pendrasali village, to see a friend of his at Dudbilla who was lying ill and had expressed his desire to meet him. The latter used to work in the coal fields of Jharia and was a smart and intelligent young man of 26. When we entered his room, we found him with a very high temperature, surrounded by his mother and other relatives, and the village Deonra. The latter was busy chanting incantations and formulæ to undo the malign influence of some dreaded power he believed to have caused the malady. The young man came home during the Maghe festival, absence from which, without sufficient cause, is regarded as ominous for the family. He intimately knew a girl of his own Killi, but obviously could not marry her. During the Marang Parav day of the Maghe festival, he had danced with this girl for a few hours and retired afterwards to the fields adjoining the village forest. At dead of night, he was discovered in company with the girl at a place which made his guilt clear. His case was duly reported to the village elders. They, however, in accordance with the usual custom in such cases, did not meet immediately afterwards, perhaps to allow the offender sufficient time to expiate his crime. He might leave his house and native village and run back to the coalfields where he usually worked, but he did not. He was overpowered by the gravity of the offence and the majesty of the taboo he had violated, and could not come to any decision how best to atone for his misconduct. His thought was naturally concentrated on the crime, and from that day his health and spirits rapidly declined. Flurriedly he narrated the whole story to us, and towards the end he said, "I have earned my death and I am dying." Two days later we received the news of his death.

In those cases, where the society is called upon to intervene, there are two different methods prescribed, one for the man and another for the woman. The following cases will illustrate this point.

Dasu's son Bamia, of Jetia village, Bantra Pir, was living with his paternal uncle Ramchandra's daughter, Subhani. The Manki of Bantra Pir had to interfere and he decided to marry Subhani to Kareya Babonga of Rengabari, Kotgarh Pir, who was willing to accept her. Subhani was sent to Kareya's village, and this decision was not challenged by Bamia. When Subhani was actually living with Kareya, to whom she was betrothed, Bamia went to Rengabari and fetched Subhani back to his own village. The village punch met again and both Bamia and Subhani were

declared to be Kajomesin. Bamia has, however, been readmitted to the society on payment of a fine of forty rupees and six Meroms or goats for a communal feast, but Subhani remains a Kajomesin. She has been given two bullocks and some land, and is living separately with her children.

Rasika Laguri of Sananda village, committed incest with Oybon Laguri's daughter, Dighli. When the latter was found to be enceinte, the village punch decided to marry Dighli to Maram Simko of Sarbil to avoid the consequence. Rasika had to marry Kande Simko's daughter, Jano Kui, from Baliudi. As Rasika was responsible for the child, he had to pay five rupees, one she-goat and three cocks towards the child's maintenance.

Unkura Laguri of Lampasai (25), had liaison with his own sister Sumi Kui (19). When Sumi conceived she let her friends know that her brother was responsible. Unkura wanted to run away and desert his sister, but Sumi preferred an appeal to the village headman. The matter was brought before the Kolhan superintendent, who appointed a committee consisting of Gangadhar Munda of Lampasai, Gangaram Manki of Bantra Pir, Chandramohan Manki of Suiamba village, Rengra Pir and Sonaram Manki of Baljoi, Kotgarh Pir. The Committee heard the case and decided to fine the parents of the couple fifty rupees. The parents were accused of possessing knowledge of this incest. They knew it but did not care to stop it, nor did they report the matter to the village Munda. The case was decided on the 25th June, 1934, but the fine was not paid until the end of July. The movable property of the parents had to be attached, and the money was recovered by auctioning one buffalo and one bullock. The couple had been permanently ostracised, and their parents have not yet been readmitted to the society. There is every reason to believe that the latter will be accepted by society if they provide a communal feast. In the course of the proceedings, the parents tried to shield their children by explaining the scandal as due to some malignant Bonga, but Sumi Kui insisted on the guilt of her brother. Sumi has, by her timely disclosure and by preferring an appeal to the authorities for protection, softened the attitude of the Killi to her share of the crime, as otherwise, such cases lead to suicide, sooner or later.

In 1930, Dobro Purty was found guilty of incest with his father's step-sister, Madkui. This was discovered when the latter was found to be pregnant. The matter was reported to the village elders, but before the latter could make even a preliminary enquiry, Dobro fled from the village, and since then he has not been heard of. Madkui was then procured abortion. The members of her Killi continued to jeer and despise her, for transgressing the rules of Killi oxogamy, and the girl in desperation committed suicide by hanging herself.

Budhu Simko of Ragutsai had illicit connection with Jonga Kui of Tamsoi Killi of the same village, by whom he had a child. Though they belong to different Killis, they are resident of the same Tola of the village. Tradition has it that both these Killis originated from the same stock, so that the members of the Tola did not approve. Before Budhu could be summoned by the village punch, he severed all connection with Jonga Kui. The latter has now appealed for redress.

Though strong feelings against flagrant breaches of tribal laws exist in Kolhan, and the Ho elders are ready to take prompt actions, the system of punishment has considerably changed. A Kajomesin can, and does obtain admission to the Killi by paying a fine and providing a communal feast. Further, as money has become cheap, the fine has lost much of its deterrent character. Another factor making for a change in these matters is the influence of the educated section among the Hos. Though these count a few dozens only, their influence has constantly been exercised to weaken the hold of the society on matters affecting individual liberty. Social dissensions and ostracism they regard as undermining social solidarity and jeopardising their interests as a political unit. They think that the time has come when their social unity and cohesion should be utilised for their economic welfare, and for furtherance of political rights, and that energy should not be dissipated by petty superstitions and trivial social prescriptions. The organisers of the Ho social reform campaign are insisting on lifting all social bans on Kajomesins, and their systematic propaganda has stirred the social life of the village to a greater political consciousness. The effects of this campaign have not been manifest in any general conformity to their programme, yet it must be admitted that the hold of the village and Killi punch is growing gradually weaker, and in years to come, social offences will not provoke the same condemnation as they do even now. The motive for compliance with customary rules lies in a vague fear of natural calamities, of epidemics and diseases, of failure of crops, and of a general economic crisis. The offence of one is believed to involve the entire Killi or the Hatu, and as such, violation of tribal laws invokes protests and denunciation from the villagers. Therefore, the village punch still insists on exercising its judicious control in social matters to safeguard the interests of the village or the Killi.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### FORMS OF MARRIAGE

There are various ways of securing a wife among the Hos, the principal methods being, (1) Andi, (2) Diku Andi, (3) Apartipi, (4) Rajikhusi, and (5) Anader. In the first two, the ceremonial side is extremely important, and in the rest it is practically absent. The fact of living with a woman in the same house is regarded as sufficient for determining the legitimacy of children born in the house, and Ho society seldom worries itself to find out whether the union of the couple was in accordance with the ceremonial usage, or was merely a voluntary mating. A child born of ceremonial wedlock known as Andi has no better claim to the family property than a child born of union without any ceremonial observance, as long as the parents of the child are known ordinarily to cohabit together. Marriage and mating have consequently the same legal recognition, and the absence of ceremony does not make children illegitimate, or impair their social status. But families who pay Gonom for marrying their sons, and perform marriages according to Andi form command respect in the village. Enquiries about the amount of Gonom paid by different members of a family are eagerly answered by those who have paid it, while others who have not paid it, remain silent. The way in which they remember these deals and the unerring way the figures are quoted for father, grandfather and even great-grandfather, show that it is considered perhaps as a mark of prestige, to remember and recite how they and their forefathers secured their mates, and how much they spent as Gonom. Except such display of family pride it is doubtful whether there exists any difference between children whose parents were married by Andi and those whose parents were not.

To-day, ceremonial marriage, or Andi is becoming less and less general, as it invariably connotes a heavy financial transaction in the form of Gonom which is now, as it has long been, prohibitive. It is not true that people who cannot afford to provide the bride-price take Apartipi or Rajikhusi forms of mating, that would of course be natural, but the recognition of such unions, has encouraged their adoption even by well-to-do families. In the latter case, the Gonom is paid after the union becomes a *fait accompli*. If public opinion be the fundamental force that makes marriage highly desirable, mating in Kolhan, by Apartipi, Rajikhusi and Anader, has also

the sanction of the society, and hence is supported by the selfsame force. Therefore it is possible that mating in Kolhan in the forms we shall describe below may replace the ceremonial marriage or Andi which, as we have said above, is regarded as the natural form of wedlock, and wields certain respect but that has not altered in any way the practical utility of mating as a form of social selection.

The ceremonial marriage in Kolhan has taken two different forms, Andi and Diku Andi. The former is the traditional form, the latter is borrowed from the Hindus. It is only a few well-to-do families who live in important Diku villages who have adopted Hindu rites and ceremonies in

#### **Ceremonial Marriage**

their marriages. Even in such cases, the traditional observances have not been entirely given up, for after the marriage is performed by the Diku form, customary rites and usages associated with Andi are observed. The main features of the Andi form are that the selection of partners is made by the father, or other guardian, a middleman or Dutam is appointed to negotiate between the families desiring the union, and a bride-price has to be paid which must be mutually approved. There is a further condition, which, however, is implicit in it, i.e., the headman of the village and the Killi elders as also the Sakhi, if there be one, must be consulted before the marriage is actually decided upon. This is necessary, as marriage among the Hos is still a communal affair, in the sense that all the villagers should participate in it, and also contribute in kind and money towards the expenses involved. This requires the selection of a date when the villagers are usually free from outside economic pursuits, and when their granaries are full. As we have seen, marriage only takes place during certain periods of the year, during the period when the harvesting is over and before the next sowing operations begin. As marriage is held after puberty, and as girls do not marry before 16 or 17, and boys seldom earlier than 20, and as there are ample opportunities available for the mixing of the sexes in Kolhan, it is desirable that young people of both sexes should have a free hand in the choice of their partners from among members of marriageable Killis. This they have, and from early times this privilege of the young folk has not been denied to them.

When a young man desires to have a girl as his partner whom he may have met in the village Akhara, or in other villages, or in the weekly markets and fairs, he communicates his wishes to his Killi friends, who inform his parents. The latter then engage a Dutam or match-maker to undertake the negotiations and assist in the settlement of terms. Even when the son has made no definite choice, the parents engage the services of a Dutam to choose a girl for their

son. The Dutam first approaches the young man concerned to ascertain whether he has any predilection for any girl. This makes it far more expeditious ; for in such cases, if the girl also has a liking for the boy, the parents on either side come to terms more quickly than when the proposal is between two unknown parties. Though in certain well-to-do families, and in those which have developed a new class consciousness and think it necessary to contract alliances with families of higher social status, thereby perpetuating a sort of class system, the young folk of both sexes are less free to select their partners; yet the final selection lies in their hands, and they can signify their refusal at the time of the ceremonial distribution of Illi, which will be discussed later on. Even if the marriage is desirable from every point of view and all terms settled to mutual satisfaction, it is not certain that marriage will take place, for the ultimate decision lies in the interpretation of the omens which, if unfavourable, will end all negotiations. When the bride's party is invited to discuss terms in the house of the bridegroom, and the bridegroom's party return the visit to make arrangements complete, the omens that they come across on their journey are carefully examined on either side, and if they are of ill portent the negotiations are postponed, or allowed to drop, for no risks can be taken in such important matters. If the omens are good, the marriage is expected to be happy and prosperous, but if unfavourable, there is no knowing how far they may affect the proposed union. In some cases, however, sacrifices are offered to particular spirits to counteract the presaged evils, but if the apprehended dangers are too great to be overlooked, the parties generally decide to call the affair off. This is done by the Dutam who takes a Sal leaf in his hand, mutters a prayer to Sing-bonga, and in the presence of both the parties, tears the leaf into halves. The parties then take leave of each other, and should they desire the alliance in future, negotiations must start afresh.

In the Diku form of marriage, the same processes are gone through as in the Andi form, with the following additional rites. Whereas in the traditional form of marriage the Deuri is required to officiate and offer prayers and sacrifices to Sing-bonga and other less important village and tutelary Bongas, in Diku form, a Brahmin is called in, who brings a Salgram Sila (black fossil ammonite) before which the couple have to promise eternal fidelity and mutual protection. The bridegroom has to move round the bride seven times with a steel knife in his hand, after which he has to paint the forehead of the bride with vermilion, and the latter does the same on the forehead of the bridegroom. The replacement of the indigenous priest by the Oriya Brahmin who lives by begging, or by preaching the worship of Siva and Narayan, has not been complete even in those families who have introduced him to officiate in their

marriage ceremonies, for the essential rites in accordance with tribal prescriptions are still observed by these families simultaneously with the introduced rites. Nor is it a case of a change in beliefs, or the attitude of the Hos to their tribal spirits and their importance in their social life. It is mostly due to a false idea of prestige attaching to the adoption of Hindu prescriptions which make them conscious of their superiority to their tribesmen that has favoured the formation of classes in Kolhan.

As the bride-price is invariably paid by the parents of the bridegroom, the selection of the bride and the amount of Gonom to be paid are matters in which Ho parents are directly concerned. While they are anxious to select a bride for their son, they are extremely reticent about their daughter's marriage. It is against all known canons of etiquette to mention or discuss the prospects of a daughter's marriage among the Hos, to advance proposals without being approached by the other party, to initiate negotiations or to engage a Dutam. A girl may grow into a maiden, and remain a spinster all her life, but her parents or guardian cannot propose her marriage without detriment to family pride and social status. The proposal must come from the other side. This attitude is responsible for permanent celibates of both sexes in Kolhan, and also for the widespread custom of Apartipi and other forms of mating described below. When you ask a Ho father, why he does not marry his daughter, (for after all marriage of a daughter does not entail any expenditure on the father) he

**Difficulties  
in Girls'  
Marriage**

would immediately reply, "I am ready to marry her but where is the proposal?" When you ask a further question, why he does not find a bridegroom, or engage a Dutam to do so, his answer would be a pale and fleeting smile. When the girl in marriage fetches a price, she must be an asset, and one would imagine that when the family property is divided among the heirs, the daughters also will be similarly distributed among them. But this is far from being the case. The unmarried daughters after the death of their father, may live with one or other of the brothers, and a special provision for their maintenance is made while partitioning the holding as well as the moveable property of the father, but the expected bride-price for the girls does not enter into the consideration of the village or Killi punch in deciding the respective shares of the brothers. It is taboo to consider them as property in exchange. Hence when the father dies, the brothers remain as passive as the former in the matter of their sister's marriage. When the brother marries, his wife does not always live happily with her sister-in-law as quarrels and bickerings are frequent which ultimately make the girls elope with young men of their acquaintance, or yield to the wishes of their captors. Many of the Apartipi marriages would not have happened if the girls had been happy

in their homes. When a man finds a woman and drags her to his village with the help of his comrades, she usually yields to her captor, because refusal to live with him means further trouble in the household of her sister-in-law or that of her step-mother. When a girl is captured by some stranger and is taken to the latter's village, it is usual for all the female members of the girl's village to come out armed with sticks and stones, and invade the village of the captor. Whereupon it is the usual practice not to offer any resistance, but to allow them to sack the house of the captor and take anything they want from it. The rescue party is, however, less anxious to recover the unfortunate girl than to assert its traditional rights. The girl who is thus captured feels that her new home may after all prove an escape from the drudgery and hostility of her sister-in-law. At the same time it may mitigate the uncomfortable situation she would be in, if she had to explain matters to her relations when she returned home. A girl captured and taken by a member of a different Killi, and kept as his lawful wife, does not suffer any social stigma. If she is returned or brought back home by the rescue party, or by her parents, she will be an object of ridicule to the village or of gossip among the village women. In 99 cases out of a hundred, a capture means a permanent union, unless divorce dissolves it. There appears to be a further consideration. The custom of rubbing vermilion on the forehead of the captured woman by the captor, (which is also an important feature of the ceremonial marriage), produces perhaps a psychological effect on the mind of the woman concerned. Her submission to her captor and her refusal to accompany the members of the rescue party are partly accounted for by a vague and mysterious implication of this customary usage (Sindur-dan). What seals the marriage contract among the Hos is the painting of vermilion, and when the same is applied by the captor, the difference in the two forms becomes a matter of minor importance inasmuch as the essential rite has been performed.

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*Nilinera chentado, gaonjnera chentado ;*  
 Elder brother's wife's jealousy, step-mother's jealousy ;  
*Sirma rimil doklo lekam goponde,*  
 Upper clouds trembling like you quarrel,  
*Laido laido rengineyngtan, dado dado telangyngtan,*  
 Stomach stomach I am hungry, water water I am thirsty,  
*Nokon kore nili dado namoa?*  
 Where oh! Nili water can be found?  
*Rajabanda rani pukuri dado mena!*  
 King's tank, Queen's tank, water can be found!

These lines describe the jealousy of elder brother's wife and of step-mother. They are so jealous that you have to quarrel with them like the rumbling of clouds. When you complain of hunger and thirst, you are asked to drink from the King's tank or the Queen's. Nili is used for Hili.

Marriage by capture is said to be an institution of predatory life and disappears with settled life. It may or may not be an early practice in human society. Some have taken it as an indispensable stage in the evolution of human marriage, others deny that it is to be at all taken as marriage. Marriage by capture may be due to the scarcity of women which makes it obligatory for a group to seek to supply its marital needs by capture, as among the Naga Khels of Assam. It may also be due to the prohibitive nature of the bride-price, which makes it difficult for a man to marry under ordinary conditions. Among the Hos, it is the result of an excessive bride-price, coupled with a popular social idea that it is improper for parents or guardians to take active steps to marry their daughters off. When economic conditions improve ceremonial marriages become more popular, and when crops fail or agricultural prices become unremunerative, there is an increase in the number of runaway marriages and marriages by capture. In most of the families of Mankis, Mundas and well-to-do cultivators, marriage by capture or by mutual consent which does not require any exchange of gifts, or bride-price, is becoming infrequent. The proportion of Apartipi to Andi is 10 to 90 in well-to-do families, and 70 to 30 in ordinary families. The following table compiled in one village will give some idea of the relative proportion of marriages under the two forms:—

Konslaposi	No. of Marriages.	No. of Andi.	No. of Apartipi and Rajikhusi.
Manki family	32	26	6
Munda family	27	19	8
Average families	56	21	35
	115	66	49

In other words, taking the whole village, 57.4% of the marriages recorded were in accordance with the Andi form, and 42.6% were by Apartipi and Rajikhusi. The proportion of Apartipi in different groups tabulated above is as follows: In the Manki family, 16.6%, in the Munda family, 30%, and in ordinary family 62%. Thus we find Apartipi and Rajikhusi methods of securing wives in Kolhan are more popular with the lower sections of the tribe, while in the higher classes the percentage decreases till Andi becomes the usual form. In many cases of Apartipi, the bride's people can, and often do claim a bride-price after the couple have settled down as man and wife. In such cases, the amount of bride-price is deter-

mined not by the social position of the bride's parents but by the material circumstances of the bridegroom. In some cases discussion of the terms often continues for months and even a year, yet no decision takes place. The bride-price may not be paid in cash or kind immediately after agreement is reached, but it is considered a solemn obligation which the Hos never repudiate.

We find from the table given above that Apartipi is not only practised by the poorer families but many youngmen belonging to well-to-do families take recourse to Apartipi for certain practical reasons. It is not always possible for a man to marry in the family of his choice, for the selection has to be mutual, and the other party to it may not agree to the marriage. A man may wish to marry a girl belonging to a higher class than his own, and her family may not countenance the proposal. Again, he may fall in love with a girl who does not respond to his feelings, and yet he may like to possess her. In all these cases Apartipi affords an easy solution. A girl married by Apartipi does not lose public esteem, nor do her parents suffer in social prestige. On the other hand, the latter may obtain an adequate bride-price if the bridegroom is sufficiently well off.

An example of Apartipi and the circumstances that led to it will be found in the following case. Surya Purty of the village of Karlajori, in Gumra Pir, is an ordinary cultivator. He has a piece of land but he is known to be extremely lazy and his circumstances therefore are not satisfactory. He approached the parents of many girls in his and other villages, but every time that his own house and property were seen by the bride's people, they declined to consider the offer. He proposed to a number of girls in the village, but he was refused. One day he was attracted by a girl who was carrying a load of firewood on her head accompanying a group of women proceeding to Chaibassa. He approached his friends and enlisted their sympathy. When the party was on its way back to Nachrai, Surya with his friends lay in ambush near Baihatu. As soon as the women were within their reach, they fell on them and caught hold of the girl. The women replied with stones and earth, but the men were too strong for them, and forcibly brought the girl to Karlajori, Surya's village. The girl piteously pleaded for her release. She began to weep and cry, but they did not listen to her. The rest of the women ran to their village and informed the male members of what had happened. The girl and Surya were kept in the same room for the night. The girl wept all night, but Surya did not yield. In the morning a crowd of men and women from Nachrai armed with lathies came to demand the girl, but she could not be traced. Then they sat down to discuss the Gonom. The

elders of Surya's Killi agreed to give four heads of cattle and ten rupees, and the girl was approached by some female members who knew where she was. She was asked whether she would live with Surya. At first she was unwilling, but the female members of Surya's Killi persuaded her, and she eventually agreed to stay on. Surya has a daughter and they have been living happily ever since.

Besides Apartipi, there are two more forms of securing wives in Kolhan, viz., Rajikhusi, and Anader. The former is marriage by mutual consent without any ceremony or payment of bride-price, the latter is a form of

**Rajikhusi** intrusion marriage, found among most of the Munda speaking tribes in India. If a young man, and a young woman love each other and decide to marry, and the parents on either side are unwilling to accede to their wishes, the couple may elope and live away from the village till such time as their parents revise their opinion. There is no Gonom paid for such a marriage and no ceremony is required to solemnise their companionship. Mahati Sirka of Tentara village, Thai Pir, had one elder brother. His father wanted to get both of them married. The first was very strong and hardy, but was known to be an idiot, so that no girl could be obtained for him. Mahati was healthy and clever. The father tried to get a wife for Mahati. The bride's people came from Gundipoa to discuss terms and examine the cattle. After a careful scrutiny the bride's people refused to accept the cattle, and thus the negotiations came to an abrupt end. Mahati felt insulted and asked his father not to negotiate for his marriage. Mahati was friendly with a girl of the village who belonged to Bari Killi. He proposed to her that they should elope. The girl was sincerely attached to him, and readily agreed. She took all her money, trinkets and clothes, and waited for him at midnight by his door. Mahati met her, and the same night they set out for Ulidi, a village ten miles from Tentara. The next morning the parents of the girl found their daughter missing, and when they learnt that Mahati also was missing, they realised what had happened. After five days, Mahati's father learned of his son's whereabouts, and immediately he sent a message imploring him to come with the girl and live with him assuring him that he need not be afraid of the girl's parents. Mahati and the girl are now living as man and wife and are happy with their family.

The most commonly practised form of marriage is Apartipi, and the rarest is known as Anader, which is the same as the Nirbolok of the Oraons.

**Anader** The girl forces herself into the family of her lover where she is seldom welcome. This extreme conduct may be due to a sincere attachment which induces the girl to sacrifice her position, prestige and material comforts to her love for the young man. Two

reasons may prompt her action. If a young man and a young woman fall in love, and if for some reason or other they cannot marry, the girl may take the risk of introducing herself into the family of her lover to secure her position. Again, there are cases in which a young woman may admire a young man and finds no possibility of alliance; the only way open to her then is to resort to Anader. Before she attempts it she informs her guardians, who try to bring about an arrangement, failing which, they permit her to act according to her wishes. The girl then sets out for her lover's village, and on arrival at the house, informs her future mother-in-law why she has come and what her intention is. This naturally incenses the mother who proceeds to use abusive language to the girl. The presents of Diang, rice and other provisions, which the girl may bring with her, are thrown away, and the girl is severely reproofed for her unusual conduct. At first she keeps silent, but when the fulminations reach a certain limit, the exasperated girl denounces the mother for her undue indulgence to her son which has brought about this situation. If the son had been properly looked after and controlled, he would not have indulged in flirtations and ruined her life. The scene usually turns into a brawl and the neighbours pour into the courtyard to watch it. The mistress of the house cannot however continue for long in this strain. She is pacified by the neighbours and the girl is allowed to stop in the house. The period of probation is of course very trying for the poor girl, for she has to do all the duties of the house as a menial. The mistress puts all sorts of obstacles in her path. When she brings water it is poured away again, she is not given a good meal, and is certainly not allowed to sleep with her lover. Yet her determination is rewarded in the long run by her success in gaining the sympathy of the members of the family and winning their confidence. When the parents find her useful, they allow the girl to remain in the house as their daughter-in-law. No ceremony, not even the painting of vermilion is required to bring about the union, and no bride-price is required to be paid. Sometimes the trouble and hardship of the period of probation prove too much for the girl, and she runs away, but this is rare. In exceptional cases a girl may take to Anader by mutual agreement with her lover.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### BRIDE-PRICE AND MATING

The social laws regulating marriage in Kolhan have been described in detail in the preceding chapter. We shall discuss below the nature of the bride-price, and its effects on social life in general and marriage in particular. Though the higher classes in Kolhan prefer to marry their sons and daughters by the Andi form, the majority find it advantageous to have recourse to less regular unions. What starts as an irregular union may be made regular by the later transaction of a Gonom. In most of the unions by the Apartipi form, a nominal bride-price is paid if and when demanded. This does not mean that there is no difference between Andi and Apartipi or Rajikhusi. The elaborate ceremonies performed in connection with Andi, and the co-operation displayed by the members of Killi and village on such occasions, explain the social prestige associated with it. Even if no bride-price is paid, nor any ceremony observed, a marriage does not become void, nor do the children suffer from any social ignominy.

The Killi elders realise the effects of an excessive Gonom. They know that the practice of demanding high bride-price has resulted in an unusual increase in the number of runaway marriages, in Apartipi and Anader. They will tell you how lifelong celibates of both sexes are numerous in Kolhan, and why the marriage of Singbhum maidens is so long postponed. The problem was faced by their ancestors, and they are facing it themselves to-day. Sympathetic administrative officers have tried to assist them in putting an end to this scandalous state of affairs. Resolutions have been passed at mass meetings convened by the Government, and by the people themselves; the rate of Gonom has been unanimously reduced in these social conferences. Some enthusiastic members have tried to introduce them and to give effect to their unanimous wishes, but the problem still remains as difficult and as acute as ever. The rate of Gonom no doubt depends upon the material circumstances and the social position of the families concerned, yet it remains arbitrary and excessive.

It is indeed surprising how the custom of demanding cattle as Gonom was introduced in Kolhan. We have every reason to believe that the predatory and hunting life of the Hos was superseded by an agricultural

life, and that pastoral life was never a stage in their economic development. Even now the Hos do not tend their own cattle. They do not milk them. There are no rites, ceremonies or magical beliefs connected with cattle. The ploughing is usually done by bullocks, and that on a joint or co-operative system, so that a Ho family seldom needs a herd of cattle or its ordinary domestic or agricultural requirements. The cattle serve as Gonom, and are transferred from village to village as such. Very little care is taken of the animals, and the breed is extremely poor, even compared with that possessed by their Diku neighbours. Every family usually possesses a number of cattle, which are handed over to the village Ahir, or some labourer in the village who makes his living out of them.

The Hos often sell their cattle to provide for their domestic needs. Goats are the liquid assets of the Hos, so also are fowls and pigeons. When a man wants to marry it is the custom for the Killi members to assist him by contributing a head or two of cattle towards the Gonom. For services rendered to a family in cases of emergency, it is still the custom to pay in cattle. When a Ho family receives a number of heads of cattle as Gonom, it usually transfers these to the care of the village Ahir, with a stipulation that after such and such a period of time so many heads should be returned to it. That acts as interest, but they never gain much from such transactions. There is a system of equating cattle with money. The price of bullocks in Kolhan fluctuates with demand and supply, but the price of cattle as Gonom is fixed by custom. One head of cattle is taken as equivalent to three or four rupees in deciding the amount of Gonom. Well-to-do families always exchange cattle, but poor families often equate cattle with rupees. In some cases, however, an arbitrary price may be fixed by mutual agreement.

Cattle as a medium of exchange, or as a measure of value are widely known in India. Even to-day, during the Sradh ceremony of the Hindus, it is the custom for a householder to make gifts of cattle to the Brahmin. The term Go-dhan still survives in the popular vocabulary and means that cattle is money. In the great epics of the heroic age in India, cattle played a distinct part as wealth. Property was evaluated in terms of land and cattle. Kings fought for cattle in ancient India, and the vanquished compensated the victor by paying in cattle. Thus it is possible that the custom of paying cattle as Gonom may be a borrowed trait, and may have been due to their association with the Hindus who used cattle as a medium of exchange and a measure of value. How far it is borne out by facts, remains to be ascertained.

Most of the writers of the 19th century who have written on the Hos, have denounced in unequivocal terms the practice of demanding a high

Gonom, which had in no uncertain way affected their simple social life. One effect of this practice was the increase in the number of unmarried men and women in Kolhan. People abstained from marriage not because they courted celibacy as a principle of good conduct, but because of the exorbitant price demanded for brides, which prevented willing young men from seeking matrimonial alliances, if their means did not permit them to do so. The girls are also conscious of it. They make themselves as attractive as they can, dance with young men of their acquaintance, attend Akharas of neighbouring villages, flirt and romp with their friends, and are not too coy to receive in public attentions from those they admire. With all this, men do not propose. The songs sung by the young folk in the Akhara are full of references to this supreme fact of their social life, and yet little has been done by the society to redress this social iniquity.

The other effect of this excessive Gonom is the postponement of the marriageable age in Kolhan, which has resulted in innumerable cases of liaisons within the village, and between members of the same Killi, and a general lowering of the standard of morality within the tribe. The social sanction that obtains in Kolhan for premarital license does not mean that premarital license is general. It only means that cases of premarital license are not taken seriously, but are condoned. When marriage becomes a remote possibility, and when both the sexes are conscious of it, immoral practices are not viewed with alarm, as they afford the only escape from artificial repression. This is how young men and women in Kolhan explain cases of incest, and of irregular unions. The sexual license said to be general during the Maghe festival in Kolhan, and also during the other festivals, is not of a promiscuous nature. The use of obscene languages by the Hos during the Maghe festival, when sons revile their parents, and parents their children, has been misinterpreted by Col. Dalton. Such customs as we find among the Hos are not unique, or without parallels elsewhere. On the occasion of the Maghe festival, it is the custom to abuse the Bongas, to strike them with magically prepared sticks, to hunt them and drive them out of the village. This is known as Bonga Hanr, and is an essential agricultural rite. The sons who revile their fathers represent men on earth, Horoko, and the fathers who reply with admonition, play the role of the Bongas (Bongako) so that the whole affair becomes a symbolical performance, and not an actual passage of arms between father and son.

Again, promiscuous mixing of the sexes does not necessarily mean sexual communism. So long as the girls are young they mix freely with young men, but as soon as they attain the age of puberty they

are seen mostly in the company of girls. Boys and girls of the same Killi, playing together, dancing together, and passing most of the time together, behave like brothers and sisters, and it is indeed doubtful if sexual license is a necessary or indispensable consequence of such association. But it is true, and the writer has the unambiguous statements of the elders of the society to corroborate him, that when young girls find that the chances of marriage are remote, i.e., when they pass their teens, they become restless, as is but natural, and yield to Apartipi to escape the drudgery in their own household, the ill-treatment of their sister-in-law, or the prospect of remaining spinsters all their life.

The average bride-price in Kolhan consists of 10 to 15 heads of cattle, forty to fifty rupees and ornaments, besides 50 to 100 pots of Illi, and the cost of feeding the Killi. As regards the latter item, the custom of contributing in kind to the expenses of marriage by the members of the Killi, or the village, helps to reduce the expenses. Being improvident, the Hos possess next to nothing to meet the expenses of a regular marriage. The result is that the number of Andi is decreasing daily, and irregular intimacies are the order of the day. How foolish the custom of demanding high Gonom is, will be apparent from the increase of runaway marriage, and marriage by Apartipi and Anader forms. The Hos know that if they do not moderate the rate of Gonom, their girls are likely to be carried off by force or to elope with their friends, but still they insist on the high bride-price, which they do not get in many cases. As has been pointed out in the previous chapter, the bride-price is not regarded as real income to the family, for it does not add to the family property in any real sense of the term. It maintains the economic *status quo* of the family, it upholds the social prestige of the family which receives the Gonom. In case the girl is married by Apartipi or Rajikhusi, the social position of the parents remains unassailed. That is why the Gonom remains excessive and social opinion has not asserted itself strongly against this practice.

As early as 1868, Dr. Hayes convened a meeting of representative men of the Hos for the express purpose of discussing the question of high bride-price in consequence of which the number of marriages was annually diminishing and immoral intimacies between the sexes increasing. It was resolved that in future the bride-price was not to exceed ten heads of cattle, and that if one pair of oxen, one cow and seven rupees were given, it should be received as an equivalent to the ten heads. For the poorer classes, it was fixed at seven rupees. There is little evidence to show that this resolution was actually acted upon. In his letter forwarding the final settlement report of Kolhan, 1896, Mr. Bompas, while disagreeing with

Mr. Craven's suggestion to fix a date for the Maghe festival (which we shall refer to in another connection afterwards), wrote, "A far more popular interference would be for us to fix a limit to the bride-price. I already decree only moderate sum when cases come into court, but all the Mankis agree that the only way to stop the practice would be to fine parents taking an excessive Gonom." Thus it is certain that the bride-price in Kolhan has continued as usual in spite of the recognition by the people themselves that it is an iniquitous custom. In 1924, a few Ho reformers took up the question again, and their attempts in this direction have been described and discussed in an article elsewhere. (*Modern Review*, March, 1925).

The poorer classes in Kolhan have unfortunately realised that the bride-price adds dignity, and increases social prestige, and they also insist on higher bride-price than was customary.

Marriage was easier among the poorer classes before ; to-day the situation has completely changed, and Apartipi and Rajikhusi have become more frequent. The landless labourers who migrated to the industrial centres and came back with plenty of money, wanted to rise in social status, and they were ready to pay a high Gonom. Many of the families, which would have received them as their equals before they left their homes, were afraid to admit them, as they could not anticipate the decision of the social elders with regard to their social position. Therefore, the demand for bride-price increased, with the result that even poorer families demanded a higher Gonom than they did before. During the period of the economic boom prior to the world-wide depression, a Ho cultivator was in a much more flourishing state. A Ho labourer earned enough and to spare, the prices of lac and cocoon increased tremendously and supplementary occupations were paying. Thus during this period, the number of Andi increased, while the bride-price was settled in rupees and ornaments. Although there was no reduction in the bride-price, the people could afford to pay, and the number of Apartipi and Rajikhusi appreciably declined. Ho elders began to talk about such forms of mating as illegal, and representations were made to social reformers, to make these marriages unlawful and criminal. The forcible taking of women was compared to abduction, for which heavy penalties are provided in the Indian penal code. Well-to-do families preferred to settle the bride-price in money, poorer families demanded cattle in lieu of coin, which according to the latter meant a claim to social status. This situation, however, changed, and with the gradual lowering of agricultural prices and an increase in unemployment in the industrial centres, the artificial inflation of Gonom has reacted on the social life by encouraging, and almost popularising irregular unions. There

#### Fluctuations in Gonom

is also a marked change in attitude towards Apartipi. Apartipi is associated with a number of customary practices, some of which are planned and concerted, some sudden and violent. It requires some courage and involves risks. Co-operation between villagers, or members of a Killi is essential for success, for violence is punishable by law, and complaints may reach the headquarters of the district, and thus involve a trial by competent courts of justice, or by the tribal elders. In either of these cases, the offender cannot escape the consequences. When governmental control in social matters was less effective, Apartipi was an ordinary social practice sanctioned by tradition and supported by public opinion. Even if there was violence on the girl, it was not regarded as a criminal offence. Nor is it to-day a criminal offence like rape. Yet public opinion is decidedly against really forcible abduction. Thus Apartipi has become a tame affair mutually planned in many cases. The couple first agree to live as man and wife, and a mock abduction is planned and carried into effect. The girl, though willing, does not like to come to her lover's house, without some show of force, and she arranges to come out with some of her friends; as soon as the young man and his friends appear on the scene and take hold of her, she makes a pretence at escape, but finally yields to the man. She is brought home by her captor and lover, and her friends report the incident to her parents. This attitude of 'drag me and I come' is general, and therefore, 90% of the Apartipi cases are virtually Rajikhusi, which means marriage by mutual consent. The phrase Rajikhusi is taken from the Gowari dialect. In Apartipi some bride-price requires to be paid, if and when demanded. In Rajikhusi, no such transaction takes place, and the couple live as man and wife. Their children are legitimate and inherit the family property. No ceremony is required to validate such a union, and no formal procedure exists for the dissolution of marriage. The duration of such a union is left to the couple themselves, and when they decide to break off, they separate without much ado.

The methods of securing wives, and the amounts of Gonom paid by a number of families in Konslaposi (three Tolas), Roborosai and Kotgarh, with geneology are given below.

#### **Family No. 1**

Lachman of Konslaposi married in Kundrojoor and had to pay a Gonom of 40 heads of cattle, and 50 rupees. He has three sons, Tupra, Barakar and Disu, and three daughters. Tupra is 35 and married in Sagorkota village. He paid 20 heads of cattle and 25 rupees. He had three sons and three daughters, of whom two sons and two daughters have survived. Barakar is 30, and he married in Siajo. He paid 9 heads of cattle and

fifteen rupees. He has three sons and one daughter. Disu married his mother's sister in Kundrokor and paid 13 heads of cattle and 45 rupees. Lachman's first daughter was married in Jamda and fetched 25 heads of cattle and 45 rupees. His second daughter was not married according to Andi. She went to attend a marriage ceremony at Amjora during the month of the Maghe festival, where she was detained by a young man, and was made to live with him. Lachman realised 6 heads of cattle and 11 rupees after one month. Lachman is a substantial cultivator and pays an annual malgoozari of 16 rupees.

#### Family No. 2

Disu is aged 50. He married twice and both the wives are living. He had no issue by the first wife, so he married his wife's sister. He married in the village, and did not pay any Gonom. For the first wife he paid only -/12/- as., and for the second, nothing. His first wife was possessed by Churdu (an evil spirit believed to cohabit with women thus rendering them barren.) There is one son by his second wife. His son has married his maternal uncle's daughter and had to pay 4 heads of cattle and ten rupees. Disu's wife's sister was married by Disu by Apartipi form just as his first wife was.

#### Family No. 3

Mangu Simko is 55. He, with his five brothers, pays a malgoozari of rupees nine and annas nine only. He married in the village in Laguri Killi. He married by Rajukhusi and without any ceremony, but he had to pay 4 goats to his father-in-law. He has four sons and three daughters. His first son married in the village, i.e., his maternal uncle's daughter, and paid 3 heads of cattle and six rupees. His eldest daughter was married in Andi form in the village of Amjora, and fetched 4 heads of cattle and ten rupees. His second daughter was married in Jampani village, and he got 4 heads of cattle and six rupees. His third daughter was married in June (1934) to Khairpal village, and fetched 5 heads of cattle and one she-goat, but no money.

#### Family No. 4

Kande aged 50, married in Marsabila village and paid 32 heads of cattle and 30 rupees. Kande has one son, Gangaram, and two daughters. Gangaram married in Gumuria and paid 25 heads of cattle and 40 rupees. He has one son, and one daughter. Gangaram's one sister was married in Parsa village in Aloa Pir, and fetched 15 heads of cattle and 40 rupees. His second sister is 25 and still unmarried. She eloped with a young man

of the village, but after six months came back home, and nothing was heard of the young man.

#### Family No. 5

Bikram Simko, aged 45 had four brothers who died one after another, but his four sisters are all living. Of the sisters, two were married in Andi form, one in Jugridar, the other in Kundrojor. The former fetched 40 heads of cattle and 30 rupees, the latter 15 heads of cattle and 40 rupees. The other two sisters were married by Apartipi to the same man. Bikram has two sons and three daughters. The eldest daughter was married in Kotgarh, and fetched 15 heads of cattle and 55 rupees. Two other daughters are living in different villages according to Apartipi. The eldest son is sixteen years old and is studying in the Middle Vernacular School at Jagannathpur.

#### Family No. 6

Reya Manki married in Sananda and paid 15 heads of cattle and 50 rupees. He died last year, and his son Bhagawan is the joint-Manki of Bantra Pir. Bhagawan is 18 years old, and his paternal uncle has settled his marriage in Kulki (Gumra Pir). He has to pay 15 heads of cattle and 60 rupees. The Gonom is being paid by instalments. His marriage will take place after the next Maghe festival. Bhagawan has four sisters, all married. The eldest was married to his maternal uncle's son, and no Gonom was paid by the latter. The second sister eloped with a Ho school teacher, but after six months the latter had to pay 12 heads of cattle as Gonom. The third was married in Jugridar, Keonjhar State, and fetched 18 heads of cattle, and 50 rupees. The fourth was married in Lukipai, in Gumra Pir, and brought 25 heads of cattle and 45 rupees.

#### Family No. 7

Jitu married in Dudbilla, Kotgarh Pir. He brought his wife by Apartipi, while she was going to the hat. He had to pay two bullocks and two rupees. Jitu is dead. His two sons, Bikram and Mana, and seven daughters are all living. His first daughter was married to Mangu of the same village. (F. N. 3). His second daughter was married in Noagaon by Apartipi, but he received 2 heads of cattle and 4 rupees. The third daughter was married by Rajikhusi. His fourth daughter eloped with a young man; both of them are supposed to be in the Assam Tea Gardens. The fifth daughter was taken to Amjora by Apartipi, but he obtained 2 heads of cattle after four years. The sixth and seventh are both living with a man of the Kotgarh village. The youngest, i.e., the seventh

daughter followed her elder sister who was taken to Kotgarh by Apartipi. Bikram married by Apartipi. He has three daughters. Mana married in Jugridai (Bara Pir), and paid 4 heads of cattle and 19 rupees.

#### Family No. 8

Rongshaw married in Dudbilla in Kotgarh Pir. He is an ordinary labourer and has a very small plot of land. He had to pay a he-goat and one rupee as Gonom. He has two sons and five daughters. The eldest daughter was married in Noagaon, and he received 4 heads of cattle and 3 rupees. His second daughter was married to his wife's brother's son in Dudbilla, and he was given 2 heads of cattle and 2 rupees. His third daughter was taken by Apartipi. He has two small huts, and all the members of the family, excepting the daughters who are married, live together.

#### Family No. 9

Oybon Hembrom, aged 48, married in the village. He has two wives related as ortho-cousins. Both share the same hut with their husband. By his first wife he had two daughters, of whom one died young. The surviving one was married in Tilaipi village for 4 heads of cattle, 4 rupees, and a he-goat. By his second wife he has two sons, and one daughter, all living. There are seldom any quarrels between the co-wives. The first wife is nearly 45, and the second is 28. The wives live just as two sisters. Oybon pays Rs. 2/6/6 as malgoozari, and is one of the elders of the village.

Oybon's elder brother Nara is living. He claims to be the oldest man in Kolhan. Nara had two wives; both died a few years back. The wives were sisters. He had two sons and two daughters by the first wife, and one son and one daughter by the second. Of the children by the first wife, one son is living, the other son and two daughters have gone to the tea gardens in Assam. It is said that Nara was responsible for driving them out of the village. Nara's second wife was very jealous and spiteful, and Nara was very fond of her. The son and two daughters by his first wife could not get on well with the step-mother, and Nara indirectly sided with his second wife. The eldest son (by the first wife) has married, and is living separately with his wife and children. Nara's only daughter by his second wife was married in the village to a young man of Simko Killi, and the latter's sister was married to Nara's third son, or the only son of his second wife. Two heads of cattle and five rupees were received and the same Gonom-plus a rupee, was paid as the bride-price for Nara's son. Nara has his separate hut, but his daughter-in-law cooks food for him, and the land is divided between his two sons.

**Family No. 10**

Karji's elder brother Birga married in Mirgilandi village, Bara Pir, but died young. He had one daughter. Karji married his brother's widow, and is living with her. He has one son and one daughter, but he is maintaining Birga's daughter too. Birga's land has passed to Karji, and yet, the family is not in very comfortable circumstances.

**Family No. 11**

Jarea Marli, aged 45 or 46, has two wives. He married his first wife by Apartipi from Sheldaori, and his second wife is from the same village. The latter is Tupra's sister, (see family 1). He paid 4 heads of cattle, and one rupee for the second wife. Of the five children by the first wife (3 sons and 2 daughters), 2 sons died before he married the second time. His eldest son has married in Tonda Hatu (Bantra Pir) by Apartipi, and has one child. His two daughters by the first wife were married by Apartipi, the first in Hesalpata, and the second within the village. For the first, he received one cow and 2 rupees, and nothing for the second. By his second wife he has one son and one daughter, both minors. He has no land and pays an annual house rent of five pice only. He and his son live together, and are labourers in the village. His son and his daughter-in-law often go to the iron mines for work, but come back during the busy agricultural season, when they find just enough work to maintain them.

**Family No. 12**

Mangu married his first wife from Thakura village, Jamda Pir by Apartipi, and his second wife from Udayjo village, Bantra Pir, by the same method. In the latter case, he had to pay 4 heads of cattle, to Lukra, his father-in-law. Jandoi married in the village, Roborosai, Kotgarh Pir, and paid 12 rupees, 14 heads of cattle including 2 bullocks. Turi married Selai's daughter in Hathabra (Kotgarh Pir) by Apartipi, and did not pay any Gonom. Robro married in Hamsada (Kotgarh Pir), Bamia's daughter, and paid 6 heads of cattle, one bullock and 9 rupees. Hari married Budka's daughter in Rengabera (Kotgarh Pir) by Apartipi. Jamdar married in Beterko village Durgah's daughter, and paid 17 heads of cattle (with 2 bullocks) and 9 rupees. Jamdar's daughter, Ambuli was married to Ganga of Tontoposi, and fetched 6 heads of cattle and 7 rupees. Manjo was married to Lukum in Beterke to Durga's son (i.e. her mother's brother's son), and fetched 4 heads of cattle. Mecho was married by Rajikhusi in the village. Chuba was married in the village and fetched 7 heads of cattle and 6 rupees only. Surdan married by Apartipi from Pichua village (Bara Pir), but had to pay 3 heads of cattle and 10 rupees.

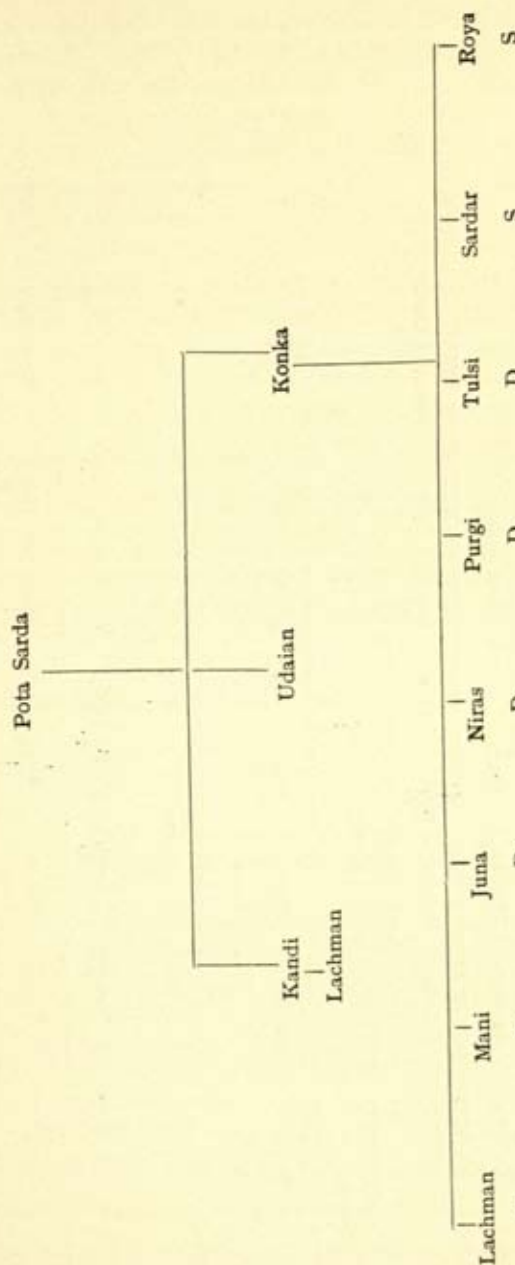
His second wife was taken from the village by Rajikhusi. Kudu married Gola's daughter from Tontoposi by Apartipi. His son Ladu also married by Apartipi. Jano was married by Chamra Ho of Beterke village by Apartipi. Somarin married by Apartipi in Tontoposi village. Mecho married by Apartipi to Budka of Rengeberi. Dongra married Turi's daughter from Ketahatu (Bara Pir), and paid a heavy Gonom, but details could not be had. Mahati married Goma's daughter, and paid 20 heads of cattle and 20 rupees. Jamdar Mahati's son married in Tontoposi by Apartipi. Damu married Chokra's daughter by Apartipi from Rengabari. Robro eloped with a girl of the village and of the same Killi and both are in Assam Tea gardens. Jingi was married by Rajikhusi in the village, Lidon to Banjora, Kairi to Kitahatu, Chariba to Aikuti, and Sunu to Bada, all by Apartipi. Sugum is an aged spinster.

The geneological tables of five more families are appended herewith.

# GENEOLOGICAL TABLE No. 1

FAMILY No. 12.

15



Lachman married in Amjora, Guna's daughter. 14 heads of cattle, 2 bullocks, 25 rupees; has one young son.

Mani married in Sheldari (Bantra Pir) to Doko Laguri. 7 heads of cattle, 2 bullocks and 10 rupees.

Juna married in Sheldari to the same person (her sister's husband). 15 heads of cattle, 30 rupees and 2 bullocks.

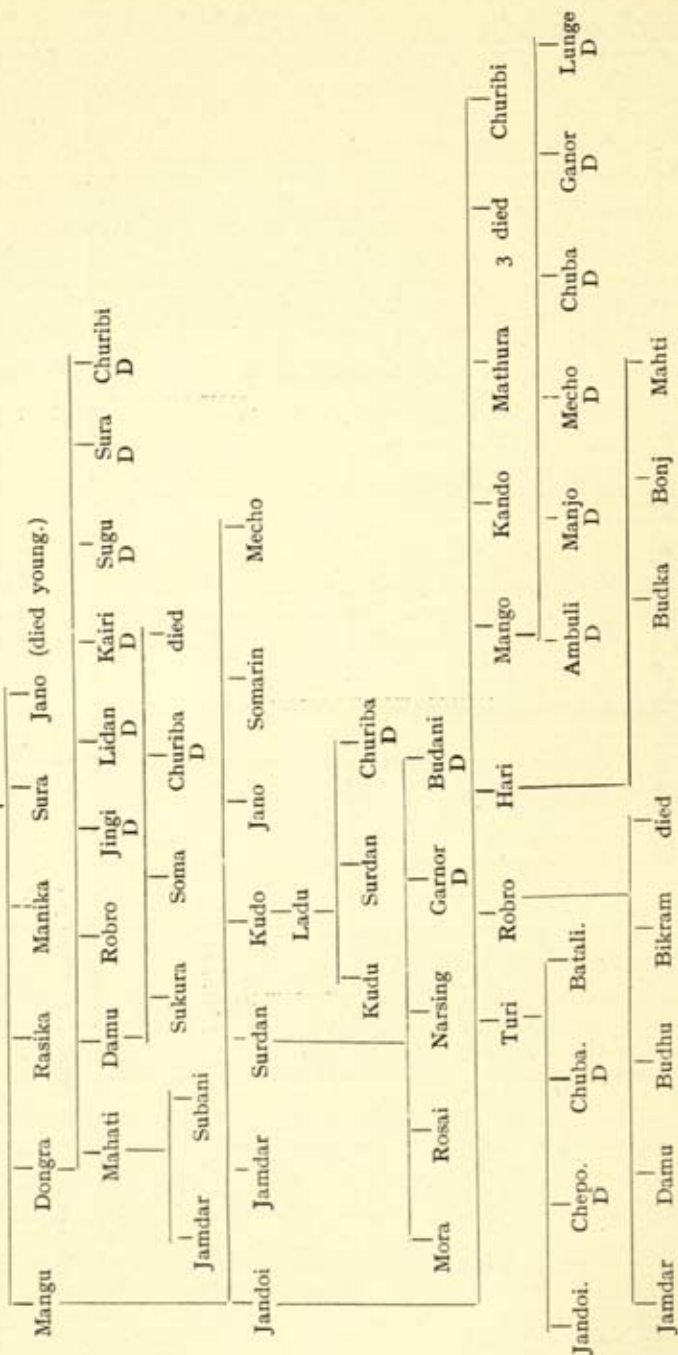
S indicates son.

D indicates daughter.

GENEOLOGICAL TABLE No. 2

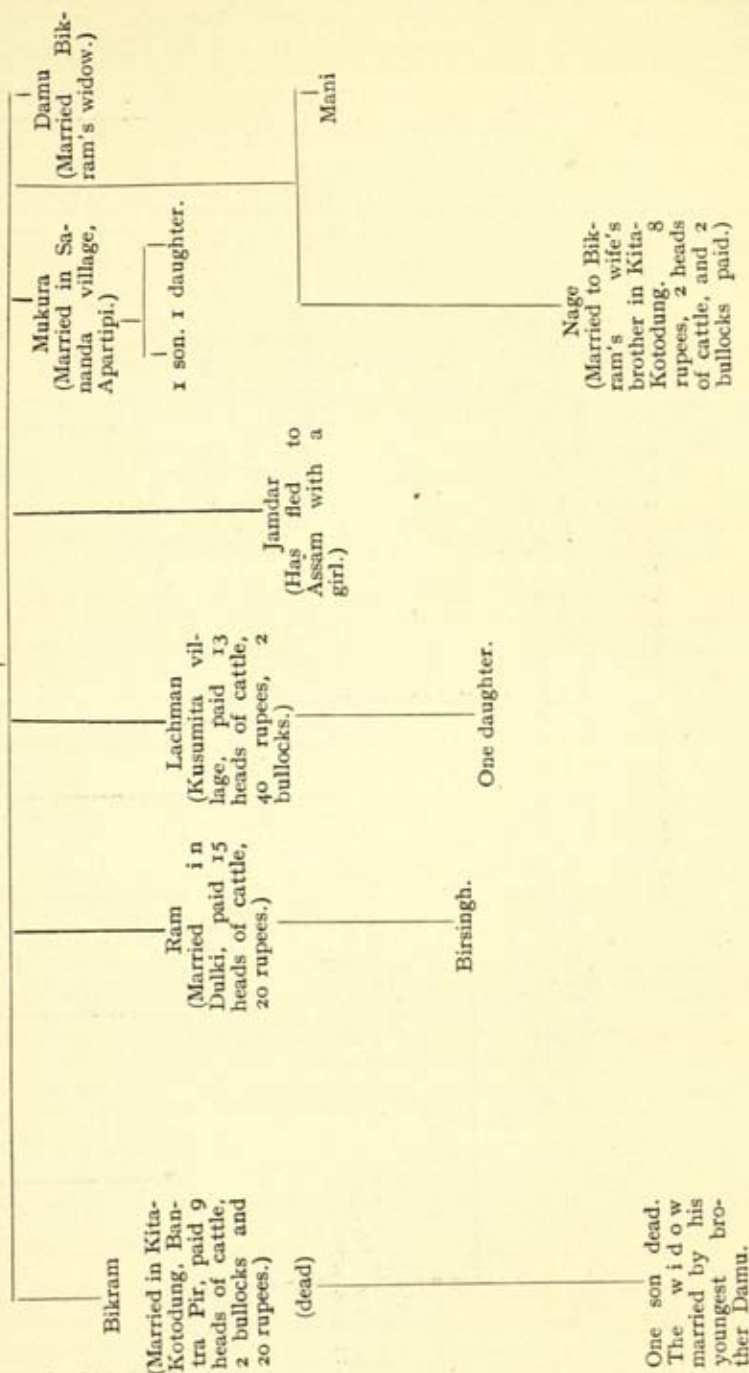
ROBOROSAI VILLAGE.

Jang, (five brothers, 3 sisters.)

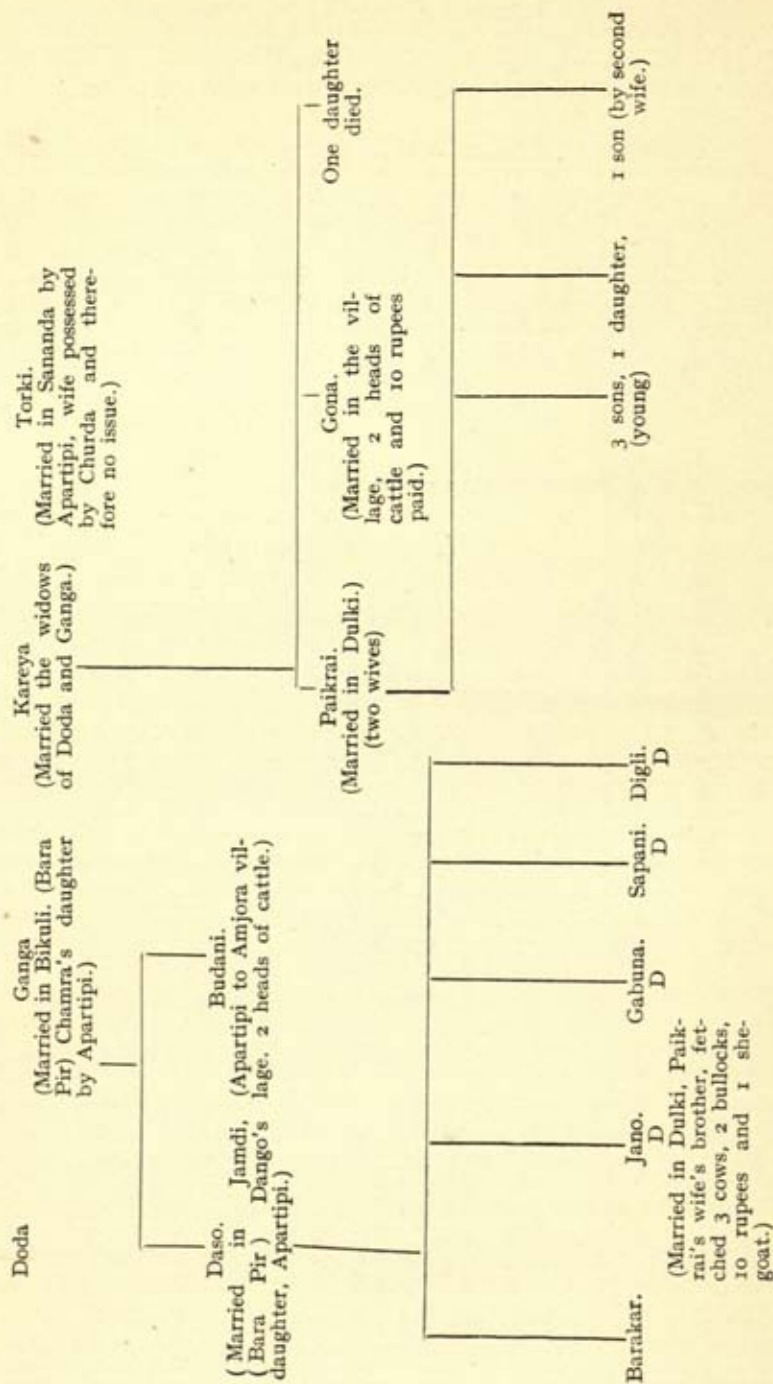


# GENEOLOGICAL TABLE No. 3

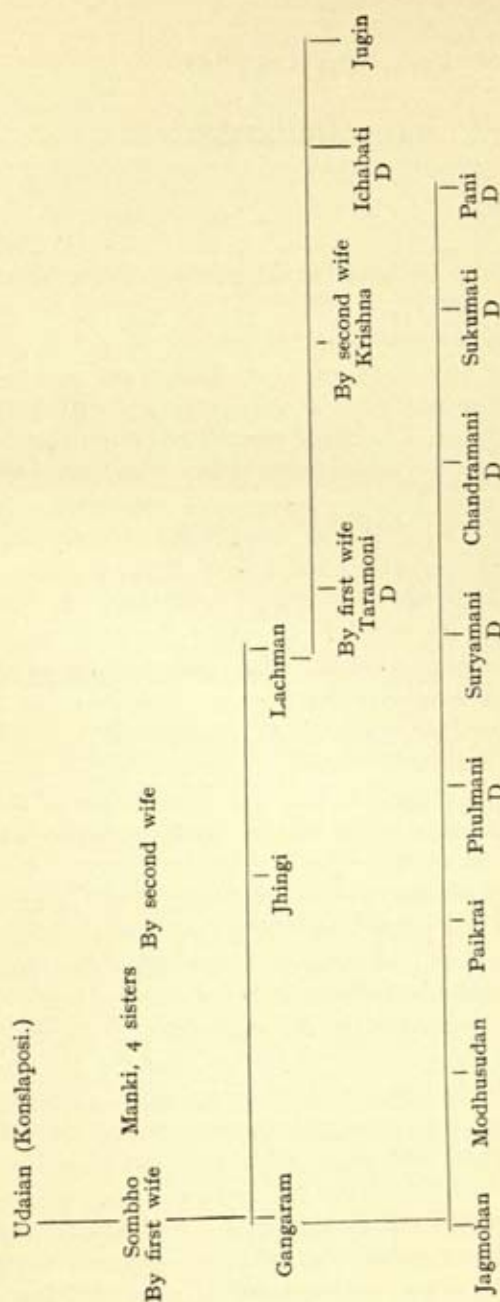
Lachman (married by Apartipi, Tengsera village, Rengra Pir)



GENEOLOGICAL TABLE No. 4



# GENEOLOGICAL TABLE No. 5



Sombho married in Kunta village (Gumra Pir). He paid 30 heads of cattle, 1 buffalo, 1 pair of bullocks and 100 rupees for his first wife, and 15 heads of cattle, 1 buffalo and 50 rupees for his second wife who is the sister of his first wife. Gangaram married Paikrai Tubid's daughter in Dulki (Gumra Pir), and paid 25 heads of cattle and 60 rupees and a pair of bullocks. Phulmani, his daughter was married in Sananda, (Bantra Pir) and he received 15 heads of cattle, 1 pair of bullocks and 40 rupees. Chandramani was married in Lagra Pir, the bride-price paid was 25 heads of cattle, 2 pairs of bullocks and 100 rupees. Suryamani was married in Nakhasa in Chernai Pir and he received 16 heads of cattle, 1 pair of bullocks and 85 rupees.

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### MARRIAGE RITES

The bride-price has to be paid by the parents of the bridegroom, and in their absence, by the guardian. If the bridegroom has no such relation, the village Munda may negotiate on his behalf and act as his guardian. In Andi, the services of a middleman or Dutam are secured, and the amount of the bride-price and other preliminaries are settled through him. In some cases proposals are advanced directly by the father or guardian of the young man, without the interference of any Dutam, but the mediation of the latter is sought more for expediency and convenience than because of any convention. The word Dutam is of Sanskrit derivation and must have been borrowed by the Hos from their Diku neighbours. Dutam means a messenger and has the same significance as Ghatak who arranges marriages in Hindu society. It should be noted that it is the well-to-do families who engage a Dutam, while poor families do without him. It is also a fact that cross cousin marriage is more prevalent among the lower classes than among the higher. As a matter of fact, it has become extremely rare among well-to-do families, particularly among the present generation. Does this not suggest that the introduction of the Dutam is meant to settle marriages in distant villages without the knowledge of the family of the maternal uncle, while the bridegroom's family remains in the background? Marriages between people of distant Pirs are more common to-day than they were a few years back. A second explanation perhaps lies in their newly developed class-consciousness which makes them seek alliances with families of higher classes. As there is always a risk of being refused and insulted, the preliminary arrangements are entrusted to a Dutam.

It is safer to secure the services of a Dutam, and the Ho father prefers to keep himself in the background until the negotiations are well advanced. After settling the preliminary terms, the Dutam informs the bridegroom's parents who in consultation with him settle an auspicious day, according to the Ho lunar calendar, on which the bridegroom's guests may be received at the bride's house. Six to ten men from the bridegroom's village with pots full of Diang, rice and spices, and with he-goats and fowls, proceed to the house of the bride to see her, and discuss Gonom. The party also takes musical instruments to keep up their spirits during the journey. As

soon as they reach the bride's house, they receive close attention from the inmates, and their friends. The guests take their seats on stools made of Sal saplings and ropes made of sawai grass. A big mat is spread on the centre of the courtyard for the accommodation of the Killi members. The women of the house or the Killi, wash the feet of the guests. Thus refreshed, they drink Illi, and discuss the omens that may have been noted by the party on its way. This is done in all seriousness, for they believe that the nature of the omens determines the success of the marriage. In case the omens prove too strong to be ignored, the parties take leave of each other, and the bridegroom's party returns to the village. In all cases, the Hos attach much importance to omens and divinations, and before they undertake any work that is likely to affect the well-being of the individual or the community, they put their heads together to decipher the nature of the omens they may encounter. The Deonra is the traditional interpreter of omens and sacrifices, and offerings are made to undo the presaged evils. The business is started in right earnest, as they say that it is certain to be successful should the omens prove lucky and they are never likely to regret their action.

In the case of the omens being satisfactory the parties discuss the terms. A preliminary settlement having already been made by the Dutam, it is for the bride's party to work out the details. The deliberations keep the parties engaged for several hours, during which the people drink large quantities of Illi. The bridegroom's people do not, as a rule, take any food offered by the bride's party. They come provided with rice, pulse, and he-goats, and such other articles as are required for cooking their meals, so that they are not at the mercy of their prospective relations. Even if they are short of provisions, they refuse any supply from the bride's people till the arrangements are complete, and the date for the Bapala has been fixed. The night is spent in dance and hilarity by the young people, and older men spend the time in visiting their old acquaintances and making new ones. The next morning the party returns to its village.

On an auspicious day fixed by the Deuri, the bride's party comes to the village of the bridegroom to see the house of the latter, and examine the cattle promised as dowry. The bridegroom's party is informed beforehand so that the family may be in readiness to receive its guests. It makes a large quantity of Illi, and provides entertainment for the bride's party. There is no limit to the number of people who may come from the bride's village, and sometimes the number becomes too large for the means

#### **Reception of the Bridegroom's Party**

#### **The Bride's Party at the Bridegroom's Village**

of the family concerned, but on such occasions the bride's party comes with presents of rice, lentils, fowls, goats and vegetables and pots full of Illi, so that the family is seldom put to any inconvenience. This is one of the redeeming features of the Ho marriage ceremony which makes it possible for the joint participation of the villagers in each other's joys and sorrows. Unfortunately, the idea of social solidarity is becoming weaker and the burden on the family is increasing.

Immediately on arrival, the party is conducted to the courtyard of the bridegroom's house, where a big mat has already been placed, and stools of different size have been arranged all round. The older members are shown greater consideration than the younger. The female members of the village, or the Killi give all attention to the guests, washing their feet and passing round Ficcas, and Illi in leaf-cups. The elders of the village receive the guests with embraces, and perfect cordiality reigns on all sides. Puhu (leaf-cup) after Puhu of Illi are drunk by all the members of the bride's party, as well as all those who are present on the occasion. Next, the members are shown their Jamdas, or temporary leafy sheds, for cooking their meals. These are made of leaves and branches of the Sal, and ovens are dug inside them. The party is supplied with rice, lentils, vegetables, spices, oil, firewood, Boroh Sengel, tobacco, and their great delicacy, common salt. For cooking, earthen utensils and wooden ladles are given, and Chitki (leaf plates) and Puhu are supplied for eating the meals. While the party prepares its food, people from the bridegroom's village sit and converse with them. When the food is ready, the bride's party invites some members of the bridegroom's Killi to join them in the dinner. This adds further cordiality to the function, and friendliness continues to mark the rest of the dealings between the two parties.

Next morning, the guests are taken to the tank, or the river close by for their morning wash, and they are given Karkads, or tooth brushes made from twigs of the Mango or Neem tree. Then they are conducted back to the village. After regaling them with a generous supply of Illi, the bride's people are shown the cattle which they are to approve. If they express their dissatisfaction with the selection, the bridegroom's party tries to please them by changing some of the cattle, or promising to replace them, if necessary. In the event of any disagreement on this account, the Bapala is called off. The Bapala ceremony begins only after the cattle have been approved by the bride's party.

The Bapala is the most important ceremony in connection with marriage, and is much enjoyed by the Hos. It is on the occasion of the Bapala that the Hos give themselves up to Dama, Dumang and Susung,

(i.e. drums, songs and dances), and the whole village takes part in nocturnal revels and jollifications. Wit and humour, and gifts of composition of songs

### **Bapala Ceremony**

are severely tested. The songs sung on this occasion are crude and vulgar. The men of the bride's party play on the musical instruments, Banam and Rutu, and the women of the village dance to the tune. The women rub their bodies with oil and turmeric powders, and bathe together, while the men from the bride's village watch them, or follow them to the tank or the river. They make red or yellow solutions of turmeric which they sprinkle over one another, and the whole village puts on coloured clothes which look like gala dress. The women deck themselves with flowers and creepers, and walk up and down the village full of the spirit of the occasion. The bridegroom is always surrounded by the girls and is the cynosure of all eyes.

The next ceremony is known as the Era Thil, which takes place after a month or two, according to the wishes of the parties at Bapala. The bridegroom, with a number of male friends and relations, is invited to go to the bride's house, and the party sets out for her village in time to reach it before dusk. It is essential for the bridegroom to take with him some ornament or money. Presents

### **Era Thil Ceremony**

of Illi, rice, lentils and he-goats are taken by the party and deposited with the bride's family. In addition, they take with them the whole of the dowry consisting of cattle and money for the final transaction. A warm welcome greets them upon their arrival, and the night is spent in feasting and dancing. The next morning, at about 9 a.m., the courtyard is cleaned and rinsed with cowdung solution. Mats and Machilas are spread on the ground, and all the relations are invited to assemble there. The bridegroom takes his seat in the centre, and waits for the arrival of the bride. Soon after the bride is brought in by her Killi mates, and is led to a seat placed opposite that of the bridegroom. The bride and bridegroom exchange glances, and have to inform their respective relatives of their mutual approval. This is done by offering Illi. The bridegroom first offers a Puhu of Illi to the bride, who, if she approves of him, has to distribute the liquor to all her relations, after partaking of it herself. The bride on her part, then offers the liquor to the bridegroom who has to repeat the procedure. The bride may not immediately accept the Puhu offered to her by the bridegroom, as it is customary for the latter to offer some money, clothes or ornaments, to elicit her approval. Ten to twenty rupees are often required to make the bride accept the offer, but there are cases when the bride insists on a higher sum, and it must be paid immediately. Refusal of either party to accept the proffered liquor brings the negotiations to a close. It is true that the refusal generally comes from the

side of the girl, for the man has made up his mind before offering the first Puhu to the bride. If the worst happens, the parties confer together to decide how to make up the loss the bride's party has incurred. The decision generally takes the form of an invitation to the bridegroom's village, at a later date, to partake of a feast specially arranged for them. But this seldom occurs, as the first refusal is made up by offering an amount higher than that formerly agreed upon. When the bride and the bridegroom approve of each other, there follows a battle of wit between the bride's sisters and Killi mates, and the bridegroom and his friends. The girls smoke Ficcas blowing the smoke at the bridegroom, and the latter has to put up with insults and rough handling from the girls. But everything betokens perfect mutual understanding, so that the whole affair becomes a part of the ceremony which adds prestige to the contracting families. At night the bride and the bridegroom take part in the dance specially arranged for them, and here they try to show themselves at their best. This dance also is a test of the skill and vigour of the bridegroom who has to play his part in the dancing ring.

The Era Thil ceremony completes the betrothal, and before the parties take leave of each other, a date is fixed for the final ceremony. On the morning of the day appointed for the ceremony, five to ten male members from the bridegroom's party leave for the bride's house to escort the bride to the village. They are called Orera men. If the bride's village happens to be far off, they set out on the previous night, so that they may reach there in time to start with the party. The Orera men are received by the bride's family with humility, and after treating them to Diang and a feast, preparations are made by the bride and her relations to accompany the Orera party. The bride's party consists of relations of the bride, male and female, and most of the male members of the Killi. The party leaves the bride's house with drums and other musical instruments, and arrives at the bridegroom's village at dusk. A sufficient quantity of rice-beer is taken to refresh the party on their bridal march. As soon as it approaches the outskirts of the bridegroom's village, the women from the bride's side pluck off branches of trees, and armed with these, they form into line, with the bride in the centre, and with songs and yells meet the advancing party from the bridegroom's village. The bridegroom, borne on a man's shoulders with bow and arrows in his hand, leads his party, and a mock skirmish takes place while the drums are beaten, and the Rutu and Banam are played by the followers on either side. At the rear of the bridegroom's party, a woman carries a pot of rice-beer, which is meant for the bride, and after the skirmish, it is offered to her and her defenders. The

**Orera  
ceremony  
and Mock  
skirmish**

skirmish lasts a few minutes when suddenly the bride's people take to their heels. It is customary to use slang and filthy words in vilification of one another on this occasion, and the corrupt patois they use are too wild and gross to record. With the ending of this mock tussle, the first act of the drama ends, and the bride is led to the house of the bridegroom amidst shouts and cries of welcome. On arrival at the courtyard all the branches of trees which the women have brought are thrown on the roof of the bridal chamber. The bride is given a new Sari smeared with turmeric water, and after her hands and feet are washed, she retires with her relations to the temporary shed, (or booth of branches and leaves of trees), where they are lodged for a while. The marriage ceremony proper takes place a few hours after their arrival. Differences as to procedure in the final ceremony are noticeable in Kolhan, and the following two cases will illustrate the degree of divergence in customary formalities connected with marriage.

In the village of Gundipoa five miles from Chaibassa, I attended the marriage ceremony of Sukha. In response to invitations, relatives and friends of the bridegroom's family had already arrived in the bridegroom's house the previous morning. They had brought with them rice, fowls, he-goats, Illi, vegetables which were presented to the family of the bridegroom. Sukha had to fast all day but he was allowed to drink Illi as often as he wished. Towards evening when Sukha's bride was seen approaching the village, Sukha took leave of his mother in a pathetic manner. His mother wept all day and seldom spoke, and when Sukha approached her, she embraced him and clasped him in her arms. Sukha tried to console her. His mother asked him where he was going. Sukha answered that he was going to fetch a girl who would help her in her domestic work and serve her as her slave. Sukha's mother was a little reassured, and Sukha took leave of her to join the party assembled at the boundary line of the village, where they met the bride and her following. In the courtyard, a dais was erected and over it, a temporary pandal was raised by placing branches of trees on four bamboo posts, fixed at the four corners of the dais. Soon after, the bride with her hair loose and dishevelled was brought in and was led to a wooden seat placed on stalks of grain spread on the dais, and close to the seat of the bridegroom. The Deuri chanted some prayers to Sing-bonga and other lesser Bongas of the Ho pantheon, as also to the Oa-bongas of the family. The actual ceremony was very simple. The bride and the bridegroom were previously anointed with oil and turmeric paste, and it only remained to paint vermilion on each other's forehead. Sukha was seated on the knee of his maternal uncle, and his bride was sitting with her friends. The bride was asked to sit on the other knee of Sukha's maternal uncle, and here they painted vermilion on each other's forehead

amidst the beating of drums and the playing of Rutu and Banam. The Deuri then prepared rice in a new earthen pot, and offered the Mundi (prepared rice) to the ancestral spirits. The bride and the bridegroom were then asked to touch the boiled rice offered in a leaf plate, and the bride was thenceforth declared to belong to her husband's Killi.

Dulphu's marriage took place at Kotgarh and the ceremony performed at his marriage was slightly different from that of Sukha's marriage, described above. When the bride and her party arrived at the courtyard of the house, a mat was spread there, and the bride and bridegroom were made to sit facing each other. Two small cups, one containing oil, and the other turmeric powder, were placed on the mat. The bridegroom first anointed the bride with a mixture of the two, and the bride then anointed his forehead, which sealed the contract. Four pots of rice-beer were then brought out from the bridegroom's house. Three were carried by the bride, two on her head, and one in her arm, and the fourth one was carried by Dulphu on his shoulder and taken to the hut where the bride's parents had been lodged. After drinking Diang to his heart's content, the bridegroom returned to his house leaving the bride with her parents and relations. The guests were then supplied with rice, lentils, he-goats, etc., according to the means of the bridegroom's family. The night was spent in feasting, drinking and dancing. In the morning the bride was brought by her friends with dances and songs, and delivered to the bridegroom. The bride's party left in the morning. At the prospect of separation, the bride generally weeps freely. Her parents and relations try to console her and after giving her advice concerning her conduct they leave for their village. Before leaving, the bride and the bridegroom have to salute all the members of the party leaving the village.

The festivities are continued in the bridegroom's house for two, three, or seven days, as long as their resources permit. During the first few days, the bride cannot be persuaded to partake of any food offered in her husband's house and she has to live upon such provisions as may have been supplied by her own people. The bridegroom and her parents entreat her to take food, but she refuses until some settlement is made with her. She insists on presents, or money, or both. When persuasions fail, some sort of compromise is arrived at, and the bride receives an ornament, a new Sari, or a few rupees, whichever she demands. The first time the bride takes food in the house of her husband is observed by a ceremony known as Jomesin. A feast is arranged, a he-goat is killed, and the members of the Killi are invited to participate.

After 2 or 3 months, the people from the bride's house may come to see the newly married couple. They bring with them presents, rice, lentils,

etc. They are sumptuously entertained by the parents of the bridegroom, and a feast is held in their honour, if the family can afford it. On their return journey, they are given similar presents. The bride may accompany the party if she desires to see her village and her Killi mates.

When a Ho girl is married before she has attained the age of puberty, she is not required to leave her parents, and the bridegroom's people have no authority to take her home till such time as her parents think proper. When the girl has attained puberty, or is deemed capable of cohabiting, a second ceremony is performed which completes the marriage. This is known as **Bandhparah**. On an auspicious day, the village Deuri worships Sing-bonga and prepares some rice in a new earthen pot, and after dedicating it to the ancestral gods, the bride and the bridegroom are asked to partake of it. The couple, with the bride's female relations retire next to the village Bandh or tank, to take a ceremonial bath. Here much fun is made with the water to the great enjoyment of the women. In one case, a pair of areca nut cutters was thrown into the water by the bride, and the bridegroom had to pick it up from the depths of the tank. The women entered the tank and tried to hide the instrument under the feet to make the search more difficult. The bridegroom puts up with such ordeals with good humour. The whole affair appears to be a borrowed custom. Child marriage is a comparatively recent practice in Kolhan, and is only practised by some wealthy families, viz., those of the Mankis and Mundas who live in proximity to Diku centres. The **Bandhparah** custom is prevalent among the lower, as well as higher castes, in and around Kolhan, and is associated with the puberty ceremony popularly known as Gauna. The use of the areca nut cutter by the Hos is difficult to explain, as the Hos seldom use it. Probably its popularity in the Hindu households and use in the Hindu marriages explain its adoption possibly as an emblem of womanhood.

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

### RELIGIOUS LIFE

Our knowledge of the religious life of the Hos or that of the Munda speaking tribes in general is meagre and fragmentary. A careful perusal of the account of the Munda religion, given by Mr. Roy, will show that the religious ideas of the Mundas have been much influenced by Hinduism, and by Christianity. The theory of transmigration, and that of metempsychosis have certainly influenced the present day beliefs and practices, and when we read that the Mundas believe that on death the Roa or soul is carried away by the Jom Raja, (the devouring king or the god of death), to his abode in the south, we only find an echo of certain popular beliefs among the Hindus. Again, when we read how the Bongas of the Sonthals were driven away from the presence of Sing-bonga, and how they came down to the earth and settled in the villages, how Marang-buru, the chief disciple of Sing-bonga became discontented and rebelled against his master, the Supreme Being, it appears that we are listening to a modified version of Biblical stories depicting the fall of the angels. Even the story of the creation of the Hos, the Mundas and the Sonthals, though varying in details, is, in essence, a curious blend of their traditional beliefs, with the popular versions of Biblical episodes, given currency by the ill-educated but zealous Christian converts in the tribal areas.

It is indeed difficult to analyse the religious ideas of the Munda speaking tribes in Chota Nagpur, in view of the culture-contact they have had for nearly a century with Christian Missions, and from time immemorial with their Hindu neighbours. This has inevitably led to a miscegenation of culture and the borrowing of many traits, even though we admit that the latter have undergone some modifications in accordance with the spirit of their own culture and the pattern of their social structure. How far this is true will be evident from a perusal of the following figures reproduced from the last Census Reports of B. & O. (Imp. Table XVIII, page 255, B. & O. Dept.).

The following table brings out certain facts about the religious life of the tribes mentioned above. At a glance it shows that all these tribes have been more or less influenced by Hinduism and Christianity, in greater or less degree, according to the districts inhabited by them. The most

remarkable increase in Christianity is shown by the Mundas, the Oraons, and the Kharias. These tribes are found mostly in the Ranchi District. The relations between the Hindu landlords and the aboriginal raiyats have never been satisfactory, and the detailed account of the many troubles and insurrections given by Mr. Roy in his monograph on the Mundas will explain the increase in the number of Christians among the tribal population of the district. The small number of Christians among the Sonthals and the Hos, particularly the latter, is also explainable. While the Mundas had to suffer from

**Christianity  
and Tribal  
Religions**

Tribes.	Name of the Year.	Actual Strength.	Number Tribal.	per mile returned as Hindu.	Christian.
Ho	1911	420,179	854	143	3
	1921	441,424	885	112	3
	1931	523,158	748	248	4
Munda	1911	490,948	655	181	164
	1921	460,319	522	274	204
	1931	549,764	459	298	243
Sonthal	1911	1,407,346	801	193	6
	1921	1,477,471	617	377	6
	1931	1,712,133	650	342	8
Kharia	1911	133,657	505	283	212
	1921	124,531	362	364	274
	1931	146,037	211	353	436
Oraon	1911	587,411	719	89	192
	1921	566,383	619	170	211
	1931	637,111	423	349	228

a hundred and one ills at the hands of irresponsible landlords, the Hos and the Sonthals migrated to areas where they could live in comparative peace, and extend their settlements on to virgin land free from exacting landlords and landgrabbing middlemen. The Hos occupy Kolhan which is a compact area inhabited exclusively by themselves, and enjoying a form of protective administration. The Sonthals have spread far beyond their original confines, and are distributed over a very wide area. Thus the Hos and the Sonthals have not felt much need for the assistance

of the Missionaries in their struggle for economic emancipation, which have contributed much to the growth of Christianity in these areas. The Census Reports of B. & O. point out that in districts where the Sonthals are dominant, they have maintained their tribal religion and have not felt the need of returning themselves as Hindus, while in those areas where they are in a minority they have not been able to maintain their identity. A similar explanation is possible of conversions to Christianity. Where they live in compact groups, and are superior in number, their tribal organisation has remained strong, and conversion to Christianity is not appreciable. The typical case is afforded by the Hos. They still maintain their tribal organisation, the traditional beliefs are still regarded as sacred, though there is less rigid adherence to tribal customs and rites due to cultural contact, and Christianity has not asserted itself in Kolhan. The Christian Hos are found mostly in the adjoining native states, and as has been mentioned in the Census Reports of B. & O., p. 257, 80% of these are to be found in the Gangpur State.

We also find from the foregoing table that the process of Hinduisation is steadily proceeding, and in some tribes the proportion of Hindus to the total strength of the tribe has nearly doubled itself in 20 years. Thus

**The Extent  
of Hindu-  
isation**

among the Hos, there were 143 Hindus per mille in 1911, while in 1931, the number was 248. In areas predominantly aboriginal there is a movement away from Hinduism rather than towards it. This, however, does not apply to Kolhan, where, from all account it is known that there is, among the higher classes, a distinct and decisive tendency towards Hinduism and against Christianity. The social position of Christian converts in Kolhan is not enviable, and they are treated with contempt by the Hos. There is therefore little chance of any immediate progress of conversion. There are a few influential Christian headmen and Mankis in Kolhan, but their authority and prestige are derived from their political influence, and the recognition that they have had from the local administration. Their opinion in social matters carries little weight with people of their own village, or Pir, and they do not interfere in affairs which are purely of Killi interest, or which involve traditional rules of pains and penalties.

Though the isolation of the Hos and their protected form of administration have secured to them many of their traditional cultural traits, yet it

**Influence  
of Contact  
on their  
Religious Life**

must be admitted that their cultural life, particularly their religion, has still been influenced to a large extent by Hindu examples, and to a small extent by Christian ones. The analysis of the names of the Ho Bongas will explain how far this process of cultural contact has influenced their essential

beliefs, and how far they only touch the fringe of their religious life. The principal beneficent Bongas are not many. Sing-bonga or the sun god, Nage-bonga or the river goddess, supposed to be the wife of the sun god (according to some, Chando-bonga is his wife), Dessauli, or the god presiding over the Hatu, Marang-bonga, Disum-marang-bonga, or Marang-buru, the god of the ancestral home of the Hos, which according to Bamia Babonga, Deonra of Konslaposi, was on the top of a mountain, complete the list. More details about these gods will be given later on. The malignant and maleficent Bongas are practically innumerable, and they differ according to locality. In Konslaposi, Kotgarh and surrounding areas, the following list of maleficent Bongas was collected, though it is not exhaustive:—

- Kar-bongako:—1. Suni Kar.  
2. Rahu Kar.  
3. Dinda Kar.  
4. Chuhar Kar.

Gara-bonga or Gara Satamai (Nai Bhagawati of the Oriyas).

Buru-bongako:—Spirits residing on hills.

Bagia-bonga:—The tiger spirit.

- Jugni-bongako:—1. Baram-bonga.  
2. Churdu-bonga.

- Haukar-bongako:—1. Bisai Chandi.  
2. Chinta Dain.  
3. Kaltud.  
4. Barma Chandi.  
5. Ranga Chandi.  
6. Maikudra.  
7. Ranga Kani.

A comparison of this list with the spirits who cause diseases and loss to persons or cattle among the Korwas will explain the process of Hinduisation among these tribes. It explains how most of the mischievous or malevolent spirits of these people are not indigenous to the tribes, but borrowed from neighbouring cultures, particularly from the lower strata of local Hinduism. Most of the Bongas are borrowed or invented by the Deonras, and the propitiation of them is a matter in which the priests have little share. The Korwas possess the following formidable spirits who are propitiated by the village Baiga (witch doctor): Jalamukhi, Ghanashyam, Deohira, Simuria, Churail, Rakas, Sadhok, Maha-

**The Korwa  
Pantheon**

dani, Balsadhok, Banaspati, Dano, Raja Chandol, Atbhuji Devi, Angarmata, Burimata, Kodmamata, Jalnimata, Sairi-Devi, Rakti Bhowani and Sakti Bhowani.

Thus it is seen how the gods of the Hindus which are not regarded by them as malevolent, have also been borrowed by the village witch doctors, and have been given a sinister role to ward off the danger of their association

**Adoption of  
Alien Gods  
and Spirits**

with these caste people. Elsewhere it has been explained how the Korwas live in constant dread of their neighbours and are afraid of the magic of the Hindu castes, and that of the cognate tribes. It is therefore no wonder that the Baiga in the Korwa country should appeal to the same deities to which the Hindus themselves pray. There is a further reason for the adoption of foreign gods and deities. Constant failures and disappointments have caused these people to lose their former faith in the tribal pantheon, and new situations have arisen which require new methods of worship and propitiation. Thus the adoption of alien deities has not evoked any general protest, and has not led to any complete disorganisation of their religious life. These alien spirits, and foreign modes of propitiation and worship, only supplement their tribal prescriptions.

Most of the malignant Bongas of the Hos are not indigenous to them, but have their counterparts among the Oriyas: as for example, Gara Satamai is the same as the Nai Bhagawati of the Oriyas, from whom they have evidently borrowed it. Their propitiation is not the monopoly of the village Deuri who is the priest of the Hos. It is usually performed by a Deonra who may belong to any other tribe, or may even be a Diku. Kar is not a Ho word, it is the same word as Kal, the destroyer, and is associated with time. The word Kali which signifies the goddess of that name in popular Hinduism is derived from the same word Kal. Suni Kar, Rahu Kar, are none other than the planets Sani and Rahu, known to the Hindus as Kals. Gara Satamai is perhaps a name for the spirit presiding over tanks and ponds (i.e., stagnant pools), and Satamai is a corruption of Sat-ma or step-mother, the real mother being Nage-bonga, the river goddess. The word Chandi (another name for Kali) is taken from the Hindus, particularly the Oriyas, for example, Bisai Chandi (poisonous), Ranga Chandi (blood thirsty or red), Chinta Dain and Kaltud (a corruption of Kalketu). Jugini-bonga is none other than Jogini, who with her sister Dakini is said to accompany Kali or Chandi. Thus it is that most of the names of the malignant spirits of Kolhan, are foreign to the Hos.

If one examines the beneficent Bongas of the Hos, one finds that they are the names of natural objects believed to exercise a beneficent influence

on their life and happiness, and to them as such, the Hos offer periodical prayers and offerings as a part of their thanksgiving service. The sun, the moon, the river and the mountain, are the principal Bongas of the Hos, besides, Dessauli, which is the usual village godling of the Mundas, as well as of the Hos. Dessauli has always a fixed abode which is also known as

**Dessauli or  
the Village  
Godling**

Dessauli, and is situated somewhere outside the village boundary. It is usually under a tree, where the Hos place a flat stone slab on which Dessauli is believed to rest. The tree is tabooed to the Hos. No one may pluck leaves of the tree, or cut its branches, fell it or plough the land under it. Dessauli is the most important god of the Hos, and is practically replacing all other beneficent Bongas except Sing-bonga, who is identified with the Supreme Creator. Dessauli appears to be a forest deity, and his consort, Jahira-buru, is conceived as the spirit of the village grove or Jahira. Both are beneficent, and every village knows the places of these two Bongas.

Much confusion has arisen in recent years concerning the significance of the two words, Buru and Bonga. Both are Munda words, and in common usage they have a very wide application. Sometimes they have been inter-

**Buru and  
Bonga**

changed. A Ho may say, Marang-buru meaning the god of the mountain, though, correctly speaking, he should say, Marang-buru-bonga. Buru in Munda languages means a hill, big or small. Thus Bicha-buru, Jhandi-buru, Lutu-buru, Budha-buru, Kulpu-buru are names of hills in Kolhan. Dr. Campbell in his Sonthali-English Dictionary, gives three meanings of the word Buru, viz., (1) mountain, (2) a spirit or object of worship, (3) a religious festival of the semi-Hinduised Bhuiyas. As the last meaning, it has very limited application; the festival being a local one, it may be dismissed. Dr. Campbell writes, "The primary meaning of Buru is the same as that of Bonga. The two words are often joined together, as Bonga-buru, Bonga being a gloss on Buru." Mr. S. C. Roy also uses the word Buru to mean a spirit. He writes, "The original significance of the word Buru was god and in that sense the name would apply to Sing-bonga (who was the original Marang-buru or the great god). But this sense of the word is now obsolete. And the name Buru-bonga is applied to a spirit which resides in the hills." Mr. Roy reiterated this significance of the word Buru in an article on 'Totemism and Religion,' (B. & O. Research Society Journal, June, 1925). The Rev. P. O. Bodding in a paper on, "The Meaning of the words Buru and Bonga in Sonthali." (B. & O. Res. Soc. Journal, March, 1926), disagrees with this double significance of the word Buru, and after analysing the uses of the words, Buru and Bonga, comes to the following conclusion: "The result of the examination of these two words is, that Bonga is the common name for a spirit

of the spirit world and that Buru really and originally means a mountain but may in circumstances be used metaphorically for the same spirits, viz., the spirits supposed to have their residence on hills and mountains and those that are worshipped by the village priest as distinguished from those that are worshipped by the priest who officiates for the village in connection with the Bongas, i.e., on the outskirts and the village boundaries." Dr. Campbell further writes about the significance of the word Buru, "that the modern word Bonga has so entirely superseded the more ancient word Buru that the present generation of Sonthals are ignorant of its real significance." It is difficult to understand why the word Bonga is called a modern word. The Rev. Mr. Bodding says, "The word Bonga is not an Aryan word; a similar word may be found in some other languages (Dravidian) but the connection is doubtful. It seems just as possible to take it to be a genuine Sonthal word." The Hos use the word Bonga to mean all spirits and powers that move in air, water or land, and the word Buru to denote hills, or ranges of hills. It is also true that they sometimes use the word Buru to mean a Bonga, just as Marang-buru or Jahira-buru, but they can always separate the idea of spirit from that of the hill, as when they mean only a hill, and not a hill spirit. Most of the big hills in Kolhan are known as seats of powers, and approach to them without sufficient protection (which may be in the form of amulets, charms or promises of sacrifice) means danger. It is evident that the very name of a Buru reminds them of a Bonga associated with or presiding over the hill, and thus the popular significance of Buru has come to be established. Buru is also meant to signify jungle, not every jungle, but those that are on the tops of hills, so that when they offer sacrifice to Buru-bonga on the Marang Parav day of the Maghe festival, they mean the forest spirit that resides on hills. The transition in meaning from Buru as mountain or hill, to Buru as forest, is not very difficult. Hoffman writes, "The original Mundas lived in the vicinity of the Himalayas. It is natural for them to have looked upon those majestic heights as the abode of the Creator. Hence the word Buru came to denote divinity itself, and subsequently according to the genius of the language to denote many cognate ideas such as to acknowledge as god or to adore."

The word Bonga requires some explanation, as I believe that the word spirit does not convey the real meaning. It is indiscriminately used by these tribes to denote all sorts of powers or spirits. The Rev. Mr. Bodding writes, "All the spirits worshipped by the Sonthals are called Bonga." Mr. Roy translates Bonga as deity as well as spirit. He writes, "The idea that the Mundas are worshippers of malevolent spirit appears to have arisen from confounding these two classes of deities who are the 'Manita-bongas' "

or gods to be worshipped with a class of spirits who require to be appeased or propitiated. This latter class are indeed no gods at all nor are they believed by the Mundas to be such." Thus we find that the word Bonga is a generic name, and is applied indiscriminately to refer to gods and spirits. The real meaning of Bonga is a power, a force, and the religion of the Hos may be called Bongaism. This power is so distinctly conceived by the Hos, that the belief in particular spirits may be destroyed without affecting their belief in Bongaism. If a tree is regarded as the seat of a Bonga, the Hos dare not fell it, or cut its branches, but if any Diku or any member of a different tribe fells it, he never worries, for the Bonga cannot be destroyed, it unites with the larger unit which is also Bonga.

Hoffman explains Bonga as a being beyond the reach of sense-perception. He further explains by saying that 'Bongas are those living beings which though firmly believed as existing and influencing us for good or for evil, can neither be seen nor heard nor perceived; though fluttering about everywhere, they are, so far as sense-perception goes, just as if they were not.' A Ho recognises the existence of a world of Bongas, but this world is not away from his own, it cuts across his own, and he realises the presence of this world in his everyday life, though he cannot express this association in terms of space, distance, height or depth. When a Ho dies, he goes to this world, he is 'bongaia'; to die is 'bongai jana,' to live is 'menaia.' It is not a transformation or a metamorphosis, it is only a reversion, a union with the world of which it was a part, a fraction of Bonga. The power which we have called Bonga is possessed by every individual, every animal, every plant, every stream, rivulet, tank, rock, tree, forest, field and mountain. It is possessed in greater or less degree by man, which gives him his power over, or makes him submit to, others. When a man possesses a personality and wields authority over others, he is a Bongalekan, i.e., a man like a Bonga, an old, great or in any way respectable man. The Europeans are powerful, they are administrators, managers and big merchants, they wield great influence and power, they do not worship Bongas, because they are themselves as good as Bongas, cf. Saebloko inku begar bongarenko, akoge bongalekano ente chikan bongako manatania?

Bonga is a power, a very big power, which pervades all space, as it were. Bonga has not got any shape or form. It can take any form or shape. A mountain is the seat of a Bonga, but the mountain is not the Bonga itself. The river is known as the Nage-bonga, but the water in it is not the Bonga. The sun is known as Sing-bonga, but the warmth of the

sun, or the day light, is not the Bonga, it is only the seat of the Bonga. The tree and the stone slab placed under it are referred to as Dessauli, but remove the stone slab, cut down the tree, Dessauli is still there. It is possible to transfer this power, or Dessauli, by prayer and supplication, to another tree, and set up another seat as his abode. The sun, the moon, the river, the mountain become gods by virtue of this power, and not by themselves. This power which we may call Bonga gives life to all animals and plants, it encourages growth in plants, it brings rain, storm, hail, floods and cold. Like the Polynesian Mana, it kills and destroys evils, stops epidemics, cures diseases, gives current to rivers, venom to snakes, and strength to tigers and wolves. From this belief in power, the Hos regard every known phenomenon in nature as its manifestation, and trace everything to the presence of a Bonga. They carry the idea further to explain all the evil done by men, by the evil eye, and the evil tongue, the activities of witches and sorcerers, and call every maleficent or beneficent deity, Bonga. Bonga, therefore, means only a power, a source of all power as it were. A hierarchy of power is also recognised, with the sun at the head and a number of lesser powers, such as the moon, the Marang-buru, the Dessauli, Nage-bonga, Jahir-buru, and others, ranged in order of their traditional prestige, influenced to a certain extent by their experiences. But this conception is not essential to Bongaism proper, it is something which has evolved in the course of their association with the different manifestations of this power. The hierarchy might have been established by a process of trial and error in the course of their attempts to adjust themselves to their habitat, and all that surrounds them.

What was only a vague and mysterious power became identified later on with the thing, or object, from which it derived its name. Thus we find to-day that the word Bonga is popularly used to mean the object with which it is associated, as if the thing itself was the power. The seat of the power was identified with the power itself, and thus mountain became a Bonga, the sun became the Supreme Being, the river was taken as the Nage-bonga. What was known as the power of the river, that which made the water flow, the tide to rise, the current to pass, became the same as the river itself; and thus a change in thought was accomplished. The idolatry of their Hindu neighbours might have served as the impetus to this mental change among the Hos, and their attempts to realise the abstract in the concrete manifested themselves in the conception of the different sizes and forms of Bongas.

Although the Hos believe in the beneficence of their Bongas, they also know that these Bongas can, and do punish or chastise them. Earthly failures, bodily afflictions, and material losses are accounted for by the

#### **Transformation of Bonga**

fact that they often disregard the traditional rules of conduct, and fail to follow the mode of life, which alone can ensure a peaceful and happy existence on earth. Whenever they fall victims to a disease or an epidemic, when their crops fail, or their dexterity in hunting and fishing are of no avail, they first blame themselves and not the Bongas, which shows that they are not worshippers of malevolent deities. They believe that their action interferes with the will of the Bongas and hence troubles arise. So long as they follow the traditional rules and usages, which have been followed by their ancestors, they need not invoke their deities, but if they violate them, knowingly or unknowingly, consciously or unconsciously, some reaction must follow. The source of an illness or a calamity is traced by the Deuri and the Deonra through revelation in dreams only. There is no direct way of knowing the role of Bongas in their day to day life. It is revealed in dreams, and it is only the Deuri or the Deonra who can interpret the significance of these dreams. That is how diversity of beliefs exists in Kolhan about the shape, the size and the role of the Bongas, and the methods and prescriptions of propitiating or worshipping them. The beneficent powers, when solemnly approached by the Deuri, always give a clue or information as to the real cause of things, so that there subsists between the Hos and their beneficent gods a friendly relation which is used to their advantage.

Sing-bonga is the principal god of the Hos, for he created them. The version of the story of their genesis runs as follows: Sing-bonga was offended with his creation and created an atmosphere of blazing flames in order to destroy all life on earth. Nage-bonga, unknown to any one, kept two souls, a brother and a sister under a vast sheet of water. This fact was discovered by the crow who informed Sing-bonga that there were still some souls left. Sing-bonga promised a fowl, a buffalo, a bullock and a goat to Nage-bonga in exchange for the souls, for he had realised the ill-consequence of his fury and wished to recreate men on earth. When Nage-bonga refused, Sing-bonga offered her a pig, and promised not to destroy the two souls. At last Nage-bonga agreed, and thus Nage-bonga is believed by the Hos to be fond of pigs, and offerings of pigs are made on important occasions to her. The rest of the story has already been told in a preceding chapter.

Nage-bonga or the river deity is a very sympathetic Bonga. She is known in some parts of Kolhan as the wife of Sing-bonga. She is very fond of pigs, and the Hos offer pigs, fowls, turmeric and eggs to her. Wherever there is Nage-bonga, water never dries up. Haldi or turmeric is given to her for her bath, and also eggs, because the shells are meant to contain water. When Nage-bonga is offended people

suffer from conjunctivitis, and diseases of the ear. Hydrocele is caused by Nage-bonga. She is believed to have some place of abode inside the river. As it is seldom known where she actually dwells, the Hos do not disturb the water by throwing stones or refuse into it. Bamia Babonga, the Deonra of Bantra Pir, believes that when Nage-bonga is offended she kills the offender by shooting him with an arrow at midnight. This belief, however, was not corroborated by other Deonras.

The form of Dessauli as conceived by the Hos varies in different parts of Kolhan. As the interpretation of the size, shape and form is the monopoly of the village Deuris in Kolhan, and as much of their beliefs is influenced by their knowledge of other religions, specially, the conception of god in those religions, the Deuris differ in their interpretation. In Bantra and Kotgarh Pirs, it is the usual belief among the Hos that Dessauli appears in dreams and whenever people dream of a man on horseback, or a European or a man with khaki turban, they know that Dessauli is offended and demands placation. Dessauli has a fixed abode, either within the village, or outside it. He is usually regarded as a benevolent god and is believed to protect the Hos from the ravages of diseases and epidemics and from those evil spirits which are foreign to them. He gives rains, averts hail and storms, and he is also the god of harvests. The Hos offer periodic sacrifices to Dessauli. The Deuri offers a hen and a cock during the Maghe festival and during the Hero festival every family offers a he-goat. When epidemics or diseases prevail in Kolhan, the Deuri offers a hen, a cock, a goat, a buffalo, and a pig as revealed in a dream.

There is much difference of opinion about the place of Marang-buru in the Ho pantheon. In some villages, it is called Marang-bonga, in others Marang-buru, while Katumarang and Disum-bonga are other names for the same deity. Katumarang is the god of a few Killis in Kolhan, viz., Simko, Laguri, Babonga, Chatomba, Chata, Kora, Jirai and Herai, who do not worship Marang-bonga. Similarly, Purty Killi which is the largest Killi in Kolhan having more than seven sub-groups, which are all exogamous, now worships Disum-bonga which is the same as Marang-buru. Marang-buru is not worshipped at any festival. When the Hos dream that somebody on the back of an elephant appears in the village, or somebody is attacked by a buffalo, they believe that offerings should be made to Marang-buru. The same mode of worship as in the case of Dessauli is prescribed, and sometimes Marang-bonga is worshipped along with Dessauli. It has also a fixed abode to the north of the village, and worship is made facing north. They have a faint recollection of their ancestral home where this mountain lies. It is believed to be perpetually covered with snow, which suggests the Himalayan origin of the Hos. The

worship of Marang-buru as a Ho deity may be an early creed with the Hos, for there is little unanimity about the identity of this god, except that it is a huge (Marang) mountain, covered with snow, situated somewhere to the north of Kolhan.

Before we describe the malevolent Bongas of the Hos, we should distinguish between the village Deuri and the Deonra. This is significant because the roles of these two ministers differ. The Deuri is almost always a Ho. In those villages where the Deuri is a non-Ho, he is also the Deonra of the village. The Deonra may or may not be a Ho, and he may belong to any caste or tribe living in the village. There may be more than one Deonra in a village, but there is only one Deuri. The Deuri is born, while the Deonra is usually made. The difference is due to the fact that the Deuri is entrusted only with the worship of the benevolent deities, who are few in number. His duty is more or less the offering of a thanksgiving to the Dessauli, and occasionally to Sing-bonga, Nage-bonga and Disum or Marang-bonga. The last is not very much invoked by the Hos. But the Deonra may have to deal with a legion of spirits, malevolent and mischievous, who interfere with every department of Ho life. Most of the spirits which the Deonra has to propitiate, are of foreign origin, and new ones are created. When the Deuri worships the benevolent gods for a particular disease or some material loss to an individual family, the Deonra will propitiate a malevolent spirit, and both claim to satisfy the god or the spirit with equal success.

In some villages, the Deuri overshadows the Deonra, but in most cases the latter is more powerful than the former. The resourcefulness of the latter and the more definite character of his prognosis make him easily a favourite, and this is why some Deuris to-day have taken also the role of Deonras to retain their clientele. The result has been a blending of functions, and a position that obscures the real distinction between these two village functionaries. The method of divination practised by the Deuri and the Deonra is nearly the same, but the manner of propitiation and worship remains distinct. The Hos have kept their indigenous mode of worship intact so far as their benevolent deities are concerned, but new methods and processes have found ready access with the Deonras in ministering to the needs of these borrowed spirits.

To take one example; the propitiation of Kar-bonga appears to be different from the mode of worshipping the village Dessauli, or even the Marang-buru. Kar is propitiated when anybody dreams of a magician or a Mahomedan. The Deonra offers molasses, ghee, milk, curd and honey, sandal-paste, flowers, and an oil lamp. A black or red cock, or a black and young she-goat are

**Propitiation  
of Bongas**

sacrificed to Kar. An effigy of straw is made, and is thrown out of the village after propitiation. The manner of worship indicated above resembles a Hindu ritual, with Pancha Gabya, Chandan, and Bali or sacrifice.

When again, the Deonra dreams of a snake, a crocodile or a fish, he believes that Gara Satamai is offended. She is propitiated in the following way: A Gandu or stool is placed on the ground, and seven small earthen pots of water are placed on it. The pots are painted with vermilion and twigs of Gulanchi flower are put in the mouth of each of the pots. Offerings of a cock or a hen are then made to Gara Satamai by the Deonra.

When they dream of a tiger, they believe that Bagia-bonga requires to be propitiated. This appears to be the tiger spirit worshipped by all the Munda speaking tribes of India, as also by Hindu castes in Bihar and Bengal. In the latter province, the cult is known as that of Dakshin Rai. There is some confusion about the identity of this Bonga. The Deuris also worship the tiger spirit, but in association with Buru-bonga which is the jungle spirit. As the tiger is the chief dreaded element in the forest, the association is not remote.

When the Deonra dreams of a trader carrying merchandise on the back of a bullock, he will tell you that the Baram-bonga is offended, and needs propitiation. Baram-bonga is responsible for smallpox and cattle diseases. The association of smallpox with cattle is common in Kolhan, and offering of a black hen, or a red cock is made by the village Ahir. The Ahir keeps the head of the sacrificed animal, and the body is taken by the Hos who cook the meat and eat it.

The roles of Churda and Haukar-bongas are also known through dreams. If they dream of a pipul tree, Churda needs propitiating under it. The usual requisites for worship are turmeric, vermilion, Arua rice, Gulanchi flower, a black hen and a red cock. When dogs or cats appear in dreams, it is believed that the Haukar-bonga is displeased, and must be propitiated by the Deonra with stones, burnt charcoal, Gulanchi flower, vermilion, a red cock or a black hen, and a peacock's feather.

How a tribe adopts an alien god, assimilates it to its culture and changes the rites and usages to suit its own tribal pattern, will be found in the adoption of the Manasha cult in Kolhan. The use of amulets and charms

**Alien Gods** and the skill of the Deonra in eradicating the poison of snake-bite by chants, hymns and massaging, were considered sufficient in earlier days to fight the attacks of snakes, which are abundant in the hills and woods of Kolhan. The difficulty of communications in those days was great, so that deaths from snake-bites could not be reported throughout the length and breadth of Kolhan. Even if these indigenous

prescriptions were insufficient to protect the lives of the Hos, who were victims to such accidents, the need of a change of procedure was not much felt. The failures of the Deonra were taken as the result of the deceased's own acts or of his violation of certain important taboo. To-day each case of failure is reported to the headquarters station of the district, and the news spreads like lightning all over Kolhan. Thus the insufficiency of their own methods has encouraged a number of people to adopt the Hindu goddess Manasha, who is believed to preside over snakes. A number of young men have learnt the hymns and prayers to this goddess as a protection against snake-bites, and as a method of driving the poison from the system. The Guru or teacher is usually an Oriya Ojha, who teaches spectacular methods of invoking the goddess, and to-day there are a number of centres in Kolhan where these mantrams are taught to the disciples whose number is rapidly increasing. In the heart of urban life, in the village of Dumbisai, which is two furlongs from the Chaibassa town, Gona teaches his disciples the secrets of this cult, and the latter include the second son of Babu Dulu Manki, sometime aboriginal member of the B. & O. Legislative Council. Every fortnight, two days before the Amaosa or the new moon, Gono makes an enclosure in his courtyard under a big tamarind tree and sits in meditation there. His forehead is painted lavishly with vermilion, and on either side of him are plates of Arua rice with molasses, and banana, cut into small pieces. A few leaf cups of Illi are also placed along with the offerings. On all sides of the enclosure his disciples sit with folded hands to listen to the weird and unintelligible mantrams which are nothing but names of Hindu gods and goddesses with their modes of worship, the details of the offerings of which they are fond, and stories of the assistance they have rendered to this or that individual in times of calamity. They are muttered and sung in such a sing-song voice that very few could understand that they were mostly in Bengali spoken in Oriya style. After three to four hours of meditation and the recitation of the hymns which were sung by his disciples in chorus, Gona fell prostrate before the small mound of earth which represented the goddess Manasha, and suddenly the situation outside the enclosure developed into one of great activity. The disciples began to shake their heads, foam at the mouth and knock their heads against the wicker fence, some receiving nasty cuts. Then three or four of the disciples took canes in their hands (which were kept near the mound within the enclosure,) and began to strike each other. It was a piteous sight to see Manki Saheb's son being beaten mercilessly by his co-disciples, for he was not yet possessed as the others were. This young man (i.e., Dulu Manki's son) is the *de facto* Manki of his Pir, as his father cannot perform his duties due to old age. The participation of the Manki's son in such

rites indicates the attitude of the people, the masses and the classes in Kolhan, towards the adoption and assimilation of alien gods, although it is apparent that this *modus operandi* is characteristic of their cultural pattern. Gona claims to-day a large number of disciples in Dumbisai, mostly young men and children. People from neighbouring villages, such as Sikursai, are also flocking to his fold. Gona's disciples, after being tested in the way described above, tie a black string round their arms on the day of the new moon and are thereby believed to be immune from snake-bite.

The interpretation of dreams as a means to explaining the role of the gods seems to be of recent origin. It aims at a greater definiteness and exactitude, and thus is traceable to the influence of the Dikus all round, particularly, to the Oriya Brahmins, who have gained much popularity with the higher classes. The nature of the dreams, such as meeting a Mohemedan, a European, a peon, somebody on the back of an elephant, or a trader carrying merchandise on the back of a bullock, suggests that the association of their gods with the foreign elements in the population is not accidental, but is engendered by a habitual mental process which attributes all their miseries to the presence of the Dikus. In some cases, however, similarity of experience is evident between the Hos and the Dikus, as when smallpox is associated with a merchant carrying merchandise on the back of a bullock. This is a common belief in popular Hinduism, and an epidemic of smallpox is preceded by such dreams.

The adoption of alien gods by the Hos has forced their own tribal gods into the background, although it is true that they still have the same respect for them as they had in earlier days. It is also a fact that the Hos pay more attention to malignant powers than to traditionally beneficent powers. Thus Sing-bonga, Nage-bonga, Marang-bonga and Chando-bonga do not receive as much worship or as many offerings and sacrifices as do the Chandis or the Haukar-bongas.

The belief in a life substance, or soul substance is prevalent among the Hos. They believe that the vitalising force, which they know as Bonga, enters into every being and everything, endowing it with a life substance, or the life essence necessary for its existence and functioning.

#### **Soul-stuff**

The usefulness of the thing makes the Hos believe in the existence of a soul substance in it, and thus they believe in the existence of soul in inanimate objects. They conceive them as living beings, and even arrange marriages for them, as for example when they want to increase the effectiveness of their weapons. Growth in any shape or form is associated with soul substance, and unusual growth or unnatural shape is attributed to an increase of it. They believe that one can augment

or invigorate one's soul stuff with the help of others, and can also partly or entirely lose it to another soul owner. For this reason they are careful to eat the centres of soul substance in animals, viz., the head, the heart, the liver, etc., for thereby they are supposed to acquire the qualities of the animal whose parts they eat. Similarly, the soul of the corn is the sheaf as the sheaf gives the food. The soul stuff in man escapes for ever at death, and it may be temporarily lost in dreams, or extracted by witches, or reduced by the Najomadani (the person that administers poison). The Hos believe that the soul continues in its existence after death and is sheltered in the Ading or family tabernacle. The ancestral spirits form a segment of the great power which they conceive as Bonga, and after death, the soul of the deceased unites with this power, losing itself in it. The Oa-bongas or ancestral spirits are all worshipped together, and are not regarded as being separable one from the other. The Oa-bongas are invoked and worshipped every day for the safety of the Hos whose prosperity and progress are believed to be in their keeping. In times of need they form a bulwark against dangers and the mischief of malignant Bongas, and are said to warn families in cases of impending calamity. Not all souls can unite with this power. Death from the influence of malignant spirits, such as Churail and Baram-bonga, makes it impossible for the souls to unite with the ancestral spirits sheltered in the Ading. The spirits of such persons are used by malignant spirits to chastise and punish others who offend them. They are known as Nasom, Mua and Haukar-bongas, and the Hos live in mortal dread of these mischievous spirits. They can be controlled by the witches who set them against particular persons or things.

There is no Mundari word equivalent in meaning to taboo, the word Bonga being commonly used to explain the source of all prohibitions. There are, however, two important classes of taboo among the Hos, one relating to food, the other to marriage. The object of all prohibitions is to protect

**Taboos** a person or a group of persons from injury or danger. The violation of a taboo is attended with risks, not only to the persons who violate, but to all who are in any way associated with them, as for example when a group of persons belonging to different Killis participate in an economic undertaking. The typical taboos in connection with food are those which have traditionally been prescribed for women who are pregnant. The purpose is not only to safeguard the physiological system, but also to shield the mother and the child from the harm done by witches, etc., who use food for the administration of Najom. The Hos have tabooed Carpandu (*Ruellia suffruticosa*) to women. Its root is used to prepare Illi. If a larger dose is taken it causes abortion. Similarly, the root of Ankoadaru (*Alangium lamaruii*) which is used as a purgative, is tabooed to pregnant women. A

number of plants and herbs are tabooed which have, on analysis, proved to be poisonous. The violation therefore of such food restrictions has led to disasters which have maintained the confidence of the people in their efficacy. The Hos taboo all kinds of interdining between different Killis, between different classes within the same Killi, between persons of different tribes, and between strangers even if they belong to the same Killi. Taking food from strangers is dangerous to the person who takes it, and may be so to others of his group also. Consequently, a person who violates a taboo is ostracised, and is made a Kajomesin.

A similar taboo exists in connection with mating, though its force has been weakened by the disintegration of religious beliefs. The endogamy of the tribe is not sacred to-day, with the result that many marriages have taken place between the Hos and other tribes. Liaison between Diku men and Ho girls is increasing, and cases that have occurred in Chaibassa during the last ten years or so would fill a volume. Thus, there being no longer any deterrent to mating with strangers, social authority vested in the Killi punch has to exercise its prerogative to ensure a compliance with social traditions. Killi exogamy has not led to an indiscriminate alliance between the different Killis, and as far as our knowledge goes, taboo on marriage outside a particular local area can be traced to a dread of unfamiliar Bongas, who were conceived as hostile, and therefore dangerous. It is a fact that the vague conception of a mysterious power, defined as Bonga, has resulted in the postulation of a number of spiritual beings who possess a share of this power in greater or lesser degree, but are known to be equally vague and uncertain. This accounts for the name of the Bonga varying so often with the locality. Disum-bonga, Katumarang-bonga, Marang-bonga are one and the same, but are conceived as different entities in different parts of Kolhan. Baram-bonga is said to be the older name for Sing-bonga (Col. Dalton). Hoffman does not corroborate this, and according to him the Mundas know nothing of this identification. Hoffman has identified this Bonga with the spirit who causes epidemics. He further says, "The sacrifices offered to Baram-bonga are made to the east of the village, i.e., in the direction of the Ganges, as some maintain, because the Ganges is considered by the Hindus as the originator of smallpox." The Ganges is not regarded by the Hindus as the originator of smallpox. Even if it is so, it involves an additional knowledge of the geographical position of the Ganges, which is not to the east of the Ranchi district. Offering of sacrifices to the east of the village may have some connection with the sun, as in all the sacrifices which the Munda speaking people offer to the maleficent Bongas the prayers end with a thanksgiving to Sing-bonga. Baram-bonga is identified with Jugini-bonga among the Hos. This explains the role of

Baram-bonga as causing epidemics. Whenever an epidemic carries off any of the villagers, the caste Hindus offer sacrifices, and worship the goddess Kali, who is conceived of as presiding over epidemics. The goddess is accompanied by two of her maids who are known as Dakini and Jogini. They are the agents of Kali, through whom the diseases are spread. The identification of Baram-bonga with Jogini-bonga is thus easily understood. The Bongas of one village are not necessarily those of another, though the names may be the same. As a result thereof, the Deonra of a village often establishes friendly relations with the Bongas of other villages, and in many areas we find one Deonra catering for the needs of a number of them. The witches of one village, during their training, are also required to propitiate the Dessauli of neighbouring villages along with the Dessauli of their own village, so that the effects of their spells and activities may not be destroyed by the rivalry existing between the gods of different villages. The Deonra of Jorapukur is consulted by the people of neighbouring villages, so also Bamia Babonga, the Deonra of Konslaposi, is known and consulted by the whole of Bantra Pir, and even by people of the Kotgarh Pir.

The influence of the Deonras, in other words, the knowledge of the Bongas of an area, determines the limit of exogamy, for there is risk in marrying in villages the Bongas of which are unknown. Though it is difficult to-day to furnish a definite proof of this mental attitude, the knowledge of a wider area brought about by better transport and communications, coupled with the disintegration of their indigenous beliefs and practices, has made it possible to extend the limits of marital selection. It nevertheless remains true that the villages which are closely allied by ties of marriage are those which share the same gods and spirits, and in many cases the same Deonra.

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

### FESTIVALS

Though the process of Hinduisation of the Hos, particularly of the higher classes, has been going on for a long time, and many of the Hindu ceremonies are observed by them, their own indigenous festivals have not been allowed to fall into disuse. Cultural contact with the Dikus has resulted in the adoption of many of the latter's festivals; but this adoption means only a participation in the many fairs held during major Hindu festivals, and occasional sacrifices to certain Hindu gods. In the list of Diku festivals in which the Hos take part are to be found the Chat, the Dewali, the Dusserah, and the Chait Parav. The worship of Mahadev at the Chait Parav, of the goddess Luxmi during the autumn, and of the goddess Shyama, or Kali during the Dewali, is popular among the Hos.

To-day the higher classes among the Hos, the families of the Mankis and the Mundas, do not take an active part in their own festivals. Nevertheless they retain sympathy with the organisers, and their assistance takes the shape of voluntary contributions to the common pool, out of which the extraordinary expenses are met. To an outsider these people appear to be aloof from the tribal life. They themselves will avow that they have little to do with these customary rites, but at the same time they would not dream of interfering with them. This is also the attitude of the educated, the so-called detribalised Hos. The family life of an educated Ho is not different from that of an uneducated Ho. He feels that although the tribal system is not of any use to him, the tribal code need not be abandoned. Even if he discards the material culture of his fellow-men, he has not changed much in his outlook towards his social environment. It has already been shown how tribal prescriptions and medical aid are believed to be complementary to each other. At the marriage, at the time of his wife's confinement, at the death and mortuary rites, he adheres to the traditional social usages of his tribe. He does not violate the prohibited degrees in marriage, nor his Killi regulations. In his Bapala ceremony he allows the same triad of dancing, singing, and folk-rites. He insists on the presence of his Killi mates and relations at his ceremonies and worship-festivals. He thinks that although the feasts and festivities that are customary at marriage, birth and death may not be essential, yet some harm may come through their non-

observance, so he does not dare take the risk. Thus, festivals in Kolhan are celebrated to-day with the same traditional rites and the same utilitarian motive.

The Hos observe seven important festivals. These are mostly agricultural, and as such their time and season are determined by the needs of agriculture. The following are the traditional festivals of the Hos:—

**Important Festivals** (1) Maghe, (2) Baha, (3) Damurai, (4) Hero, (5) Jomnama, (6) Kalam and (7) Bahtauli. Col. Dalton's list is more descriptive. They are:—(1) Maghe Parav or Dessauli Bonga, (2) Baha Bonga, (3) Damurai, (4) Hira Bonga, (5) Jomnama, (6) Kalam Bonga and (7) Bahtauli Bonga. Evidently Col. Dalton uses the word Bonga to mean Parav, which is not a Mundari word. The Hos do not call Maghe Parav, Dessauli Bonga, as it is apparently meaningless. In all the festivals, the object of worship is the village Dessauli, though prayers are offered to Sing-bonga, and other Bongas of lesser distinction. Col. Dalton's statement that the sacrifice and offerings are made by the village priest, if there be one, and if not, by any elder of the village who possesses the legendary lore, is not accurate. In those villages where there is no resident Deuri, the Deuri of the adjacent village comes and officiates at the ceremony. Most villages, however, possesses a Deuri family. The Deuri is usually hereditary but a member of the original Khuntkhattidar family may be selected a Deuri, if, and when, the family of the Deuri fails to continue the line. The Deuri may be elected by the village punch from the family of the deceased Deuri, and indispensably from the latter's Killi. Being a village functionary, he is entitled to certain consideration in kind for his services from the villagers, and this is ungrudgingly given. The Deuri also possesses a certain amount of land which is usually cultivated and worked by some of the villagers, who do not pay in kind for his services. In the village of Rajabasa, a few miles from Chaibassa, the Deuri died in 1924, and the Maghe festival of 1925 was performed by the brother of the deceased Deuri, at which his minor son assisted his paternal uncle at the time of worship. The presence of the Deuri's son was an essential part of the service, as the mantle of the Deuri was believed to have fallen on his son. This son is now of age, and is the Deuri of the village.

Most of the festivals we have noted above are associated with agriculture, and the ceremonies are performed to increase the fertility of the fields, to protect the crops from natural and supernatural calamities, or as a part of the thanksgiving service to the village, and tutelary Bongas. The motive of these festivals is, therefore, the same as that manifested in the rites of all agricultural castes, with whom they share the land; but the mode of worship, and the manner of participation are peculiar to the tribe.

The Baha festival is held in honour of the village Dessauli, and offerings of Sal flowers to him, and the garlands of Sal flowers that adorn the necks of the people during the period show the intimate connection between the Sal forest and the life of the residents of the village. The villages of to-day stand on grounds that were once occupied by Sal forests, and many of them are adjacent to large patches of Sal forests.

Before the seeds are sown for the first rice crop, the village Dessauli and his consort Jahira-buri, are worshipped by the village Deuri, and the Oa-bongas by the oldest member of the respective families in the family Ading. If this festival is not celebrated the seeds do not germinate and transplantation is not possible. When again, the crops grow up, and before they show signs of ripening, the village Dessauli and his consort are again worshipped with sacrifices and offerings, and the blessings of the Bongas are thus ensured. The rice plants are not expected to mature and yield the desired quantity of grains unless every cultivator sacrifices a fowl in his field, and hangs up the wings of the sacrificed fowl in the cleft of a bamboo stuck in the centre of the ricefield. Next, the Ho cultivator, before he partakes of the new harvest in August and September, offers a white cock to Sing-bonga along with a preparation of boiled rice, and invites his Killi mates to a ceremonial feast. As if all these were not enough, the Ho cultivator worships the village Dessauli by sacrificing a fowl, or a goat, according to his means, before the straw is removed from the threshing floor to be stacked. It is not true to say that the Hos still believe in the efficacy of their rites. Evidently many of their practices appear meaningless to them through experience, but although these rites may have lost their productive virtue, their protective role is not denied even by the sophisticated cultivators.

Thus it is clear that most of their ceremonies are originally agricultural rites. These festivals are arranged in such a way as to enable the cultivator to concentrate his attention at critical stages, before, during and after his agricultural operations, and at the same time to allow him to participate in these ceremonies without prejudice to his work in the fields. Some of these festivals are held before the fields are ploughed and the seeds sown, and some after the harvesting. There is no fixed date on which they have to be held; this depends on the economic condition of the villagers and, as said before, on the needs of agriculture. If the monsoon is late or the Sal trees blossom early, the festivals are either postponed, or expedited. The village elders decide when, and how, to perform these tribal undertakings. As each village decides for itself, a particular ceremony may extend over a long period. This is true in the case of Maghe and Baha festivals. The villages which are adjacent to Sal forests have little option in the celebra-

#### **Agricultural Origins of Ceremonies**

tion of the Baha festival, as it is essential for the festival to be completed before the first Sal flower touches the ground. In villages situated in the plains, the Baha festival is only nominally observed, and there is no elaborate system of rites and rituals in force.

The principal festival of the Hos is the Maghe which is held in January and February. The importance of this festival and its implications in tribal life has been described by Col. Dalton in his classic account of the tribe.

Since then, little has been written about the Hos. Col. Dalton writes, "The festival (Maghe) therefore becomes a saturnalia during which servants forget their duty to their masters, children their reverence for parents, men their respect for women, and women all notions of modesty, delicacy and gentleness; they become raging Bacchantes. They have a strange notion that at this period men and women are so much charged with vicious propensities that it is absolutely necessary for the safety of the person to let off steam by allowing for a time full vent to the passions." Again he writes, "Their natures appear to undergo a temporary change. Sons and daughters revile their parents in gross language and parents their children; men and women become almost like animals in the indulgence of their amorous propensities. They enact all that was ever portrayed by prurient artists in a Bacchanalian festival or Pandean orgie, and as the light of the sun they adore and the presence of numerous spectators seem to be no restraint on their indulgence, it cannot be accepted that chastity is preserved when the shades of night fall on such a scene of licentiousness and debauchery."

This is fine rhetoric but extremely overdrawn. The duration of the Maghe festival in Kolhan, which lasts sometimes a month, or more, naturally leads to some undesirable effects. Mr. Craven in 1898, suggested the fixing of a date for the celebration of Maghe for the whole of Kolhan. Mr. Bompas, however, did not agree with his suggestion, on the ground that though a good deal of drinking and license is manifested there is none of the open and flagrant indecency mentioned by Col. Dalton.

The Maghe festival, no doubt, provides opportunities for young people of both sexes to indulge in amorous adventures and for the villagers to get drunk, but it also affords scope for the selection of partners, which is extremely important in view of the traditional limit to the period of marriage, and the excessive bride-price prevalent. Marriage in Kolhan can only be performed within a certain specified period, always after the Maghe festival. This period comes to an abrupt end immediately before the rains set in and the sowing operation begins. It is, therefore, during the Maghe festival that marriages are usually arranged, and Apartipi and

Rajikhusi matings planned and effected. The duration of this festival, extending as it sometimes does over six to eight weeks, makes it possible for people of one village to go to a neighbouring one, to the Maghe dances, and for people of different Pirs to meet together. In this way it is possible for young men to get acquainted with the girls of other villages, and ultimately to choose their wives. A detailed scrutiny of marriage and family life in one village, viz., Gundipoa, has shown that three out of every five marriages could be traced to the opportunities provided by the dances during the Maghe festival. The value of social ceremonies and entertainments in Kolhan cannot be overestimated, as they bring together people of different villages, and of distant Pirs which is becoming more and more difficult, because of the recent campaign of social reform, and the growing class consciousness mentioned before. The educated Hos are not against the performance of these periodical festivals; on the other hand, money and leisure have led to the adoption by them of a number of Hindu festivals as well, and they are trying to popularise them among the people. Nevertheless they do not approve of dances, that is, Dama, Damang and Susung, (drums, dances and songs).

As the Ho poet sings:—

“ No more engage in merriment by drum, dance and song,  
 No more toss your heads in dancing Akhara,  
 You are drinking leaf-cup after leaf-cup,  
 Drink no more out of big pots, but  
 Seek the road to your country's good!”

A short, sharp and simultaneous performance of the Maghe festival in all villages will hinder, rather than assist, in the solution of their tragic social problem of marriage, as it will not allow any inter-Killi, nor inter-Hatu participation, which is essential for an exogamous community with high bride-price, limited period of marriage, and chronic destitution.

Much has been written about the licentiousness and debauchery of the Hos during the festivals but all these are generalisations which explain little or nothing about the nature of this Saturnalia of indulgence. I have participated in a number of such festivals in different villages, have drunk with the people, danced with them their tribal dances, have seen the performance of the weird rites associated with the festival, and have observed the drunken men and women, even after the shades of night have fallen on “such scenes of licentiousness and debauchery.” It is true that the people drink leaf cup after leaf cup, until it intoxicates them. They do use gross language, and will be possessed by spirits or Bongas, as they will tell you, they may occasionally be seen even romping with women, but they

do not behave as animals. The girls of the village find their friends among the visitors from other villages, and men their partners from the girls of other villages. Husbands and wives allow a certain amount of liberty to one another, but the liberty is not greatly abused in the way that Col. Dalton has described. The Ho dances require skill and strenuous application, and during the Maghe festival, men and women display their dexterity and skill in dancing the tribal dances. If there is any license, it is usually inter-Killi and not intra-Killi, and may result in permanent unions. The tribal elders, and the leader of the village youths are always alert, and flagrant indecency is not tolerated.

The songs sung, and known as Maghe Rag, are mostly amorous. The advent of the festival is marked by popular songs, which describe nature as attaining maturity, and therefore in sympathy with the fulness of the human heart and the desires of man to mate and settle down. The following is a characteristic song sung by young men and women in Kolhan immediately before the Maghe festival:

"Hesa mata matalena, bari mata matalena,  
Thik samay rege tuyum seterelena,  
Hesa mata chaoajana, barimata, chaoajana,  
Sama geya tuyum bandolekana."

The fruits of Pipul ripen and fruits of Banian,  
You jackal, you have come in time (to taste the fruits,)   
When the fruits of Pipul and those of Banian disappear  
You come in vain to taste them.

Then again,

"Sanengetan hujulena, kamalbara kumbaruia nalomnerain  
Gatijati nalomnuru nenganapun nalomhia bodebode,  
nodongne prititaleme,  
Disum reya dukusuku jatireya rengeraban nalomhia  
bodebode nodongne prititaleme,  
Nege समय नेगे नसरा जुरि काजिनायुमेने प्रितालेमे."

I am coming from a distant village, oh Kamal (lily),  
Do not be annoyed, I shall carry you with me,  
Do not think of your kith and kin, neither of your parents,  
Come out of your house and love me.  
Leave all weal and woe, leave the rulings of the Killi,  
Come out and love me,  
This is the time, this is the season for love,  
Come out my friend and love me.

Maghe is the time, the season for love, and it is no wonder that people eagerly await the return of the festival every year. The obligatory nature of the festival created certain economic difficulties. Every villager, wherever he may work, within or outside Kolhan had to come back and join in the festival. Absence from the village without sufficient reason, was ominous to oneself, and also to the relations living in the village. This belief has been weakened in recent years, and dislocation of work in the factories and towns has been remedied to a great extent. A number of meetings were held all over Kolhan to combat the pernicious effects of the festival, and the attempts of the reformers have succeeded in encouraging a healthier atmosphere in their festivals, though inter-Killi and inter-Hatu participation in the festival is still the usual practice.

The ritual of the Maghe festival is no less important than its social side. The elaborate rites that are performed for five long days clearly establish the sacredness of the ceremony. The following functions are attended to during the Maghe festival:—

- (1) 1st Day. Gawmara.
- (2) 2nd Day. Ote Illi.
- (3) 3rd Day. Loyo.
- (4) 4th Day. Marang Parav.
- (5) 5th Day. Bonga Hanr.

The functions enumerated above indicate all the economic activities which the Hos are engaged in. They include pastoral pantomimes, dramatic performances of chasing and tracking game in the forest, agricultural dances, and offerings of sacrifices to the Bongas for the prosperity of their chief economic occupation, viz., agriculture.

When the villagers have all completed their winter programme of agricultural activities, and have leisure to indulge in their chief tribal sport (i.e. cock-fighting), they meet at the house of the Deuri where they decide upon a date for the celebration of the Maghe. The village officials are also consulted. The date fixed, the boys of the village make their Banam and Rutu and play on them. When the date for the ceremony arrives, the village Ahir is summoned to the house of the Deuri who instructs him about the paraphernalia required for the festival. The employment of the village Ahir (Gaw) shows how the artisan elements of the population in Kolhan have been assimilated to the social economy of the tribe. The Hos will tell you that their ancestors did the smelting of iron, and weaving and spinning are still done by them. The employment of the artisan elements dates from the time of their settlement in these areas, as they only follow

the practice of the Bhuiyas whom they displaced or assimilated. On the morning of the first day the villagers assemble in the courtyard of the Deuri, with offerings of heaps of grass, Saiu and Bunum, which are placed on a spot rinsed with cowdung solution. Before breaking his fast the Deuri takes a bath and puts on a clean white Botoi. He then takes his seat in front of the heaps of grass, and invokes the village Dessauli, ending with prayers to Sing-bonga and other lesser Bongas, as well as to the ancestors of the clan. When this rite is finished, the village Gaw is called upon to scatter the grass imitating with his head the ways of the cattle which he tends. With mud and dirt sticking to his body, and the leaves and creepers on his hair, he makes a dramatic exit towards the forest, amidst shouts of joy from the villagers. The latter then return to their respective houses to offer Illi and sacrifice fowls to the Oa Bongas in the family Ading. The night is spent in dancing and merrymaking.

On the second day, the Deuri offers Illi to the Bongas, a rite known as Ote Illi, which is the divine marriage dramatically performed every year. While the Deuri and his wife sit together in the courtyard, each holding a cup made of Sal leaves, the villagers approach them, and pour liquor from the pots brought by the villagers into the leaf cups. The first man pours into the Deuri's Puhu or leaf cup, and the next into that of the Deuri's wife. The Deuri mutters a prayer and pours the contents on the ground. His wife follows suit. Next the two villagers change places and the first man pours liquor into the cup of the Deuri's wife while the second man fills the cup of the Deuri. This time also the liquor is thrown down. The process is repeated seven times, each man giving the liquor alternately to the Deuri and his wife. After it is over, the Deuri and his wife drink from the leaf cups and leave the place amidst the loud cheers of the villagers. The remaining liquor is then distributed among all present. Cheered by the intoxicating drink they proceed to dance at the Akhara, which is continued till a late hour.

The next day is known as Loyo, which is the day of purification. The house is cleansed, the people take baths and offer sacrifice to the Oa-bongas, and all promises of sacrifice made during the year are fulfilled.

The fourth day is known as the Marang Parav day, and is the main item of the festival. The Deuri fasts all day, but may drink Illi at intervals. The ceremony begins after midday when the Deuri is taken to the Bandh or the neighbouring river for a purificatory bath, accompanied by the whole village, and the music of Dama, Nagera, Banam and Ratu. The place of worship is fixed usually outside the village at the crossing of two or more village alleys leading out into the forest or river. Here a

raised earthen dais is erected the day before. After the bath, the Deuri is conducted to this place of worship. The villagers take with them one large pot containing Illi, a pot full of water, some leaf-cups, one red cock and two hens. The Deuri first places on the ground a piece of bark called (Lama) Ichaba or twig of Icha, with the chanting of formulas which are abusive as well as precatory, the principle of worship being cudgelling and praying, alternately. A number of leaf-cups, the number varying with the villagers sometimes, are arranged in front of the Deuri who pours Illi into those cups, each time reciting a prayer. Next he scatters some Arua rice on the ground, and taking hold of the cock utters similar prayers. After each repetition of the hymns, the Deuri places the cock on the ground so as to enable it to eat the grains scattered, and four or five of the villagers assist the Deuri by blowing Birdiring, each time the cock partaking of the scattered grains. The process is repeated seven times, after which the cock is killed by the Deuri, and the carcass thrown aside. Next, the Deuri takes the hen which he also kills, and offers to the Nage-bonga after his incantations have been repeated several times. The blood is poured in a leaf-cup and the hen put aside. Lastly, the Deuri takes the second hen and offers it to Buru Bongas. It is not killed but thrown towards the forest where it is stoned to death by the villagers. The Deuri then sprinkles water on the cock and the hen, and the villagers who have actively helped the Deuri take them to his house where they are cooked and eaten by the Deuri and his assistants. The hen killed by the villagers is the spoil of the village Dom or Ghasia.

The fifth day witnesses a typical ceremony known as the Bonga Hanr, or the expulsion of the Bongas. The villagers armed with sticks come out in batches of ten to twelve, and begin hunting the spirits with vociferous songs and incantations. They assemble at the boundary line of the village, and begin by singing, or rather chanting, their invocations in a singsong way. They then race about in zigzag fashion till one of them shows signs of being possessed by a Bonga, and points out a spot which is accepted by the villagers as the haunt of the spirits. The possessed man runs with the villagers at his heels to a big tree or jungle near by, and addresses the spirits thus,

“ We have brought you here,  
We want you to stay here,  
Please take up your abode on the tree.”

In all their sacrifices, the blood of the sacrificed animal is offered as a libation to the Bongas, and after it is dedicated in the way described above, the Deuri dips his fore-finger in the blood, and marks his forehead, arms and

chest with it, and finally licks it off with his tongue. The rest of the villagers do the same. The incantations muttered by the Deuri, and the songs sung in the Akhara afterwards by the villagers are all obscene and vulgar, and they indulge in them with a strong belief that it is essential for agricultural prosperity.

Names of Festivals.	Date.	The object of worship.	The Functions.	Who Officiates.	What sacrifices and requisites.
Maghe.	January-February.	Dessauli.	Gawmara Ote-illi Loyo Marang Bonga Hanr.	Deuri.	Illi, goat, cock, hen, Saitu bunum, Lamacha twig with blossoms, and Arua rice.
Baha.	March-April.	"	Bagurugiti Baha.	"	Cock, hen, Arua rice, a new earthen pot to cook rice. New wooden ladle, sal flowers, etc.
Damurai.	May.	"	One day Worship.	"	Cock, hen, Arua, Illi.
Hero.	June.	"	Gurugiti Hero.	"	Baburi rope, wooden pegs, thorny creepers, he-goat, and cock. Arua, Illi, etc.
Bahtauli.	July.	Dessauli and other Bongas.	One day.	Cultivator.	Hen, cow-dung, cooked rice.
Jomnama.	August-September.	Dessauli Sing-bonga.	"	"	Cooked rice.
Kalam.	October.	"	"	"	Fowl, Illi rice.

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

### DISEASES AND DIVINATION

Just as economic troubles, according to the Hos, are traceable to the influence of alien tribes and castes, to the Bongas who rule over the destiny of the latter, and who may be set against them to injure their property and destroy their crops, so physical illness, disease and death are also traced to the interference of Bongas who may act independently or be invoked by witches and sorcerers to cause loss or damage to their property and physical harm to themselves. The Hos, therefore, live in mortal dread of the Dikus. They also greatly fear the witches, whose number is legion. Disease, deformity and death may all be due to the mischief of these witches, so the only remedy lies in offering sacrifices to the malignant Bongas and invoking the aid of their beneficent gods. The latter are believed to give a clue to the Bonga which is the cause of their sufferings.

There are two classes of agents which bring affliction down upon the Hos. The malignant Bongas, most of whom are really gods of alien people, and the witches and sorcerers who are usually members of the tribe, but are anti-social take delight in their nefarious practices. The Hos believe that all diseases are caused by one or other of the following agencies, viz., (1) natural causes, (2) human agency (witches and sorcerers), and (3) supernatural agency (spirits and malevolent beings). They believe that a man loses his life when his system gets out of his control, that the sign of approaching death is manifest when he no longer feels strong enough to control his movements, or to work like others. The maximum span of life of a Ho is not counted in years, but when a man is old he is anxious to see his grandchildren marry, which gives an approximate expectation of life. Death may also result from a duel, or from murder, or from unforeseen accidents over which they have little control. Diseases may be caused by the projection of some morbid object into the body, or the abstraction of some important element from the body. It may also be due to the mischief of witches and sorcerers acting on some part of the body, or on some object which has been connected with it. The methods by which they divine the cause of a particular malady are many and varied, and the processes of thought and the remedies known to them will be discussed in detail in the following pages.

Through contact with the outside world, the experience of life outside Kolhan, and through the medical aid that is given in certain centres as well as in the district hospital at Chaibassa, the Hos now find it possible to explain many of the diseases which they are heir to, as due to natural causes (which include the modern medical theory, and all injuries obviously inflicted by material agency). Though they know that quinine taken in regular doses is effective against malaria, that the Dikus take it and are cured of malaria, that the local medical officer always prescribes quinine as well as a bitter tasting mixture which is found to stop the spread of the disease, and ultimately to cure it, in spite of all this they still approach the village Deonra to find out which particular malignant Bonga has been offended and demands propitiation. A young Ho who accompanied me on my tours in Kolhan, in July, 1934, had a severe attack of malaria at Gua. Gua is a mining centre and is notorious for the incidence of malaria, particularly during the rainy season. I prescribed some medicines which I carried with me, and after three days the fever subsided. I completed the treatment with a preventive dose of quinine which I asked him to repeat occasionally. This young man was soon free from fever, but he would not stay with me, as he felt that he should go back to his village and propitiate the Bongas. I explained the causes of malaria and how it is checked by administering quinine and taking preventive measures, as in his case, and though he seemed to accept what I said, yet he was not sure whether his cure was due to my medicines or to other causes. On previous occasions also the fever had lasted only three days, and a propitiation of the Bongas by his mother had produced the desired effect. Malaria is a disease which is not acute or serious, except when it takes a malignant turn, or is attended with other complications. It is therefore difficult to convince a Ho of the efficacy of the *Materia Medica* in such cases. The present day attitude of the Hos is still to try all known and unknown methods in dealing with diseases, so that one or other may prove successful. When they take to the allopathic system of treatment in the charitable dispensaries under the District Board, they also take care to propitiate the malignant Bongas who are supposed to cause the trouble, and medicine and sacrifice together bring about the desired effect. Thus the Medical Officer in the village dispensaries has to cope not only with his lack of necessary equipment (which is due to the small grant he receives), but also with the village Deonra, whose authority is still dominant in Kolhan.

Diseases, as we have already pointed out, may be due to natural causes which are treated by their indigenous pharmacopœia. They have a traditional knowledge of the efficacy of many roots and herbs, which is

**Attitude  
Towards  
Disease**

handed down from generation to generation. The diagnosis of a disease is always done by the Deonra, and it is not always based on a system of divination, as is often suggested. The examination of urine or Dukida is a common method of diagnosing a disease in Kolhan. The method of diagnosis involves a special knowledge which is the monopoly of the village Deonra. A small quantity of Dukida or urine is brought in a leaf-cup early in the morning to the Deonra. The latter puts a drop of castor oil in the urine and intently studies the reaction in it. He knows the meaning of every reaction, and diagnoses accordingly. In case the disease is due to the mischief of any spirit or is caused by human agency, he takes to divination to find out the real cause. The process of diagnosis by studying the reactions on the urine of the patient is known as Dukidanal. Dukidanal, therefore, is very useful in tracing the cause of diseases, and apparently, is a process of elimination. The Deonra knows a formidable list of medicines, mostly herbal, and prescribes them according to the needs of the occasion.

One of the most important uses of Dukidanal is to ascertain whether diseases are due to Najom (poison), or Tiji (bacteria). Najom is regarded as a dangerous method of inflicting disease on the enemy in Kolhan, and one who knows how to apply Najom is called Najomadani. Najom is found in the countryside, and is collected by the witches or sorcerers. The usual method of administering Najom is to mix it with Illi or with dried meat, which is distributed and sold in Kolhan. The Najom is not destroyed when heated or boiled, so that when a man takes such meat preparation, he is sure to be attacked with diseases, which more often than not prove fatal. The diseases that result from the intrusion of Tiji in the system are, cancer, dysentery, and epilepsy. The Deonra can find out by Dukidanal whether the disease is due to Najom or Tiji or other causes. There are medicines which are believed to be powerful enough to counteract the effect of Najom, and when the proper diagnosis is arrived at the disease becomes controllable.

Diseases in Kolhan are also caused by witches and sorcerers, as well as by malignant spirits, and we shall examine the methods of diagnosis and treatment current among the Hos. There are three distinct classes of agents connected with diseases and death, viz.,

**Diseases Caused by Witches and Spirits**

(1) the Bongas, who are impersonal, (2) the witches and sorcerers, who are either barren women both old and ugly, or persons whose ways of life are strange and mysterious, and (3) the Deonras, who are the witch doctors of the tribe. In many villages, as we have noted above, the divination and the treatment of disease are

exclusively done by the Deonra, though occasionally a Deuri may act as a Deonra.

The malignant Bongas are believed to cause diseases to persons and cattle by direct interference. They may enter into human bodies, causing swellings in the body, or interfere with the normal functioning of the system. This is what we know as 'spirit-intrusion.' In other cases, spirits may abstract the Roa or soul substance, reducing it by pressure (during sleep), or suppress it (causing the victim to lose his voice). The malignant spirits can also enter into the bodies of persons, and through them administer Najom to those whom they want to chastise.

The witches of the village may invoke a particular malignant Bonga, and set it against a person or his cattle. Diseases in such cases are due to the manipulations of persons who exercise some control over the supernatural world. The witches may also inflict diseases by magic. The Hos believe that the witch, if she wishes to kill a person, must shoot an arrow at an effigy of the man or at his shadow. The man thus acted upon will not die suddenly. He will develop consumption which is believed to cause holes in the lungs and a slow but terrible death. The arrow is generally shot at night without being detected, so that the victim may be taken by the disease unawares. The witches also make an effigy of the person they wish to harm, with powdered rice or wheat flour, and then prick it with thorns in the certain belief that the intended victim will suffer similar pricks resulting in boils and ulcers all over the body. The witches among the Hos will obtain certain things which once formed a part of the person, as for example, nails, hair, spittle, etc., or some articles which the person uses constantly such as a cloth, ornaments or a weapon, etc., or things which are trodden upon by him, or even the dust off his feet. The effect on these things of the magical formulæ, with which the witches invoke the spirits believed to be under their control, varies according to the importance of these articles to the victim. The witches are known to take hair cuttings and pairings of nails of intended victims, and bury them in the courtyard for a week or so, and dig them out on the night of the new moon. The floor of the hut is swept clean, and ashes previously drawn are spread in a circle on the floor. Then the witch kindles a fire with dried faggots inside the circle, and throws the hair or nail clippings into the flames. Thrice the smoke is swallowed by the witch, and incantations and formulæ are recited. When the fire is extinguished, she collects the ashes in a new earthen pot, and preserves it in a corner of the hut, or hangs it from the thatch of the roof. The next process is the same as that of the Najomadani. It is generally mixed with Illi, or with fruits collected in the forest, and distributed by the villagers, such as wild plums, Mohua, Kudo

or black-berry and the like. Such is the magic of the dust that only the victim whose hair or nail has been thus burnt, if he or she partakes of it, will suffer, and not others who may unsuspectingly drink or eat them. The first symptom of the attack will be sneezing by the victim, not once or twice but in succession for a considerable time. This will at once indicate to him the power of some witch over him, and he will call out the names of the Bongas and immediately resort to some Deonra. The next stage of the disease is high fever, dysentery or nausea, which come unawares to him.

The method of inflicting disease with the help of the spirit-bundle is common among the Hos and other cognate tribes of Chota Nagpur. The spirit-bundle consists of bones of fowls or other animals, potsherds, grains, broken pieces of trinkets, torn rags dyed with red ochre, etc., all of which the witches promise to the malignant spirit which is invoked.

There are other methods of causing diseases in Kolhan. The transformation of the witch into a cat is a popular belief among the Oraons, and the Hos have similar beliefs. The witch in the form of a cat enters into people's houses at night, licks the saliva trickling down the corners of the mouth of some sleeping person, or bites off a lock or two of hair, causing the unfortunate person to fall ill or his hair to fall out.

In all these processes the witches have to be in close association with the spirits. Every witch is credited with the control of a number of malignant spirits, some of which are like pet spirits whom the witch can use in any way desired. The success of magical processes is also attributed

#### Witches as Mediums

to malignant Bongas, for the chants and incantations cited by the witch are all addressed to them. When the witch doctor finds out by divination the proper spirit to which to appeal, offerings are made to the spirit concerned, without ascertaining who the witch is. This makes the witches merely mediums, as it were, and the Hos believe that if they could kill all the witches they would be immune from disease. This belief is so strong that whenever they suspect any person as being a witch, feelings run so high that the unfortunate suspect is put to all sorts of ordeals to prove her innocence. Attempts to coerce women to confess their identity have led to violence on them. Some are naturally innocent, and many cases are annually brought to the Kolhan Court for decision. It is believed that the witches are trained in secret, and that they gather at a place outside the village boundary at dead of night when they indulge in a nocturnal dance. It is also believed that anybody passing by them at night is sure to be molested and killed. Fasting and meditation lead to possession by the Bonga, and while in that state, the witch is asked to carry

out the instructions of the malignant Bonga which possesses her. There is no direct way of knowing these malignant Bongas, just as there is no direct way of knowing the cause of disease, or the offerings that would cure it.

In all cases of disease, the Hos consult the Deonra. The latter has a system of treatment for all of them; he can, as Bamia Babonga proudly asserted, study the symptoms of a disease, and find out by sight whether it is a case of spirit intrusion, or the interference of witches and sorcerers, or due to natural causes. When he finds any difficulty, he resorts to Dukidanal which gives a very accurate diagnosis. When his treatment in accordance with the diagnosis fails, he takes to divination. The following methods are usually practised in Kolhan.

When a person falls ill, some member of the family takes a handful of rice, Jutid Chaol, as it is called, and touching the body of the diseased person names all the spirits known to him. The rice is then brought to the Deonra who begins his Sup method, known as Bonga **Bonga Nam** Nam. The Deonra puts the rice in a Sup, and asks Sing-bonga and Nage-bonga questions, while naming the spirits in succession. In the process of interrogation, if any displacement of the grains is noticed, that particular Bonga is believed to have caused the malady. The terms of compromise are also found out in a similar way.

The second method is known as Danda Nam. Here, again, questions are put to Sing-bonga and Nage-bonga, but instead of the grains, two men with Sontas in their hands sit on either side of the Deonra, and when the hymns are being recited and the names of the spirits **Danda Nam** called out one after another, the men are suddenly possessed and begin to shake their sticks, indicating thereby the cause of the disease. A number of people armed with sticks follow the Deonra into the forest, the latter reciting all the time mantrams or incantations. The party visits different parts of the forest, and if they come to the abode of the spirit which is responsible for the disease, their sticks grow heavy, and they feel the presence of the Bonga. The Bonga has to be propitiated if the patient wishes to be cured.

The Deonra recites his incantations, and a man sits at his feet. The effect of the mantrams is to make the man shake his head and to be **Rum Nam** possessed, and in course of the possession he reveals the name of the spirit who has caused the malady.

A small but thick wooden plate with rice is placed on paddy or husks spread on the floor, and over the Patki is placed a Gandu. A man is asked

**Patki Beur Nam** to sit on this Gandu, while the Deonra invokes the spirits. When the name of a spirit is called out by the Deonra, and the man sitting on the Gandu turns round (Beauretan-turn) the spirit has to be propitiated.

A few grains of Arua rice are taken in a Sal-leaf, and the Deonra touches the body of the diseased person with the leaf. He then mutters his weird mantrams over the grains, and when the name of **Bawa Nam** the Bonga causing the disease is called out, the patient feels a heaviness over his body, which makes the identity of the Bonga clear.

Two leaf-cups of oil are taken to the Deonra after they have been touched by the patient. The Deonra looks in the oil and **Sunum Nam** discovers some sign, from which he ascertains which spirit has caused the disease.

When the Deonra finds out by divination, or by dream, the cause of a disease, he receives also by the self-same process the prescription for propitiating the offended Bongas. In all cases sacrifices have to be made, and the blood, head, liver and lungs of the sacrificed animal have to be offered with prayers and incantations. When the **Remedies** Bongas reveal the cause of a disease or an epidemic in a dream, they also suggest remedies, i.e., sacrifices that would restore the normal relation between the patient and the Bonga concerned. In cases of divination in the manner described above, the result of it is communicated to the patient, if the latter be unable to stir out of bed. The result of the divination and the prescription obtained by the Deonra immediately effects a change in the patient, and within a few hours he shows signs of possession by sweats, which indicate the validity of the prognosis. The offerings are seldom denied, and the task of propitiating the Bonga, believed to have caused the disease, is entrusted to the Deonra. In spite of all the efforts of the Deonra, the disease may not leave the patient; in that case further divination is sought. Whole days and nights are often spent by the Deonra in finding out the real cause of a disease; medicines are used simultaneously with divination, and appropriate spells are recited by him to exorcise the spirit. As the Bonga is conceived as a semi-material being, the Deonra touches the head of the patient with his two hands and gradually draws them down from head to face, from face to the neck, from neck to the shoulders, to the elbows, to wrists, down to the palms of the hand, and thence down the nails into the earth. This process is repeated twice or thrice, the direction varying every time but always finishing in the earth where the spirit is buried. In case all methods of treatment fail (and there

are many cases where they do fail), the Deonra warns the survivors by saying that the wrath of the spirit has not yet been appeased and that it may involve other members of the family. Sacrifices are made even after the death of the patient to protect the survivors from further attention from the spirits, and as the spirit of the deceased is conceived as hostile to the family, precautions are taken by the bereaved family against the mischiefs of this spirit as well.

Nor does divination stop with death. The cause of death, as well as the form which the Roa or soul takes after death, are divined during the Anader ceremony (the ceremony of calling the spirit), which will be described in connection with the death ceremony of the Hos.

## CHAPTER TWENTY

### DEATH AND MORTUARY RITES

Burial and cremation both are practised by the Hos. The fact that the higher classes in Kolhan cremate their dead while the lower ones still prefer burial shows that burial is the earlier practice. Contact with Hindu society explains many of their rites and customs, and cremation may as well be a derivative custom in Kolhan. But the Hos bury those who die an unnatural death, such as suicide, or of smallpox, or of leprosy, or through the agency of the Bagia-bonga, or the tiger spirit. In some cases, the deceased leaves instructions with his, or her relations to burn or bury, him or her, but well-to-do families prefer cremation to burial. The Jangtopa ceremony, which may be compared to the Marvaineikedr of the Todas (i.e., the dry funeral), has lost much of its communal character, and there is no annual ceremony of the dead in Kolhan. The Jangtopa is done after every death, and instead of a unilateral participation in this ceremony, there is what we may call a bilateral participation. It is used to be compulsory for every member of the Killi of the deceased to take part in the Jangtopa, but to-day it is performed by the nearest relatives of the deceased, on both the father's side and the mother's side. Jangtopa need not be held on the third day after death (as is customary), the ceremony may be postponed indefinitely, till such time as it is deemed proper. The bones of the deceased are then provisionally interred in the courtyard beneath a small stone slab. This custom is known as Jangkapari. The participation of the relations in the Jangtopa, as well as in the last rites of the deceased, has introduced a new departure from traditional rules. The relatives on the father's side of a deceased married woman sometimes demand half of her bones, and disputes arise occasionally on this point. The breakdown of the Killi system in some villages is perhaps responsible for such changes in custom.

There are certain restrictions as to the use of wood for cremation. They usually use the wood of the Tarab tree, the Nanam tree, and the Semur tree. In the absence of these trees, the Pipul, the Karayia and the Sal, may be used. As we have found in the case of other economic activities of the Hos, co-operation among the members of the village, as well as between members of two different villages that may

be affected by death, is still the dominant feature of the death and mortuary rites. The coffin is made by the members of the Killi, and those who are skilful in carpentry voluntarily take part in this task. The Chalpa or coffin is made of wood. It is a long case usually 5 ft. by 2 ft. and about

#### **Making of Coffin**

2 ft. deep, and is covered with a lid called a Tenen. The whole case is adjustable. The side planks are known as Kanati, and the bottom plank is called Ganeti, while inside the coffin are two arms known as Aar. The case stands on four pegs or legs called Mandoke. It is often shaped into a horse's head at one end, and the head of the corpse is placed against this end. The head of the corpse is always made to face the south. It is the custom among the Hos for all the members of the deceased person's Killi, as well as relations and friends from other villages, to come with presents of rice, fowl, he-goats, Illi, new clothes, and money, as soon as they learn of the death. It often happens that some of the friends and relations wish to attend, but cannot procure the presents which they must carry. If this happens, they send word to the village of the deceased to postpone the cremation, or burial, as the case may be, for two or three days. The corpse is then brought out of the hut, and is kept guarded by mourners, who are usually the women of the Killi, including the wife or the husband of the deceased. As soon as a death occurs, the Deonra is called in to proclaim it. The female relatives of the deceased fill the air with their screams and wailings, which summon the villagers to the Racha, or courtyard of the deceased. From the moment of death to the last act of cremation, the Birdiring or the horn of wild buffalo is blown, and its solemn and uncanny sound strikes a note of alarm in the village. The Deuri, the Munda, the Manki if he be a resident of the village, and the other village officials, such as the Tehsildar, and the Dakuas (bailiff) come, one by one, to the Racha of the deceased, while the women of the village pay their obligatory call to condole with the bereaved family. As the women gather together the wailings increase, and the nearest female relatives strike their head against the wall and tear their hair in grief. When all the members of the Killi, and the relations and friends from neighbouring villages have assembled, the Deuri asks the women to bring out the corpse. The corpse is first anointed with oil and turmeric paste, and bathed in water, and a new cloth is wound round the body. When the corpse is brought out of the hut, the Deuri takes some Arua rice in his hand, and muttering a few incantations in honour of the principal Bongas scatters the same from the door of the hut to the courtyard where the corpse has been placed. The women take the body seven times round the coffin anticlockwise, and amidst loud wailings, place it inside. In case the body is very heavy, and the women fail to keep the

corpse up, men may help them, for the corpse is not allowed to touch the ground after it has been brought out of the hut. If the deceased happens to be a male, all the utensils, Thali or plate, Lota or water jug, Sakom or bangles and ornaments he used to wear, his bow and arrows, and coins, are placed on the coffin, and are all burnt with the corpse. To-day the costly ornaments and utensils are not usually burnt or buried with the corpse. If the deceased be a female, the face is covered with rupees, and a new cloth is used to cover the corpse. In case the body bears tattoo marks, special care is taken to keep the marks exposed. This being done, quantities of rice, pulses, and other seedlings are placed under the coffin by the villagers, who afterwards distribute it among themselves, in the belief that when these grains are mixed with other seeds at the time of sowing, a rich harvest will result. The soul substance is brought in contact with the seeds to fecundate them, as it were.

The funeral pyre is prepared in advance, and the corpse is carried to the cremation ground by the women. It is borne round the Kanduked or the pyre three times, and then placed on the pyre with faggots around and above it. There appears to be some divergence in procedure regarding the

#### **The Funeral Pyre**

next rite, i.e., that of setting fire to the pile. In some parts, in Chiru Pir, for example, the eldest son of the deceased sets fire to the pile. In Kotgarh Pir, it is the custom to engage a man from a different Killi, or a servant from another village, to do it. In Bantra Pir, again, at one burial, the first handful of earth was put on the grave by the wife of the deceased. The custom of engaging mourners for the deceased is still found in Kolhan. Does this show that formerly the last rites were performed by the hired widows, or at any rate by members of other Killis? In those areas where widows are employed for the last rites they remain in the house of the deceased from the time of death to the next Jangtopa day. The widows engaged for this purpose must be barren, or without any living children. This may mean that the services of these widows, who are believed to be witches (for witches are recruited from barren, or old and ugly women), are required to safeguard the family from future misfortune. The corpse is generally burnt at night, and the funeral pyre is kept burning all through the night, while relatives and friends keep watch on it.

At dawn, the women cut two branches of the Pipul tree, three or four cubits long, and fetch three or four pots of water from the neighbouring river, or Bandh. One of the branches is pushed straight home into the ground at the centre of the Kanduked, and the second placed horizontally over the remains of the dead person. Water is then poured from the pots on to the smouldering embers.

#### **Collecting the Bones**

Next, the women collect the charred bones, put them in a Hata or winnowing fan, which is taken to the Racha and placed in the sun for the bones to dry. When the bones are completely dried, a new earthen pot is procured and the bones are placed inside. The pot is covered with twigs and leaves of the Kend (ebony) tree, and is made to hang from the thatch of the hut, or is placed in a corner of the Ading. The party then proceeds to a neighbouring river or Bandh for a ceremonial bath with Sunum, or oil and turmeric paste, and afterwards returns to the village. The relatives and friends who come from other villages are distributed between the families of the Killi who cater to their needs, or they may cook in the house of the deceased, after the house has been cleansed and the floors and courtyards plastered with cowdung solution. The bereaved family is not allowed to suffer any expense for entertainment, as the visitors always come with their own provisions, which are delivered to the housewife of the family or the woman who takes charge for the time being. In the same evening, with the approval of the Deuri and the village Munda, a date is fixed for the Sabsi (Sradh) ceremony.

When a child is born, the Hos observe pollution (Bisi) for a few days. A Ho renders himself Bisi if he enters a house where there is a newborn baby. (Cf. Naoa Jonom Oraree Bisinjana). The birth of a child entails certain restrictions on the family, and it is not allowed to mix freely in

**Pollution** the community, but at death there is no Bisi for the family of the deceased. If there is any Bisi observed, it is a general one. Restrictions on diet and movements after death are observed by all the members of the Killi concerned. During the period from the time of death to the completion of the Sabsi ceremony, the Killi is forbidden to eat fish or meat, and its members are not allowed to use oil or turmeric paste. They cannot shave their faces or cut their hair. On the third day after cremation, the men and women who set fire to the Kanduked cook a small quantity of rice with turmeric powder in a small earthen pot. The preparation is known as Sasanmundi. A flat stone is placed in the courtyard known as Pauchaiti-diri where the women wash their hands and feet with a quantity of Sasanmundi which is said to purify them. Next, they spread out the Sasanmundi in a plate made of Sal-leaf as an offering to the spirit of the deceased. The earthen vessel containing the charred bones is brought down from the thatch of the hut, and is placed in the Racha. The bow and arrows of the deceased are put near it, or his favourite musical instrument, or his umbrella (made of leaves), but if the deceased happens to be a woman, a pot of water or a cloth sieve, or a basket sieve, is placed by its side.

At nightfall, the Ading is swept clean, and ashes are spread on the floor of the room. The members of the family sit in the room and one

of the male members begins to call the name of the deceased. This practice varies in details in different parts of Kolhan.

"Ela nutum huju singh subarichi, daru subare  
mename hujume sikuku murmuriko rabangjiareyajia."

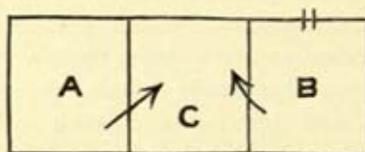
"Come, spirit, come, under the tree or wherever you are; it is cold outside, there are gnats, insects in plenty, why do you remain there, come inside please."

The door of the room is carefully bolted from within, and two persons, a male and a female proceed to the cremation ground to fetch the shade of the departed. The soul after death is believed to hover round the cremation ground, and must be invited in the following way. From the  
**Fetching the Shade of the Departed** cremation ground they start for the Ading. One of them takes two plough-shares in his hand, and the other carries a pot containing water. As they come, the person with plough-shares strikes them against each other, and at every stroke the woman with water pours some of it on the ground. They then go to the spot where the vessel is kept, and touching it with their feet, they approach the door of the Ading. Here they ask the inmates of the Ading whether the spirit has entered or not. They ask this question seven times, and the members inside the hut at once light a dip (lamp), and minutely examine the ashes to see whether any impression is noticeable. As soon as any mark or footprint is discovered, the members inside cry out, Sukula, i.e. entered. If, however, after seven addresses of Sukula Chi Dikula (entered or not entered) the inmates do not answer Sukula, they have to go back again to the cremation ground and repeat the process.

When an impression is discernible on the floor, the members put their heads together to divine the cause of death, as also the form which the Umbul or Roa will take. If the impression on the ashes resembles a long line made by dragging a rope, it is believed that death has  
**Divining the Cause of Death** been caused by the agency of the spirits of dead ancestors. If the traces resemble the footprints of a lizard or squirrels, they believe that Buru-bonga has killed the man. Marks resembling the footprints of a crab indicate death at the hands of the Bagia-bonga. If it is death from the agency of mischievous witches, the impressions appear like those of a cat's paw. If only holes are found on the ashes, the person must have died from holes in his lungs (i.e. from consumption). When the mark indicates a thumb impression of a human being, death is believed to be caused by Jugini-bonga.

To-day, the belief in rebirth appears to be vague, and there is a section of people in Kolhan who deny that reincarnation is possible. The names of

the Hos prove, beyond any doubt, that there is a traditional belief in reincarnation. The grandfather reappears after death in the role of the grandchild, and the names of children are selected in accordance with the sequence of death in the family. Some Deuris hold that the soul after death has no sex, and can come back in any form in the family. Others hold that men will be reborn as men, and women as women. They believe also that some ancestral spirits are not reborn at all, because they do not deserve it, whereas others are not reborn as their meritorious life in this world is rewarded by everlasting life afterwards. The following story narrated by Mr. Kanuram Deogam, L. T. Assistant Teacher of Chaibassa District School will lend some colour to this belief in reincarnation among the Hos. Mr. Kanuram is the eldest son of Mr. Dulu Manki, who has already been referred to in a previous chapter. In 1928, Kanuram's aunt died of dropsy. She was the wife of Dumbi, his father's brother's wife. The Ading of Kanuram's family is situated in the centre of a long house, which consists of three apartments, the central being the Ading and the two rooms on either side being used as dining rooms.



A and B are two rooms situated on either side of C, the family Ading. The room B is scarcely used. There is one door in A, which is the entrance, and one in B, but there is no entrance to C from outside. The Ading is approachable only from A and B. The room B is kept closed and therefore the entrance to B from C is also shut. When, on the third day, the shade of the departed was called back to the Ading in the usual way, all the members of the house, men and women were waiting in the dining room A, while a woman was spreading Rakh or ashes through a cloth sieve in C. The usual practice is to scatter Rakh from the furthest end in C, the woman walking backwards while doing so, so that she may not tread on it. The first time no mark of any kind was visible, nor the second time; the third time, marks resembling the footprint of a human child were discovered. This confirmed the belief that the deceased was to be reborn as a child. Kanuram's wife was three months gone in pregnancy, and as soon as she gave birth to a female child, it was believed that the deceased person was actually reborn into the family. The marks could not be explained normally, as, Kanuram said, there was no child in the house at the time, and there was no possibility of any child coming to the Ading at that hour, and yet

the prints were those of a human child. Since this incident, Kanuram, an educated man, able and clever, and himself a reformer, has been convinced that there is much truth in the belief in reincarnation. (The story and comments were written down in Kanuram's house, in his presence at Chaibassa on the 27th of July, 1934).

If the Jangtopa is performed on the usual date, that is, on the fourth day after cremation, a general purificatory ceremony is observed by the villagers. They cut their hair, and have their nails pared, and shave themselves. The women throw away old earthen utensils, and the metal ones are washed and cleansed. The villagers then go to neighbouring stream, or Bandh, and take a ceremonial bath. The Jangtopa friends and relatives of the deceased are invited, and arrive in time for the ceremony with presents. Non-attendance at Jangtopa without sufficient reason is attributed to malice, or antipathy to the departed person. The whole village is astir with the spirit of Jangtopa, which is a pleasant function, there being no sign of grief or sorrow anywhere. The departed soul is believed to unite with the souls of the dead ancestors, and the people assemble to celebrate this union. From the night preceding the Jangtopa, people begin to flock to the village in numbers, carrying with them presents of Illi, rice, fowls and, if possible, he-goats. In the morning the men dig a hole in the family Sasan; when the hole is ready, the earthen pot containing the charred bones is brought out for burial. The vessel is then covered with flowers, and is carried by two women to the Sasan. Before the final interment, the vessel is filled with rice, and a piece of thread, six to seven cubits in length, is allowed to rest on the vessel, one end of the thread being kept on the surface. The hole is covered with earth, and the burial is thus completed. Next, one of the widows, or a woman relation of the deceased, draws the thread up out of the hole, and runs with it to the hut where death had occurred. The thread device allows the spirit to come out of the hole just covered. A Sasandiri is placed over the hole, and oil is poured on it, as well as on the Sasandiris of the graveyard. The members of the family then scatter fried rice, and prepare Sasanmundi, which is offered on plates made of Sal leaves.

All the while, Birdiring is blown, and drums beat out topam, topam, jangtopam. Finally, a dance is held in honour of the departed person. With the completion of the rites the people drink Illi, and parade the village in procession, dancing up and down the streets to the beat of Dama and Banam.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

### LAW AND ORDER

The tribal laws, the penalties for breaches of the same, the ideas of right and wrong, the legal definiteness attained by the Hos to-day, do not appear to be genuinely indigenous to their culture. The tribal core has blended with elements introduced from alien sources. The Hos have come in contact with codified rules, regulated proceedings in court, and with an executive force exercised through the medium of tribal officers. It is therefore difficult to throw much light on the theory of primitive law by a study of the working of their tribal system. Even if the forms of tribal laws have changed, the functions remain much the same. A field investigator in Kolhan stumbles against a body of traditional rules, laws or effective customs, strictly obeyed by the community, which appear to dominate the relation of the individual towards it, and which perhaps explain the social solidarity of the Hos. A study of the working of the customs and usages, of the manner in which obedience to customs is secured, the clash of interests and confusion of ideals which result from the violation of these norms of conduct, the system of control exercised through the medium of the social machinery, and the belief in supernatural vengeance which rationalises the approved standards of the society, will explain the degree of elasticity of their culture.

We have shown the fundamental principles of social life among the Hos, and the tribal traditions that are followed by them. We have recorded the customs and practices which are observed in connection with their economic life, those connected with marriage and sex life, with maternity and motherhood, their religious beliefs and rites, sorcery, witchcraft, disease, divination and death. Also have we noticed the influence of these customs, the functions which they perform in the life of the Hos, how the cycle of life is governed by an implicit obedience to the tribal code, how violation leads to disasters and encourages disaffection in the community against the offender, how the tribal officers and the Killi elders uphold the sanctity of their traditional laws and make them effective, and how offenders against the tribal code are cut adrift by the members of the group and, above all, the public opinion that sustains such control.

All offences against the tribal code cannot and are not brought for trial before the tribal court. Some pass unheeded, some are met by the

frowns of the elders, but some are too serious to be overlooked. Offences against the Killi are not always met with punishment, nor have the tribal officials jurisdiction over them. The gradual widening of their outlook made possible by outside contact and the resulting complexity of life in general, have made it possible for the Hos to underestimate the importance of tribal laws. In many cases, where a verdict of public condemnation would have been the minimum penalty for an offence, to-day the offender escapes even a trial. Incest is not punished by murder, but by social boycott which, as we have seen, is not a deterrent to such offence. Experience of other lands, a knowledge of the possibility of independent living in labour centres and the formation of classes within the community make it difficult to enforce conformity to tribal code even within limited areas. Suicide, which was a general and common practice resorted to by indiscreet persons violating tribal laws or as a result of public disapproval of their conduct, has become less frequent. Witches are not so miserable to-day as they were a few decades back, and the social opprobrium that is associated with witchcraft does not invariably lead to any personal injury to the witch, or perpetration of any violence to her family or possessions. In earlier days, tribal laws were regarded as sacred, and any infringement was severely condemned. The offender was made to redress the wrong committed by him by offerings and sacrifices before public gatherings, so that the effect of violation was not patent. This precluded the possibility of realising the results of acts of infringement of tribal laws. To-day, breach of customary laws is not always punished, and yet, it may not be followed by a disaster, so that more and more people are encouraged to omit the performance of customary rites and disobey tribal laws. However, breach of tribal laws, even to-day, is followed by a feeling of suspense, and if any calamity, personal or collective, happens, the offender curses himself and ends by promising to comply with the law in question.

It is not the traditional fear of supernatural pains and penalties alone that explains the attitude of the Hos to tribal laws. There are some laws which appear to be designed to secure co-operation among the members of the group, to encourage joint efforts and reciprocity of relationship among them, which lead to a better understanding between the members of a group, and between those of different groups. By complying with such laws, they can adjust themselves with the forces of their environment, can resist the effects of privation, disease and epidemic, and finally, ensure a better adaptation to the changed and changing conditions of life. So long as the laws are believed to subserve the objects for which they were intended, the effect of a willing compliance can hardly be overestimated.

### Changed Attitude to Tribal Code

The custom of transferring diseases from one village to another affords a case in point. Whenever the Hos find that a particular disease has assumed an epidemic form, they approach the Deuri of the village to undertake propitiatory measures. The Deuri invites all members of the Hatu, and the tribal officers and substantial cultivators, and listens to the experiences of the individual families which have paid toll to the epidemic. He then decides to placate the village Dessauli and worship Sing-bonga, and asks for the co-operation of all the members of the Hatu. The Dakua or the bailiff is instructed to procure the necessary requisites for the worship and sacrifice. The Deuri fasts for the following 24 hours until the time of the ceremonial worship, and concentrates on his task. The next evening, before it is dark, the Deuri, followed by the villagers, proceeds to the neighbouring river where he takes a ceremonial bath, and with hardly a rag round his loins, he approaches the abode of the Dessauli, with the villagers at his heels, while some members of the crowd sound the Birdiring. The sacrificial requirements have already been deposited by the Dakua, and the Deuri faces the setting sun and mutters weird incantations, glorifying the Bongas and imploring their aid. All the villagers solemnly stand round the Deuri while two of the villagers assist the latter in the sacrifice. A black hen is usually offered to the Dessauli, but the form of the sacrifice may be revealed in dreams, so that a cock, a pig, a he-goat or whatever animal is asked, is offered by the village. Some thread dyed red, or a piece of red rag, is tied round one of the legs of the hen, and the Deuri holds it in his arms and offers his prayers. The hen is allowed to partake of some grains scattered on the ground, three times, before it is finally offered to the Bonga. The significance of this practice is to offer food to the hen, in the name of the ancestors, in the name of those living, and in the name of those that are yet to come, thus securing the dead, the living and the unborn against harm. When the Deuri has finished his prayers, he throws the hen some distance away, and the villagers pelt it with stone and chase it out of the village until it reaches the outskirts of a neighbouring village or a forest. This custom is widely practised in Chota Nagpur and adjoining areas. The Korwas offer a goat to the Disease-Spirit. The goat is carried by some villager in his arms, and he places it within the boundary of the adjoining village or forest. Special care is taken to see that it does not return to the village where it has been offered to the Bonga. After this rite, the Hos retire to their respective houses and throw away all their earthen utensils and cooking pots, as well as any cooked food that may remain. The Ading is cleaned and plastered with cowdung solution, and new earthen pots are used for cooking. The value of confidence brought about in the manner described above, and the ceremonial cleaning of the house and the

kitchen, which serves as a preventive measure, cannot be exaggerated, and it is no wonder that the epidemic is often brought under control.

The tribal law forbidding a person to take food from a stranger, from the Dikus and from members of other tribes, has already been referred to. The value of this prohibition also has been noted in connection with disease and witchcraft. The Hos resent any infringement of this **Kajomesin** taboo, and any person who disobeys the injunction of the society is branded as Kajomesin. The word Kajomesin is derived from Ka—no, Jom—to eat, Esin—cooked food, so that Kajomesin stands for one from whom a Ho dares not take cooked food. A Kajomesin is cut adrift by the members of the tribe, and no social relationship with him is possible, unless the society readmits him by the elaborate process of Jati, which we shall describe below. So long as the restrictions are not removed, a Kajomesin is not allowed to touch anybody's water, cannot eat with anybody, and even if he dies, his corpse cannot be touched by the members of the Killi or the Hatu, nor put in the Sasan. A Kajomesin, even when he is restored to the Killi, does not attain full social status within the village. There are no apparent social disabilities, and he is entitled to all the privileges of membership of his Killi. In spite of this, a Kajomesin who has been readmitted to the Killi, finds it difficult to marry in families which have no such past, and he has always to pay a higher Gonom than is usual with people of his status. When he violates any tribal law, the social machinery is not immediately set in motion, as a certain latitude is given to him which is not allowed to members of the tribe in general. Although once a Kajomesin is not always a Kajomesin, yet the ignominy is too deep to be erased once for all. This has created a new element in the population of Kolhan. The families of Kajomesins, who have been accepted by the society but upon whom full social status has not been conferred, are finding it advantageous to marry among themselves, and are thus creating a class within the class.

The process by which a Kajomesin is readmitted to the society, is called Jati. The village Munda and the members of the Killi to which the Kajomesin desires to reaffiliate himself, hold a panchayet. Debar of Kitahatu committed incest with his father's brother's daughter. The Killi punch held its sitting under a big mango tree in front of the village Sasan. The young man was sitting with his father and paternal uncle, all with folded hands. When the charges were stated by an elder of the village, the paternal uncle tried his utmost to shield his nephew. Debar did not answer the charges. The Killi punch heard all witnesses and summed up the proceedings in a brief statement. It accused the parents of the young man and the girl. The father of the girl was asked to arrange for her marriage, within two months from date, which could be done by bribing

some young man of a different Killi to marry her. The young man was asked whether he wanted to expiate his crime, to which he replied in the affirmative. An elaborate ceremony of purification was announced. Next day, the Deuri approached the abode of the Dessauli and placed three sticks tied together with Babui rope and covered the same with thorns. In the afternoon, Debar, with his parents and a few villagers, at the instance of the Deuri, went to the neighbouring river where he took a bath with oil and turmeric paste. He then proceeded to the abode of the Dessauli where the Deuri and the punch were waiting for him. The Deuri was supplied with a red cock and other requisites by Debar's father for the sacrifice. In the usual manner, described above, the Deuri offered the cock to Sing-bonga with prayers and incantations, and the blood of the sacrificed cock was poured into two leaf-cups which were respectively offered to the Sing-bonga and the Dessauli, and drops of the blood were allowed to fall on the ground in the name of the Oa-bongas. A pot of water with its contents dyed with turmeric, made ready beforehand, was sprinkled over Debar seven times, and three times over the rest. Debar was told to take a few drops of the blood from the leaf-cups, and dilute it with Illi and drink the mixture in the presence of all assembled. Thus the horror of the breach of the tribal law manifested itself, as it were, in the blood of the sacrificed cock, and restoration to the norm of the tribe was ceremonially observed by the offender by drinking the blood. Next, Debar was told to cook food for the members of the Killi and other elders present on the spot. A he-goat was killed and the feast was partaken of with great cheer. Debar thus expiated his crime.

There are degrees of social offence in Kolhan, and not every breach of the customary law is met by ostracism. It is only for offences of a very grave nature that a Killi takes such a drastic step. While **Offences** for petty offences, a small fine (which may be in cash or in kind) is levied by the Killi elders and spent for ceremonial purposes. The major offences for which a person may be made a Kajomesin are few in number. They are as follows:—

- (1) When a person transgresses the limits of consanguinity (incest within the family).
- (2) When a man is guilty of liaison within the Killi.
- (3) When a man takes food from the hands of the Dikus.
- (4) When a man lives with a Kajomesin wife and eats food cooked by her.

There are some families in Kolhan who are not Kajomesins, but who are nevertheless subjected to certain social disabilities. Nothing has been

proved against them but they are suspected to have committed some such offence. They are also cut adrift by the members of the Killi for offences, alleged to have been committed by their ancestors but have remained unpunished. Under this group come many labourers who worked in the mines but have resettled permanently in the village. There is no evidence against them; it is mere suspicion that they have violated social rites that prompts such action. But labourers who are affluent and do not settle permanently in the village enjoy a higher social prestige. Poverty among the Hos is a great disqualification; it is indeed a social crime, and a poor family is subjected to disabilities which are difficult to explain otherwise. The son of a poor man cannot eat under the same roof with the son of a rich cultivator, and doubts and suspicions are always entertained about the bona fides of the poor, for poverty exposes people to temptations. When a man takes food from a stranger, he has to explain his conduct before the Killi, and in most cases, the Killi elders insist on a fine which must be paid before the man is allowed to participate in the tribal life. One of the most important results of cultural contact among the Hos has been the fission of the tribe into classes which share the same economic environment, co-operate with one another in all their economic undertakings, offer prayers and sacrifices to the same Bongas, participate in customary feasts and festivities, recognise relationship between themselves as members of the clan and the tribe, and yet maintain their identity. Restrictions on intermarriage between these classes are not yet rigid, but those on commensality are already strict enough to allow any fusion in the near future.

Besides the elaborate processes of social expulsion and ostracism, there is another social corrective which is essentially a passive force, viz., public disapproval. Its strength lies in the fact that all members of a Killi or of a Hatu, have common venues of meeting together, and the action of particular individuals within the community comes up for discussion and criticism in these gatherings. A person can easily gauge the effect of his or her doings on the tribal opinion, and by experience learns to estimate its form and magnitude, so that actions which are calculated to provoke public opinion, are controlled without any direct exercise of the social prerogative vested in the Killi or Hatu elders. The actions that the Ho society views in an unfavourable light, and which evoke protests from the members are:—

**Public  
Disapproval**

- (1) Neglect of family duties and obligations.
- (2) Desertion of dependents.
- (3) Refusal to entertain guests.
- (4) Repudiation of debt and Gonom.

- (5) Adultery.
- (6) Theft.
- (7) Wilful destruction of other people's property.
- (8) Witchcraft, sorcery, administration of Najom or poison.

Suicide and murder are not essentially bad in themselves, for they may be the natural consequences of the functioning of the tribal laws. They cause alarm, and no doubt involve the society in trouble, but the society does not lose sight of the motives. The infringement of tribal laws regarding incest provokes condemnation, and may lead to suicide. Cases of suicide and murder are cited by the village elders to instil ideas of sanctity of tribal laws and discipline within the society, which therefore act as social suggestion.

There are other ways of enforcing conformity to tribal laws in Kolhan. Stories and folk-tales are current among the Hos, how theft, adultery, and incest were punished, even when these offences were committed in secret and without the knowledge of the society. Thus the following story, widely known in Kolhan, explains how theft is punished. Two brothers were coming from the field, each with a sack of paddy on his head. Suddenly the elder brother stopped and said, "Brother, I am dead tired and cannot move, will you get me some fire from the village so that I may smoke my Ficca?" The younger brother unloaded himself and ran to the village to fetch the fire. In the meantime, the elder brother opened his brother's sack and transferred a portion of the paddy into his own. When the younger brother came back, they lighted Ficca, and after some rest returned to the village. Shortly afterwards, the elder brother died, and was reborn as a bull in the same village. The bull also died soon, and its skull, somehow, fell in the kitchen garden of the younger brother. It was winter and tomatoes were growing in the garden. A thief wanted to steal them, and when he crossed the fence and dropped in the garden, the skull addressed the thief, "Friend, do not steal. I did, and I am still suffering for my crime. I took only a handful of grains, and I have been unable to liquidate by debt; and I am here watching my brother's yams and tomatoes." The thief ran away in mortal dread.

There are many actions which are encouraged by the society and the man who performs them receives some social recognition and approbation.

**Social** ~~Special~~ Special skill in hunting, fishing, basket weaving, carpentry, dancing, singing, making of musical instruments, is appreciated by the Hos, and they show their recognition by consulting those possessing it whenever they undertake such activity themselves, or by following their lead, and also by citing them as examples to children and young people. This leads to the continuity of specialisation to a certain

extent. Hospitality is an attribute of the good householder and the Hos are fond of it. The capacity to give feasts and entertain guests is very much prized by them, and in all their social and socio-religious functions, feasts constitute an indispensable element. A traveller in Ho villages is always welcome, he will be offered Ficcas and Illi, and food, if necessary. The following song popularly sung in the fields of Kolhan, addressed to travellers, will explain their attitude to guests:—

Nepa paromere tamaku tamasatada ko tamaku,  
Terepa paromere barenga bengebangi jolena barenga,  
Pekaya joka nidi me tamaku tamasatada ko tamaku,  
Nuthui joka godome barenga, bengebangi jolena barenga.

On the bank of the river there, the tobacco is grown,

On this bank, the brinjal is grown,

Oh friend, you may take the tobacco as much as you

require for Ficca.

You may pluck the brinjals as much as you require for cooking.

Injury to person and wilful destruction of property are very much resented by the Hos, and if they do not get any redress from the tribal officers, they take the help of witches or engage the services of Najomadani to punish their enemies. Witches who are suspected of causing injury to persons and things without provocation are very much dreaded, and the Hos shun them publicly, though they are not branded as Kajomesins. They hate the witches, dread the Najomadani, tolerate the magician, admire the Deonra, and respect the Deuri. Witches who assist the villagers against the mischief of other witches, and who undo the effects of witchcraft by counter-spells or psycho-physical exercises, are not treated unkindly, and the Hos reward them for their services by contribution in kind to their maintenance after the annual harvest. They distinguish protective and productive magic from destructive magic, and the fact that the same person may be responsible for all kinds of magical practices does not encourage a general disapproval of his methods. But a witch or a magician who lives alone and keeps himself aloof from the social life of the village is always suspected of mischief. Offences against a person evokes condemnation of the entire Killi, but it does not lead to joint action. Witchcraft against a person or a family is always taken as a challenge to the society, and the victim of witchcraft is sure to be assisted by his Killi-mates and fellow villagers. This is how witches are beaten and cudgelled occasionally by the villagers, and in cases where witches are brought to trial, little sympathy is shown by the villagers and even their Killi-mates.

**Social  
Attitude  
Towards  
Witchcraft**

We have not mentioned anything about the attitude of the Hos towards adultery and divorce. An adulterer is a menace to society, and the Hos offer a cock to Sing-bonga to escape the consequence of adultery.

**Adultery and Divorce** The man who is found guilty of adultery is fined by the Killi and ridiculed by the village. In case the husband does not want to live with his wife after the crime has been detected, the adulterer has to accept the woman as his wife or mistress, and the child of the union, if any, is entitled to inherit his property. He is also liable to pay back a certain share of the bride-price paid by the husband. In case a girl deserts her husband and lives with some man in a different village, the members of the husband's Killi assist the aggrieved husband to bring her back from some public place, such as a market or fair, and this establishes the right of the husband; but in such cases the woman usually escapes again from her husband's village. The Manki of the Pir, with the assistance of the Mundas of the villages concerned, decides such cases, and some compensation in kind and cash is usually paid to the husband. A wife may desert her husband for maltreatment, for incompatibility of temper, for his inability to maintain her, or for other reasons. The husband has to bring her back from markets and fairs. Three times the husband is assisted by his friends and Killi-mates, but in the event of her escape again, he gives her up. There is no formal proceeding for divorce. The attempts of her husband to take her back to his village and the fact of her escape again and again serve as proof of her disaffiliation from her husband's Killi. The Ho society does not possess any regular code regarding divorce, and a woman who is deserted by her husband or divorced finds it difficult to marry. In most cases, she lives as a mistress or concubine.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

### CULTURAL CONTACT AND ADAPTATION

The Hos are not an isolated people. They have from very early times come into contact with other races and tribes. They have introduced rites and acquired culture traits from more highly developed communities, while their own practices have also been diffused outside their habitat.

**Dress and Decorations** The material aspect of their lives has undergone a great change. The leafy booths and wicker walls have given place to substantial houses, even bungalows are met with in Kolhan. Their furniture which used to consist of a bedstead and a wooden stool, their crockery which included a few earthen vessels, wooden ladles and leaf plates, their dress which was nothing more than rags and loin cloths, have all been replaced by more substantial, more artistic, and more durable patterns. Umbrellas made of steel framework and cloth and paramatta have pushed their leafy substitutes out of many homes (Rung Chatam or Rung Sakom), and hurricane lanterns have replaced the indigenous Kupi. Bamboo combs have disappeared, as also the bangles and other ornaments worn by men. Women prefer light and sparkling glass bangles to heavy Sakoms and the habits of dilating the lobes of the ear, and mutilating the nose with heavy metallic cones and bamboo tubes have been replaced by those of elegant earrings and nose pins. Though women keep their bust covered when out of doors they have not yet taken to upper garments, such as the Jhula or jumpers, though these are worn only by Christian converts. Soap has grown to be a necessity, and scents a popular luxury. Hair oils and liquid Alta have found their way into the houses of the poor and the rich. The indigenous mat has been replaced by durries and bed sheets and mosquito curtains are found in moderately well-to-do houses. Shoes have become popular with people who work in the towns, and with substantial cultivators, students, and those whose children are at school. Shorts and shirts are the commonest dress for children of well-to-do families, and poorer families like to dress their children in similar style. Artistic and gaudily bordered saris are very much liked by the women, and the village weaver finds himself faced with starvation. The village looms are being used for making napkins and sheets which are sold to the Dikus, while Manchester clothes cover the Hos. Turbans are much in vogue these days, and even the villagers in the

interior wear them if they can afford to. At night, cheap electric torches send their rays into the obscure recesses of their forest-clad home. There is a fair sale of imported tins and toys, parents being willing to buy them for their children, sometime even at the cost of their food.

The principles of public health are to-day better appreciated than they were a few decades back. Housing has received much attention, and new houses are always an improvement on existing ones. It is the absence of means, and not ignorance, that explains the continuance of small mud hovels with small doorways through which a man can just crawl in and out. The difficulty has been increased by the breakdown of tribal solidarity and by the high cost of labour for transport and for construction, which in earlier days was socially provided and could be had free when it was needed. Little propaganda is required to induce the Hos to build better houses although they are ready enough to impress the poverty of their dwellings on administrative officers and inquisitive tourists. In many villages the District Board vaccinator finds little resistance against his mission, and hundreds submit to vaccination without grumbling. The insides of their houses are as clean as they should be, and their Ading combines purity with cleanliness. Food has not received adequate attention, and the poorer classes still eat their customary diet. Well-to-do families have introduced some changes, but not many of these are without some undesirable defect. Occasionally a Ho may buy biscuits and cakes from the town and sweets from the village markets, but they do not seem to have developed any taste for them.

### **Public Health**

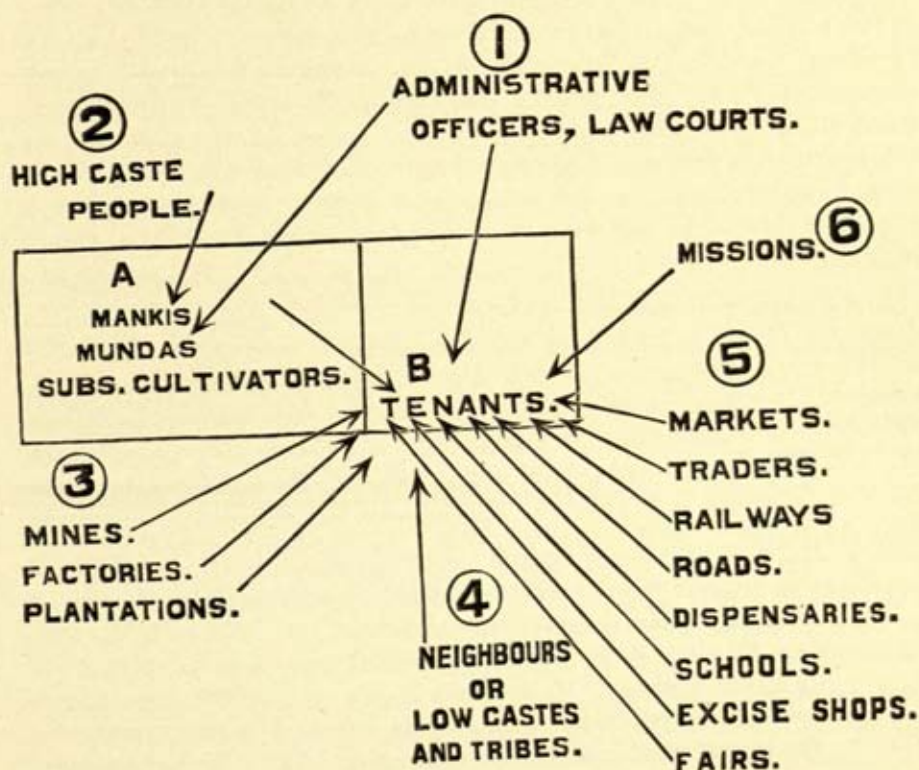
The sports and games of the Hos have been supplemented by the introduction of new ones. Hockey is becoming popular in certain centres. They shape their own sticks from the forests and make wooden balls, though they may not always be round. Football is attracting their attention considerably, and even boys of the countryside are seen on fine afternoons playing with leather balls in uneven fields. The Ho students in the M. V. Schools, and also in the High School, figure prominently in their school teams, and a little encouragement will go a great way in popularising these alien games.

### **Sports**

In many villages there are people to-day, men and women, who have been outside Kolhan, who have lived for sometimes in mining centres, in Jamshedpur, in the tea plantations of Assam and Darjeeling, or in the jute mill areas round about Calcutta. They speak Bihari, understand Bengali, and are proud and conscious of their experience. These people have brought back with them many articles of luxury as well as useful domestic ones which their compatriots have introduced in their homes or would like to possess if

they could afford. The census figures for bilingualism in Kolhan (250 per mille) are an extremely moderate estimate, and to-day an anthropologist can converse with the Hos in perfect confidence in the Gawari dialect.

The streams of cultural contact in Kolhan may be graphically illustrated in the following way.



The above shows that the influences to which the Hos are subject are fairly numerous, and it is easy to realise that their life must be tremendously affected by them. It is clear that a right estimate of the resultant of these

forces can only be obtained by an enumeration of the nature of these contacts, and how the Hos have responded to them.

#### Group-Contacts

We have shown the Mankis, and the Mundas, and the village elders to be separate from the tenants, and this follows naturally due to the differences in their material outlook and social life. We have called the first group A, and the second, i.e., the tenants B. The more group A can

approach group No. 2 in dress, food, housing and other customs, the greater becomes the distance of group A from group B. But however group A may try to affect it the social distance between A and No. 2 will remain fixed for a long time to come. The improvement in dress, food, and outlook, has no doubt reduced the prejudices of the high caste people towards the Hos, but any attempt to transgress the traditional limits will lead to an estrangement. This, group A has already realised, but whether it can approach any nearer to No. 2 or not, group A has secured a status much higher than that possessed by group B, and there is little chance of this recognition being upset by any factor whatsoever. The tenants (i.e., group B) come in contact with group No. 2 as labourers and menials in their household, but group A holds the key to this contact. Anybody taking cooked food with group No. 2, is a Kajomesin, so that his social status depends upon the verdict of the social elders. In this way the upward race of group B is sternly checked.

The contact of the administrative officers with group B is mainly derivative as the indirect form of administration in Kolhan makes it difficult for group B to get in direct touch with group No. 1.

**Contact with Administration** The list of cases that are filed in the court of the Kolhan Superintendent would make it obvious that there is great disaffection against the decisions of the tribal elders. There are three registers maintained by the Kolhan administration for petitions from the Hos.

The first includes the following:—Mankis' reports against Mundas for not carrying out orders of the authorities, for evicting Dikus from their Elakas against raiyats for cutting trees without permission; complaint against a Manki, or a Munda, for selling trees to non-resident raiyats, or for settling lands with such raiyats, and so on. The second register deals with applications of a tenant for possession of land, for partition of land between co-sharers, for recovery of Gonom, for recovery of wages from contractors under whom the applicant might have served, and other petitions involving a claim for money which would be monetary suits if treated under the civil procedure code, and also for the possession of land with damages and mesne profits, etc. The third register is miscellaneous, and includes applications for the construction of or repairs to private Bandhs, for the taking of water from a private Bandh for irrigation, prayer for a punch and the election of members thereto; and orders on a person to accept a woman as his wife or mistress, as the case may be.

The number of cases filed in 1933-34 in the Kolhan Court is given below:

REGISTER NO.		
1933-34		1930-31
379	A	384
569	B	822
240	C	286
<hr/>		
1188		1492
<hr/>		

The arbitration of cases in the village by the tribal officers is not a very satisfactory method of settling disputes as they are not always honest. Many of these tribal officers are grabbing, and others quarrelsome. They sometimes dissipate the Malgoozari paid to them before it is deposited with the treasury. Local disputes are made the subject of private gain, and private grudges are satisfied by deliberately manipulating evidence. They have learnt many vices from their association with touts and litigants.

**Tribal Officers and Their Lapses** There are many cases of embezzlement, bribery and corruption by the Mundas and the Mankis. They suppress crime by accepting bribes. No longer dependent for their position on the good will of the people, they can seldom refrain from using their increased judicial and executive responsibility thrust upon them for private or political ends. They are responsible only to the administrative officers whose every caprice they are thus able to flatter. The higher standard of living which these officers have adopted, and their constant association with people whom they cannot afford to imitate, together with the expenses which they have to incur to maintain their position as leaders of the tribe, make it impossible for them to live within their means. As a result, corruption and bribery are becoming more frequent. But this fact alone does not explain the number of law suits in Kolhan. Foreigners and those who had lived outside Kolhan foster a spirit of discontent among the people, and it is often found that persons who have a little education or some knowledge of law take advantage of the more ignorant aborigines to evade the local panchayet system and get their civil disputes decided on the evidence of the witnesses they produce in court. Steps have been taken from time to time to remedy such evasions of customary procedure. The Deputy Collector in charge of the Kolhan administration is responsible for the efficient functioning of the tribal machinery. To ensure that the panchayet's decision may satisfy the parties to a dispute, the Deputy Collector is required to attend the final meeting of the panchayet, question the members, and record for himself the

essential issues in dispute and the panchayet's opinion on them. All disputes require to be enquired into and settled by arbitration in the village by the village Munda and the Manki of the Pir. When the headman fails to settle a dispute, the Deputy Collector must himself proceed to question the parties, and the headman, as to all details, to refer to all settlement and other records available, and to make out clearly the history of the dispute and the points for decision. Thus the essential points in the administration of civil justice in Kolhan are: (1) that the disputes are arbitrated in the village assembly, and not heard mainly from such individual witnesses as can be produced in court, (2) that all orders are communicated direct by the officer in charge of the administration to the Pir or village headman, and not through the medium of Hindu subordinates. Parties are entitled to apply to the Deputy Collector to have their cases decided in the regular form of a civil suit on payment of court fees, but this is only allowed after every effort has been made first to settle the dispute in the village assembly, and the result of such proceedings recorded. The efficiency of this system depends, among other things, upon the knowledge the Deputy Collector possesses of the language, customs and traditions of the people, and the frequency with which he can visit his Elaka or jurisdiction, in connection with the cases which require to be decided by this system.

In many Pirs to-day, new Mankis have been appointed by the Government, who are usually selected from the same family. They are mostly literate, and wield greater power and more effective control over the tenants. This is reason why the number of civil cases has been reduced from 1492 to 1188, though there are other causes also. The price of lac was Rs. 2/- per seer in 1929-30, to-day it has come down to -/6/- as. per seer; similarly one Pan of cocoons (80) fetched Re. 1/- in 1929-30, and it has now come down to -/5/- as. This has affected the tenants tremendously who were supplementing their meagre income from the fields by their income from these industries. Litigation has also become costly. In 1920, a petition to the Kolhan Court cost -/2/- as., to-day it costs -/12/- as., and the process fee has tremendously increased with it to 1/2/- as. All these things, therefore, account for a fall in the number of cases. Again, the number of cases does not give any idea as to the total number of people involved in them. It is the usual practice for a group of persons who are either Killi mates or co-villagers to accompany the petitioner, or the defendant, and thus law suits and petitions involve the idleness of a large number of people who are not directly concerned with such cases. The petitioner and his friends come in the previous evening and take shelter under trees, if it is summer, or in the verandahs of some public buildings, or inside the cylindrical cover of their native carts which

they bring along with them. They cook their food in the open air and attend the court from morning until it is closed for the day. During this period they sit together, smoke Ficca, and discuss the chances of the case and the subtleties of law. The results of litigation are seldom an unmixed blessing for the people. In spite of the good intentions of the administration, they are financially ruined and driven to despair after some time. Had it not been for the touts and litigants, and for people whom they look up to, the great majority of the Hos would prefer to suffer wrongfully at the hands of their own tribal officers rather than receive an apparently higher form of justice from the courts. Thus, in order to make the present system of administration of civil justice efficient, it is necessary that the tribal officers should be really responsible to the people, and not only to the administration, as they apparently are at present. In view of the formation of classes in Kolhan, it is also doubtful whether such responsibility can adequately be discharged by these tribal officers.

The influence of mines, factories and plantations on the Hos has been very great. There are iron mines in Kolhan and iron foundries and steel-works at Jamshedpur. The metallurgical industries of India are localised in and around Kolhan. The ancestors of the Hos knew the art of smelting iron;

the present generations are not therefore averse to mining.

#### **Influence of Mines, and Factories**

The routine work in the factories is not very popular among them, still there is to-day a permanent Ho population in Jamshedpur. This population changes its units no doubt, but there is growing up a regular Ho element. The same cannot be said of mining. The mining centres of Gua, Noamundi and Manoharpur do not possess a permanent mining community. Nor is there any likelihood of one developing. Noamundi gets a constant supply of local labour, as on all sides of it there are Ho villages. The complexion of labour in Noamundi, therefore, is more healthy than at Gua. While the proportion of women to men at Noamundi is nearly equal, at Gua there are 3 men to every woman. Many of the pairs working at Noamundi are related as brother and sister, or as cousins, while at Gua such pairs can seldom be found. The rate of wage at Gua is naturally higher than at Noamundi. At Gua labour has to be recruited by Thikadars (contractors) from the interior, while at Noamundi local labour is always available. As they come from their villages which are nearby, the workmen can always bring rice from home whenever it runs short instead of having to depend entirely on the shops as they have to do at Gua. Therefore there is very little fluctuation in the price of rice at Noamundi, while at Gua the shopkeepers exploit the people mercilessly. On the 28th of July, 1934, rice was selling at Gua at 8 seers a rupee, while at Noamundi the same day it

was 11½, and at Chaibassa 11. The shopkeepers at both these places get rice from the native states, or from Chaibassa. At Keonjhar rice is sold very cheap. On the 28th of July (1934), rice was selling at Keonjhar border at 22 seers a rupee, but as the State does not allow the rice to be exported, except of the finest quality, the shopkeepers cannot freely import it from there. But necessity is the mother of invention. A system of barter is prevalent in all these native states as well as in Kolhan, so the shopkeepers export salt into the native States, particularly in Gangpur and Keonjhar, and receive rice in exchange. Rice thus becomes the medium of exchange, and measure of value, so that it can be exported. Hence the shopkeepers obtain rice at 22 seers, or more, and sell it at 11 seers, or 8 seers, according to their manipulation. Between Noamundi and Gua, there is another difference regarding the nature of labour. The work at Gua has to be done at a higher altitude than at Noamundi. The labourers have to remain at the top of the Jhandi Buru, whence they can only come down on Saturday night, or Sunday morning, the bazar day at Gua. Thus the difficulty of labour at Gua and the absence of local labour account for the comparatively high wage there. The advantage of higher wages is offset by the prevailing price of foodstuffs and liquor. While liquor is sold at Gua at 4 as. a bottle, the same is sold at Noamundi at 2 as. The price at certain interior places of Kolhan is lower still. The annual rent at Gua for the excise shop is approximately 1300/-, which shows how much money is made by the excise shopkeepers, in spite of the fact that the aboriginal population of Kolhan can brew its own liquor, i.e., Illi. The brewing of rice-beer in the mining centres is attended with a number of difficulties, the most important being that of performing all the requisite rites in connection with it. Again, when we look at the strength of the labour population at Noamundi and Gua, we find that Gua has 1500, while Noamundi possesses 2000 hands. Thus it is certain that the excise revenue, and the profits of the stills at Gua and Noamundi are largely met from the meagre income of the labourers.

In most of these mines labour is temporary for definite reasons. The Hos are lazy and have few wants. The forests still supplement their food supply from the fields, and so long as there is rice in their Bandhies, enough to brew Illi, they prefer to remain at home. In case of urgent need they would first send their sisters and wives, and remain at home till the time for Malgoozari comes, or the dates for the festivals are near. It is for Malgoozari, and occasional feasts and festivals that they come to the mines, and that

**Labour in  
the Mines**

also when they are not and cannot be employed in the village. Labour in the village is not remunerative. There they work for paddy, while at the mines they are paid in money. The average wage given in the village is one anna, or six pice worth of paddy, and in those villages where the Dikus live and require labour for the construction of buildings, etc., they may receive  $-1/6$  or sometimes  $-2/-$  as. Therefore whenever they want money, and cannot obtain it by lac, or Mohua or Kusum, they come to the mines. In the mines the average income per head is Re.  $1/2/-$  for men, and  $-12/-$  as. for women, per week. Though the daily rate is  $-4/-$  as. for men and  $-3/-$  as. for women at Gua, and  $-3/6$  for men and  $-2/6$  for women at Noamundi, they do not work for six days, so that the weekly income does not exceed the amount stated. There are, of course, some whose income is higher, but they are few. If they work for two months, and can abstain from drinking liquor (which very few can do), they may save some money, say 4 to 5 rupees, either for clothes or for Malgoozari. As many of them bring their provisions from home, they can save some money after eight or ten weeks, and as soon as they get the amount required to meet their immediate needs they depart for their homes. This is the story of their earnings in the mines. There are, therefore, two considerations for labour in the mines. One is the immediate need of money for paying Malgoozari, or for providing for cloth, and any ceremonial needs; the other is the lure of a free and unfettered life in the mines away from social control. When the labourers come back from the mines, they receive an indirect social approbation from their Killi-mates, which is due to their success in tiding over crises, their knowledge of the outside world as provided by their association with men and machines and, above all, to their ability to spend. The discontinuity in the service of the miners and the strong liquor which they drink after strenuous work in the mines reduce their health and limit their efficiency, so much so, that skilled labourers are rare among the Hos. The managers will tell you that intelligence and skill develop more quickly among them than among other tribes who work with them, but deteriorate after a few years, and that they end where they started (i.e., as coolies). The health of the people in the mines is never satisfactory. Besides the low vitality which the Hos possess, and which is lowered still more by the strenuous work and indiscriminate drinking, there is the mosquito carrying germs of malaria. The incidence of malaria at Gua and Noamundi is incredibly high. At Noamundi there is a systematic propaganda carried on by the mining authorities, and malaria has been controlled to an appreciable extent. The following figures kindly supplied by the resident medical officer

of the Noamundi dispensary, Dr. Ganguly, will explain the success of their experiments:

	1928- 1929.	1929- 1930.	1930- 1931.	1931- 1932.	1932- 1933.	1933- 1934.
Staff which includes person earning						
As. -/8/- a day and above ...	28	21.5	27.5	11.5	7.5	6.0
General ...	56	15.5	8.5	5.0	7.0	7.5

Out of a labour population of 2,000 at Noamundi, there were 202 who came for treatment in the hospital in June, 1934. The figures for January, February, March, April and May of the same year are 114, 103, 126, 130 and 161 respectively. June, July and August are the worst months in the mines, and the incidence of malaria, and other diseases, is necessarily higher. The housing conditions in the mining districts are far from satisfactory. Although the arrangements at Noamundi are better than at Gua, these leave much to be desired. In spite of the low wages, the unsatisfactory conditions of houses, the high prices of provisions, and the liquor booths where they squander away their money, there is a continuous stream of labourers coming in from different parts of Kolhan, as well as non-Ho labourers from the neighbouring States, and a similar stream on their way back to their home, so that the effects of the mines on the social life of Kolhan cannot be over-estimated.

A comparison of the conditions in the mines with those prevailing in the tea plantations will show that the emigrants to the latter have more opportunities of learning and incorporating new traits and cultural patterns than those who frequent in the mining centres. In the case of the mines, the labourers do not lose touch with their society or their tribal traditions. The Maghe and Baha festivals in the neighbouring villages attract them, and they can come back whenever they like. The natural environment of the Hos is still the background of their culture. In the case of plantation labour, the new environment assists them to adopt new ideas and imitate new practices without difficulty, but as the possibility of their coming back frequently to distant homes is not so great, the detribalisation among them has little effect on the culture of the area they migrated from. Instead of building sanitary dwellings for the labourers, which are one room tenements and where in spite of the best intentions of the mining authorities privacy and family life are bound to suffer, the labourers should be subsidised to build houses for themselves which would gradually lead to a permanent mining population in and around the mining centres. It is doubtful whether mining, as it is, can claim a skilled and specialised community permanently depend-

**Contracts  
between  
Mines and  
Plantations**

ing on it, but the contact of the labourers with the outside world as provided by the markets and the Dikus has encouraged new wants and modern products. To get these wants satisfied, the Hos must work in new conditions of money economy and must labour. They are living in the areas where the industrial development is progressing. The villages, though affording temporary welcome to the labourers, cannot hold them long, as their prestige is associated with their ability to spend with and not their return. Thus, the open arms of the village are assured them so long as they continue to migrate periodically to the industrial centres. This affords a constant source of repulsion, though indirect. This repulsion in the village, therefore, the industrial authorities can utilise by providing certain facilities which will attract labour and will lead to permanent labour communities in areas where they are needed. The social environment of the labourers will thus be secured to them and will check detribalisation, at the same time making them dependent on the industries and thereby encouraging specialisation or skilled labour.

The relation of the Hos with their neighbours, the lower castes of Hindus, has already been referred to in several connections. These castes consider themselves as of superior extraction and culture. They would refer to the aborigines as Kols and Kuis and call them ignorant savages. They watch the rites and ceremonies of the Hos but keep themselves aloof from them. Yet they are hardly superior to the tribal people in their social and religious outlook. The dress worn by the inferior castes, the food they take, the gods they worship, the life they lead are not such as the Hos can imitate with profit. They worship stones and trees, ugly idols and dreadful spirits, believe in witchcraft, and expect to be cured of rheumatism by the kicks of the village Sokha. The consequence is that cultural contact with the low castes has not helped the Hos in any way to lead a better and healthier life, nor to meet difficulties. The contempt of the Hos for some of the untouchable or depressed castes finds expression in some of their popular games, such as Mali-inung on land, and Mali-inung in water. The boys collect under a big tree, and a sort of lottery is made to choose the Mali or the untouchable. A stick is taken by a member of the party and thrown as far as possible which the Mali has to bring back. In the meantime all the rest have to climb a tree. The Mali has to fetch the stick and endeavour to catch one of the boys before he is up the tree. If he does so, the one caught becomes the untouchable. The Dom, the Dosadh, the Ghasi, and the Chamar are all untouchables to the Hos, and they therefore refuse to have anything to do with them. Their culture has indeed received little from these castes, as there is little worth receiving.

Although the tendency of the Hos is towards Hinduism, yet this should not be interpreted as a friendly relation between the Hos and the Hindu residents of the neighbourhood. The higher classes are more in sympathy with the Hindu practice than the lower ones so that they may achieve social prestige; but they are also conscious of their economic exploitation by the higher Hindu castes. The castes of Dikus in most cases enter Kolhan for trading purposes.

**The Hos  
and the  
Hindus**

They get permission to build a house and carry on trade, but gradually they become landed proprietors; such cases have happened in Majhgaon, Jagannathpur, Jaintgarh and Hatgamaria. They pay higher wages to the local labour, which make it difficult for the Hos themselves to secure it when they need it. They exploit and usurp land whenever they can, lend money, and extort exorbitant rates of interest, which the Hos can seldom repay. Few outsiders know that this obligation is utilised by Begar (free and forced labour). The result is a disorganisation of the system of economic co-operation within the village. The reforming section in Kolhan at one time decided even to withdraw from Hindu festivals and to preach non-participation in them and other periodical fairs.

We have already discussed the influence of the fairs and markets on the Hos. There are four old Bhattis or excise shops in Kolhan, viz., at Noamundi, at Gua, at Chaibassa and at Manoharpur. Four new ones have been added lately—they are at (1) Kharband, (2) Hat Gamaria, (3) Tantanagar, and (4) Jagannathpur. The effect of these shops on the health and social life of the Hos we have already pointed out in connection with the outstill system and the mines.

There are a number of Upper Primary and six Middle Vernacular Schools in Kolhan. The M. V. Schools are situated at Purnea, Chitinati, Asura, Dumuria, Sonua and Jagannathpur. Most of these places are

**Schools** Diku centres, so that the Hos receive instructions along with the Dikus. The reports of the Headmasters of these schools confirm our knowledge of the primitive races in other countries, that in the lower forms the Hos can compete with the Dikus, and can sometimes even excel them. The Upper Primary Schools are 19 in number. These are situated at (1) Machgaon, (2) Kotgarh, (3) Kasirah, (4) Balandia, (5) Sinduri, (6) Donkatratu, (7) Burigola, (8) Gitilpir, (9) Tantanagar, (10) Nanda, (11) Rajabasa, (12) Kanataga, (13) Tonto, (14) Lagra, (15) Jaintgarh, (16) Barakala, (17) Peteda, (18) Sialjuri and (19) Bharbharia. The teachers of these schools have no special qualifications, being either Ho or non-Ho residents of the locality. The pay of these teachers does not attract any capable man to such posts. Religious education is banned in schools, and the

curiosity of the students is deadened by their dread of the teacher if he be a Diku, and by the latter's ignorance, if he a Ho. The Diku teacher possesses his crude faith in Hinduism, and demonstrates it by his life. The students may add to the knowledge of their tribal lore by imitating him. A Ho cannot make any decision by himself, but he must seek the assistance of the village diviner, the Deuri, the Munda or the elders of his Killi. If he has to make up his mind about something alone, he will watch for omens or take to drawing lots. The students in these schools are receptive, but not critical, and as independent thinking is not encouraged even in secondary schools, they have not the courage to challenge the teachings of their own religion, or those of others. Lack of confidence makes them weak and vacillating and explains their present attitude to their tribal pantheon. Education in the Primary schools, as well as in the M. V. schools, does not help them to think for themselves, nor to develop personality. Lack of initiative still remains the bane of their life. Those who proceed to the secondary schools or to colleges afterwards are few in number, and they possess a wider outlook and are liberal in their views no doubt. The conservative element in the family is yet too strong to allow these people any very great latitude in their domestic lives. They find it more profitable to agitate for political right and appeal for better economic measures than to interfere with their agelong practices and traditional usages. Kanu Babu of Dumbisai insisted that both the sexes should participate in the preliminary negotiations in marriage, including the Bapala ceremony, and it was done for the first time in Kolhan during his marriage, but it remains to be seen how many of his tribesmen follow his lead.

There are four dispensaries in Kolhan, besides the District Hospital at Chaibassa, and those at the mining centres. They are at Jamda, where the Hos live in constant association with the Dikus.

**Dispensaries** The number of cases attended to at the Jagannathpur Dispensary during the five years ending 1933 are given below:—

Diseases	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933
Dysentery	... 52	36	118	95	157
Diarrhoea	... —	37	127	37	55
Malaria	... 907	1149	1336	1296	917
Rheumatic fever and					
Rheumatism	... 19	10	4	1	3
Pneumonia	... 1	2	7	3	1
Tuberculosis in the lungs					
or Phthisis	... —	1	9	16	6

Diseases	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933
All other diseases of the respiratory system except Pneumonia ...	387	516	492	465	348
Primary Syphilis ...	—	—	5	22	22
Secondary Syphilis ...	2	1	3	3	15
Gonorrhœa ...	—	5	14	15	25
Worms in the belly (round) ...	109	131	237	366	367
Diseases of					
Eye ...	203	609	213	440	726
Ear ...	183	232	256	239	209
Skin ...	483	557	685	568	591
Leprosy ...	—	—	—	5	7

The proportion of tribal patients (mostly Hos) to others, Hindus, and Mahomedans, is given by the following table:—

		Hindus.	Mahomedans.	Tribal.
1929.				
Male ...	...	1368	422	780
Female ...	...	282	43	132
Male Children ...	...	264	116	119
Female Children ...	...	145—2059	72—653	48—1079
1930.				
Male ...	...	1522	449	992
Female ...	...	441	67	305
Male Children ...	...	304	220	160
Female Children ...	...	283—2550	139—875	128—1585
1931.				
Male ...	...	1535	421	1083
Female ...	...	467	165	251
Male Children ...	...	361	235	190
Female Children ...	...	276—2639	139—960	134—1658
1932.				
Male ...	...	1500	532	701
Female ...	...	488	171	173
Male Children ...	...	482	226	157
Female Children ...	...	391—2861	100—1035	131—1162
1933.				
Male ...	...	1332	428	712
Female ...	...	425	134	205
Male Children ...	...	515	232	245
Female Children ...	...	473—2745	106—1002	170—1332

Considering the proportion of the Dikus to the population of the area, the number of patients is certainly rather high, but the number of patients in the tribal population is also significant. This, however, does not explain the incidence of disease, or the actual number treated. The same man may be recorded more than once, thus making the absolute number much smaller. Nevertheless it is certain that the tribal people do come for treatment in these dispensaries, and in future their number will increase appreciably. Medical aid in the dispensaries and hospitals does not, as we have said already, substitute their tribal prescriptions, but only supplement them. In most of the cases of tribal patients the resident physician, Dr. M. L. Bardhan, informed me that a cure is difficult, because the patients are brought too late, or when they have developed complications. Again, instructions as to diet and medicine are not always followed by the patients' relations. The majority of tribal patients come from the higher classes, the labourers who have worked outside, and from the Kajomesin families, as the village Deonra still holds his clientele among the raiyats. The Hos suffer mostly from malaria, respiratory diseases (including phthisis), and diseases of the eye, ear and skin. Lack of vitality due to the insufficient food they eat, deficiency of vitamins in their diet, and excess of drinking lead to these diseases, which also explain premature death among the Hos. Venereal diseases are practically unknown among the Hos of the interior, and most of the cases that come for treatment claim their victims among the Dikus. A few cases are known among the Hos, and the local doctor is of opinion that they are traceable to the association of Ho women with Diku men, or with Ho labourers who had worked outside Kolhan. So long as premarital license was confined within the tribe venereal diseases were absent. To-day Ho women often live with Diku men (at Chaibassa, Machgaon, Jagannathpur), and thus catch the infection which they transmit to the tribe. This menace is increasing in the mining areas where the Hos come in contact with other tribes and exterior castes, and as the people frequently come back to the villages, there is a still greater possibility of importing venereal diseases. Much depends now on the efficacy of the medical aid, and efforts should be made to establish more dispensaries in Kolhan, and equip them adequately.

The advent of the railways and the improvement in roadways have facilitated the movement of people and have increased marketing facilities. Although the Hos have hardly realised the value of time, they have developed ideas of personal comforts, so that whenever they have to undertake a journey of a few miles, which they had usually covered on foot, they take the train or bus. Even if they do not possess the requisite fare, they will higggle with the bus conductor and would prefer to be carried some distance on payment of a fraction of the fare,

#### **Incidence of Diseases**

#### **Railways and Markets**

and then covering the remainder on foot. The colonies of traders and labourers that have sprung up at the stations depend on the Hos for their daily needs, and this has induced the Hos to grow vegetables, and they even keep cows to supply provisions to these colonies. They are also being recruited for railway construction works and road gangs. The railways have assisted in the opening up of Kolhan. The rich raw materials, both vegetable and mineral, as well as the capacity of the tribal people for consuming manufactured goods, are too great to be overlooked. As the Hos are not in a position to take their future into their own hands, the more they come in contact with the outside world, the better it is for them. The exploitation of their economic environment by foreigners (i.e., Dikus) is not an unmixed evil, though steps should be taken by the administration to check unfair competition, which may eventually destroy their ambition in life and lead to their maladaptation. The system of granting licenses for trade in Kolhan, as in the case of hide trade, excise shops, etc., should be judiciously followed, so that undesirable traders may be kept out of the district. Some excise shopkeepers have been found to sell liquor on credit. They do not insist on cash payment, but demand lac or cocoon in exchange, when the season comes. Cunning shopkeepers take advantage of the ignorance of the Hos in calculating the amount payable, and the Hos have to part with a large quantity of their produce to satisfy petty debts.

Finally, we come to the influence of the Missions on the cultural life of the Hos. We have shown that the number of Christians among them is much less than among other cognate tribes. The economic assistance rendered by the Missions to the primitive tribes of the Chota Nagpur Plateau has been ably described by Mr. Roy in his monograph on the Mundas. Wherever the Missions have established their stations, the people of the neighbourhood have sought their aid and have gratefully acknowledged the assistance received. Missionaries come and go, they preach their religion, urge the Hos to despise and discard their faith, their traditional beliefs in Bongas, and witchcraft, and place before them the life of Christ as the ideal. Religion with the Hos is only a tool of adaptation to the process of nature, something by which they can maintain a friendly relationship with the power that is Bonga, something which enables them to secure a bumper crop, and so maintain their existence. They can appeal to any power that will give them this confidence. They want tangible proof of God's power. True, their Bongas do not always assist them, but that is due to their ignorance of the role of the Bongas. If they appeal to the right Bonga, and worship or propitiate him, success is guaranteed.

We have mentioned the forces acting on the socio-economic environment of the Hos, how they operate, and how far they have succeeded in effecting material changes. The factors that we have mentioned as exercising tremendous influence on the life of the Hos have not given rise to any great social disequilibrium. When a tribe is unable to adapt itself, a number of symptoms are manifest, such as indifference to the interests of the community to which the individual belongs, to the propagation of the family and descendants, a loss of alertness and virility, and a pessimistic outlook. These symptoms among the Hos have not assumed any great proportion. The external contacts the Hos have established with the foreign elements in and outside Kolhan are slow and gradual, and that is how they have survived the ordeal and been adapted to the changed conditions of life. The economic conditions have considerably changed in recent years; at the same time, the struggle for existence has become strenuous and complicated, but new industries and their old occupations are still helping them to hold their own against heavy odds. Brought face to face with the forces of their new environment, they have learnt to respect them and get themselves adjusted. Their success in this respect, if success it may be called, may be traced to a number of more or less important elements in their culture, such as,

**Social  
Adjustment**

- (1) The compact area they live in.
- (2) The system of land tenure.
- (3) The conservative elements among the Hos.
- (4) The formation of new buffer class in Kolhan.
- (5) The social distance between the Hos and the Dikus, which has engendered a sense of rivalry and jealousy.

Kolhan is still the land of the Hos, in spite of the presence of the Dikus. They have occupied it and have maintained their occupation. The Hos are often encouraged to treat the Dikus as aliens. The land being inalienable, it has to be worked, as otherwise it passes on to the community. The conservative elements among the Hos are afforded by the women, the aged people, the tribal priest and the village Deonra. The higher classes have introduced changes, but they, being the leaders of the tribe and conscious of their superiority, seldom encourage innovations and introduction of new traits within the village. What they practise cannot and need not be imitated by the tenants, for that would lead to a rivalry in the village and a challenge to their status. Thus they join hands with the conservative elements whenever the latter disapprove of any new or any transgression of the old tribal code. When the sons of the tribal officers indulge in luxurious modes of dress, they do not excite any adverse comment, but when the poor

tenants imitate them, the tribal officers would invariably expose such conduct and check any adoption of such a general pattern of behaviour. The tenants, strangely enough, implicitly accept this fundamental difference in status. The formation of classes in Kolhan has done much to soften the distinction between the aborigines and the higher caste people. The higher classes of the Hos form a sort of middle class, and thus bridge the gulf between two extreme sections of the people in Kolhan. This is contributing to a peaceful social progress. The rivalry between the Hos and the Dikus has also encouraged a healthy race for progress, and though the Hos are not friendly to their well-to-do neighbours, they have realised the superiority of the latter and are keenly alive to their responsibility in this direction. Thus, on the whole, the future of the Hos is not one for despair. As the Deogam poet sings:—

In the gloomy darkness of Singbhum land  
 Must we illumine the light of learning,  
 This is the duty, the virtuous deed  
 Must we undertake by all means.  
 Let us find out a patriotic message  
 Then spread it to all brothers,  
 Let us climb up the path of duty  
 And beshame the foreigners (Dikus),  
 Let us roar like the mighty lions  
 And rouse to action our sleeping brothers,  
 Come, come, unite and assemble together  
 Must we climb to the zenith above.



A Killi Sasan, with the cattle pen belonging to the village Munda of Sikursai.



Ho women digging water from sand pits. Water is scarce in many villages specially during the summer.



Menhirs. The central one is 10-ft. 2-in. high, 4-ft. in width and 7-in. thick.



A Killi Sasan in Konslaposi. The elders of the Laguri Killi are holding a 'punch.' The ploughs of the Killi are kept under a tree near by for use by the members.



Fetching Sasan Diri or burial stone from the hill side.  
A man is seen carrying Diang for the party and the  
stone is carried on a native cart Sagor.



Ho girls nicely clad in groups attend markets for sight  
seeing and making acquaintances—Their fine physique  
and graceful appearance make them very attractive  
indeed. The use of umbrellas by women is becoming  
popular.



Ho dance.



A substantial house in Kolhan showing the change in technique.



A village church, such houses are to-day frequently met  
even in the interior of Kolhan.



## APPENDIX I

### EDUCATION

With the gradual disappearance of the institution of the village dormitories in the Kolhan, the system of training of boys and girls in matters relating to tribal life and conduct has undergone a considerable change. The introduction of schools in the villages where they did not exist before has fulfilled to some extent a want more real than is felt to-day. The success of these institutions will depend upon the attitude the people take to them and the conduct in later years of those who have gone through them. Doubts and distrust of the efficacy of these schools are constantly expressed by the older generations, but though they may not approve the system of training given there, they are nevertheless anxious to send their boys to be trained therein. Though most of the students never get beyond the elementary school, educated children add prestige to the family; and this is the factor that weighs with parents in Kolhan.

Illiterate parents speak with pride of the achievements of their boys, how they can read books in difficult languages, write petitions in English, and understand letters addressed to them. A father regretted the absence of his son during my stay in the village, as his son was the only 'educated' young man in the village having read up to the preparatory Matriculation class in the District School. He told me that people in his village could not understand me, but that if his son had been present he would have been able to exchange ideas and views. Education in the local schools does not help the Hos in the least from an economic point of view, unless the students can proceed to the High School at Chaibassa. Even then it is at best doubtful whether a Ho boy who passes the Matriculation Examination will be able to secure a job good enough for him to live independently of his family. There are nearly a dozen Matriculates among the Hos who are anxiously waiting to be provided for by the Government with posts either as teachers in the M. V. schools, or as Sub-Inspectors of Police, or even as head-constables. The unenviable situation of these students excites sympathy and raises misgivings about the utility of their education. Those who come to the High Schools are either sons of Mankis and Mundas, or of substantial cultivators, or are capable students who have received stipends or scholarships which help them through their school career.

The latter class of students are more unhappy because they have nothing to fall back upon after they finish school education, and cannot for want of funds proceed to higher education in colleges. When they pass the Matriculation Examination they are faced with the problem of employment. Either they find a post worth twenty or twenty-five rupees a month, or work as private tutors to Ho children, for which they receive free board and lodging. For two or three years they move heaven and earth to secure a job, and if they fail, they return to their homes and curse their education for the rest of their lives. When they go back to their villages, they do not help to raise the level of the society in which they live, for they have no faith in the system of education which increased their desires, multiplied their needs and aspirations, and at the same time showed them no way of realising them. They learn no arts or crafts, no technical knowledge which they can use to their profit, and at the same time they cannot easily settle down among those with whom they have to live. The sons of Mankis and Mundas, even if they do not find employment, can come back to their homes and be the leaders of the village. Their knowledge and idealism, if any, can be used in some form or other for the better administration of the village, or for the general welfare of their village life. Education for education's sake is an ideal possible only to the leisured section of the society. To him who must needs use it for his daily bread, it is only a drag on his life. What, after all, is an academic degree to a man who has to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, who has to go back to the land and use the same crude methods of farming and husbandry, whose social position depends on his material circumstances, and whose material circumstances cannot keep him above starvation? The administrative staff who are constantly approached by members of this educated class for trivial positions under the Government frankly confess that they do not want these peaceful cultivators to be transformed into 'Babus.' At the same time the present system of education in the Kolhan follows the same unproductive line of development as in other parts, with the result that the students who receive this education become a problem to the society, useless in every respect, except as clerks, or teachers, or petty officers under various departments maintained by the administration. The unemployment cry amongst the limited number of educated and half-educated Hos has already become insistent and strong, and it is high time that some scheme of education should be introduced which will suit to the needs of the aboriginal element in the population of the District, and which will assist rather than retard the little progress already made by the Hos in adopting a foreign system of training.

Though the Kolhan administration is responsible for the introduction of the Dikus in Kolhan, they were allowed to settle because the need was obvious, and the Hos could not supply their needs by themselves. The Hos are lazy and dislike manual labour. The artisan elements in Kolhan were requisitioned by the Hos to supply their daily requirements, and the latter have profited not a little by their association. To-day, educated Hos realise the needs of their community and are anxious to fulfil them by legitimate means. Could not these schools in Kolhan provide adequate training in the necessary arts and crafts which might promote better living and facilitate production? Students ought to be trained in carpentry, weaving, dyeing or basketry, in scientific farming, and the scientific rearing of tusser or cocoons, or in decorative arts, as those of Benares and Fyzabad, or in pottery. They could then use this knowledge to supplement their agriculture, and thus help to raise their standard of living, and release to a certain extent the pressure on the soil. There is no lack of interest on the part of boys in the schools, and one can assert, on the authority of most of the teachers of the M. V. Schools in Kolhan, that the students are extremely anxious to take up any new training along with their regular studies, provided the teachers themselves take part in it. The introduction of such a scheme in the curricula of schools in Kolhan will have a further effect on the social economy of the village, as it will end by destroying the existing prejudices common among the primitive tribes in India, as well as elsewhere, against the adoption of new and unfamiliar occupations. Scholarships should be founded for assisting Ho boys in taking up courses in medical science, so that when they complete their course they may settle down in their villages, and help to replace the present system of divination and psychic cure by more efficient systems.

One of the reasons why we have in India to-day a surfeit of graduates who are practically useless from many points of view, except as toiling clerks, is that the system of education in Indian schools does not take into consideration the needs of the people for whom it is intended. It is not necessary or desirable that every student who attends an elementary school should proceed to higher education. There are many students who drop out after the elementary stage. But by the system prevalent in our schools boys never derive anything really valuable from their studies, nor anything that is of use in their practical life. The goal is so distant that those who want a return must plod on till they reach the end of University education, and even then the goal recedes. The son of an ordinary cultivator, and that of a clerk with no land, are given the same training, but when they leave the schools, they find they have received little which they can fall back on. It is not that education is not popular in India, or that people do not want

their children to be educated. It is the system of imparting it that detracts from its value and raises a problem which grows more and more urgent, as years pass by. The same defect is found in girls' education in India. The same books and the same curricula are used for boys and girls alike, though their needs are so different. It is more tragic for an unsophisticated people like the Hos.

The system of education in Kolhan should be radically changed. Those who desire their children to receive a training similar to that provided for children of well-to-do, or high class families, may, if they can afford it, have it in schools which cater for the needs of those classes. But for the average Ho, his education should be such as will suit the needs of a future peasant or craftsman. Technical and vocational subjects should figure first in the curriculum, for they teach a pupil to be creative, as well as receptive, to know his own ability, and also the relative value of intellectual knowledge.

The selection of the right type of teachers is an important task for the administration. The teachers in primary schools, specially, have certain social functions to fulfil. The function of a teacher is not only to instruct his pupils but also to see that instruction given in schools may be translated into activities outside. The teacher must demonstrate to the village that he is helping the village boys to be good cultivators, able craftsmen, and willing and obliging compatriots. At the same time he should enable them to receive all that is good in the new order of life. He will thus soon overcome the prejudices of the village community, and dispel their misgivings.

The following extracts from a memorial of the aboriginal population of Kolhan to His Excellency the Hon'ble Sir James David Sifton, K.C.S.I., K.C.I.E., I.C.S., Governor of Bihar, will explain the present day attitude of the Hos on education and unemployment.

"That Your Excellency's humble memorialists are the aboriginal Mankis and District Board Members of Kolhan and these aborigines have been enjoying some special privileges for the education of their children and hope to continue to enjoy the same as they are still very backward in education, there being only one M.A., B.L. (Babu D. N. Samanta, M.A., B.L., M.L.C.), only one graduate (Babu Chandra Mohan Deogam, B.A., Dip.-in Ed., still unemployed), six Undergraduates and only twenty-nine Matriculates among them. That under these circumstances it is highly desirable and absolutely necessary for Your Excellency to have full sympathy for them and to do the needful to encourage their education."

"That your humble memorialists had the honour to submit a memorial on the 2nd November, 1932 to Your Excellency with the prayer that Babu

Chandra Mohan Deogam, then the only B. A. among the Hos, might be appointed in any of the Executive Services, but unfortunately they were utterly disappointed, as their memorial was not considered favourably."

"That Babu Chandra Mohan Deogam, B.A., Dip-in-Ed., is now the first and the only trained graduate and is still unemployed which fact is very disappointing to the aboriginal Hos. When Rai Saheb Dulu Manki, the old and acknowledged representative of the Singbhum aborigines, had the honour to have an interview with Your Excellency in January, 1934, at Chaibassa, Your Excellency kindly advised him to ask Babu Chandra Mohan Deogam to join the Education Department and Mr. G. E. Fawcus, Director of Public Instruction, promised him a post when he qualifies himself by undergoing training. Accordingly he joined the Cuttack Training College and secured his Diploma-in-Education, and is now fully qualified for the post of a Sub-Inspector of Schools or a teachership in the Sub-ordinate Educational Service."

"That Babu Chandra Mohan Deogam, B.A., Dip-in-Ed., applied for the post of a Sub-Inspector of Schools in Singbhum and was rightly recommended for the same post in Kolhan by the Deputy Commissioner, Singbhum, and it was suggested by him to accommodate him in Kolhan by the transfer of a Bengali Sub-Inspector to Dhalbhum Sub-Division where a vacancy occurred. But Your Excellency's humble memorialists are at a loss to know how his suggestions were totally disregarded."

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"That the authorities ought to have rightly realised the necessity of having a Hindi and Ho-knowing Sub-Inspector of Schools in Kolhan, (a purely aboriginal area and where education is imparted through the medium of Hindi) as they are realising the necessity of having a Bengali-knowing Sub-Inspector of Schools in Dhalbhum. That one of the Bengali-knowing Sub-Inspectors of Schools in Kolhan could have been transferred to Dhalbhum and a Hindi-knowing gentleman (Babu Chandra Mohan Deogam) could have been appointed in Kolhan as suggested and recommended by the Deputy Commissioner."

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"That the authorities ought to have fully realised the fact that it is not desirable that non-Hindi knowing Sub-Inspector of Schools be retained in Kolhan area, where education is imparted through the medium of Hindi. That in not transferring a Bengali-knowing Sub-Inspector of Schools from Kolhan and not appointing Babu Chandra Mohan Deogam, the memorialists

as well as the aborigines of Kolhan have been much aggrieved as they have been led to believe that the Government are not at all inclined to redress the grievances under which they have been labouring, though there is ample opportunity of the grievances being redressed easily in the manner suggested above."

"That Your humble memorialists crave leave to submit that the children of infant classes are taught through the medium of Ho language in Kolhan and a Sub-Inspector of Schools without the knowledge of Ho language is unable to guide the Pathsala Gurus in this direction also."

"That Your memorialists further beg to say that a Sub-Inspector's duties are not confined to school room or to the school compound, but he has to deal with a vast number of uneducated Hos. It is essentially required of him that he should co-operate with the villagers for the spread of education among them, for the up-keep of the school buildings and for satisfactory percentage of attendance. A Diku is too big a man to condescend to co-operate with the Hos whose language, customs and needs he does not understand."

"That for these reasons along with others Your Excellency's humble memorialists, in the interest of their children's education, cherish the desire to appoint one of their race when such one is available, and that they could tolerate the grievances only when there was no possible remedy for them. But they are strongly desirous of getting their grievances redressed at the earliest opportunity."

"That it was not only the present Deputy Commissioner of Singbhum who realised the need of a Ho Sub-Inspector in Kolhan but in the year 1919 Mr. Garrett, the then Deputy Commissioner of Singbhum, and Mr. F. B. Whitmore, the then Inspector of Schools, Chota Nagpur Division, also rightly and strongly emphasised the need for having aboriginals to deal with the Hos of Kolhan. That the authorities in the Education Department were fruitlessly looking for a qualified aboriginal candidate for the post of a Sub-Inspector in the year 1919, when there was absolute dearth of qualified Hos. Then, to the authorities the absence of any qualified candidate was very disappointing and now to the aborigines, the rejection of the first and the only trained graduate, is no less disappointing. The Letter No. 3081/3A-20-20 dated the 14th June, 1920, from Mr. F. B. Whitmore, then Inspector of Schools addressed to Mr. J. E. Scott, the Deputy Commissioner of Singbhum, supports the lines written in this para. In this letter he was pleased to observe that to him one of the best ways of proving the value of education to the Hos and of fostering a desire for higher education is to appoint one of their own race to a post of some importance and that such a man would

have a keener interest and a wider influence than an outsider, however able, and he proved by citing the most satisfactory work done by late Babu Sidhu Ho, that even a poorly qualified aboriginal is better than a highly qualified Diku."

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"The special claims and qualifications of Babu Chandra Mohan Deogam are mentioned below.

(i) He was the first and the only B.A. among the Hos in 1932 and was then a candidate for the Executive Service and even now he is the only trained B. A., and the Education Department being the last resource, not to provide him therein is to directly discourage the education of the Hos.

(ii) He being a Ho, cannot think it beneath his dignity to mix freely with the Hos and to co-operate with them in the cause of their education and to quote Mr. F. B. Whitmore "one of the best ways of proving the value of education to the Hos and of fostering a desire for higher education is to appoint one of their own race to a post of some importance."

(iii) He knows Hindi and Ho both, a great and indispensable qualification possessed by no other candidates. As the medium of instruction in Kolhan area is Hindi and the infant classes are taught through the medium of the mother tongue Ho, the knowledge of Ho is also essential, as has been pointed out by Your humble memorialists and Mr. F. B. Whitmore too.

(iv) He is closely related to Rai Saheb Dulu Manki, ex. M. L. C., formerly an Honorary Magistrate and a District Board Commissioner, now the leading Manki, the acknowledged leader of the aborigines, the President of the "Ho Samaj Mahasabha," a Member of the District Board, a Member of the Managing Committee of the Chaibassa Sadar Dispensary, the Non-Official Visitor of the Chaibassa Jail, a Member of the Board of Examiners in Ho Language and the Recipient of Sanada and various certificates awarded to him from time to time in recognition of an appreciation of his loyalty, the services he rendered in helping the Police during the troublous time of Non-Co-operation movement, and the services he rendered in making the celebration of Their Imperial Majesties' Silver Jubilee a success and his services done to his community and finally his uniformly good work."

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"That Your Excellency's humble memorialists relying on the wisdom and clemency of His Majesty's Representative in India, humbly beseech an early consideration of the matter and hopefully trust that an aboriginal trained graduate . . . . . would be preferred to a Diku . . . . . for the post of Sub-Inspector in Singbhum."

" That if Your humble memorialists fail to receive due consideration at the hands of Your Excellency, they reasonably apprehend that the aborigines of the district will be much discouraged in receiving higher education and the district will ever remain backward as it is at present."

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## APPENDIX II\*

### ORIGIN OF CLANS

#### LUGUM SEPT

When the Hos were a hunting tribe living on the chase and wild fruits and roots, a band of them descended from the north-west during the annual hunt. While they were chasing the game, one of the boys climbed up a tree in the centre of the forest to secure some Lugums or tusser when the rest of the company left the forest. He waited for them, but they were not to be found, he cried and cried, but nobody was there. When night came, the fear of animals drove him to the topmost branch of the tree, and he remained there all night. Next morning a fresh batch of hunters entered the forest and discovered the boy. They took pity upon him and led him to the river close by where he was bathed and given some rice-beer to drink, after which they took him home. Then arose a difficulty as to who should feed the boy. One man of the party had a large family, there were seven brothers, and this man was asked to take the boy and bring him up. He consented and the boy was told to tend the cattle of the family. These people were Sidus by Killi. When the Hero festival came they thought to themselves, "We do not know his Killi, how shall we eat with him?" They then approached the eldest brother and asked his advice. He said, "Yes, I know his Killi, he has a Lugum with him, so we should call him Lugum, and he shall prepare food for us." Then the brothers gave him two pots, one a Chetang, or small vessel with a wide neck, and one a Tundi, or large vessel, for cooking food in the Chetang for himself and in the Tundi for them. The food was cooked and the brothers proceeded with the boy to the family Gora land to offer sacrifice to the Hero Bonga. The boy remained with them, and in due course married and was responsible for the origin of the Lugum Sept of the Hos.

#### DEOGAM SEPT

Deogam is a bird. Its peculiarity lies in its call note, which sounds like "Had Deogam." In very early times when the Hos were coming from the

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\*Reproduced from my article on 'Totemism and Origin of Clans,' *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 50, No. 3.

north-west, on the way one of the women had a child born to her. It happened that at this particular moment this bird cried out, "Had Deogam, Had Deogam," and this was unanimously taken as a good omen; so the descendants of the child took Deogam as their sept name. The bird is always welcome to this sept and, on former occasions, food was offered to the bird whenever its voice reached them.

#### TUBID SEPT

Tubid means a mouse hole. When the Hos were on their way to Kolhan, a woman gave birth to a child. It was the custom with the Hos to bury in the ground the placenta and the umbilical cord in an earthen pot, but as no such pot could be had at the place, the woman discovered a mouse hole nearby and sent down the placenta and the umbilical cord through the hole. The descendants of this child came to be known as Tubids.

#### HASADA SEPT

Hasa means clay and Da water. A particular section of the tribe, while migrating to Kolhan, determined to settle down wherever the earth and water should suit their taste. Now they began by tasting the soil and the water, and finally came to a place that suited them. The descendants of this section came to be known as Hasada.

#### KALUNDI SEPT

The preparation of Handia was taught to the Hos by Sing-bonga or the Sun god, so that they have been preparing rice-beer ever since they were created. Now, when they were coming to Kolhan, their stock having been exhausted, a particular batch halted at a place to prepare liquor. But when they started to stir the contents of the Tundi, or vessel in which the liquor was fermented, they found to their disappointment that they possessed no Lundi, or ladle. Ka means not, and Lundi, ladle. Henceforward, the members of this particular branch were identified with Kalundi.

#### PURTY SEPT

This is a division of the Ho tribe and includes as many as seven septs. The story of the origin of the Purty Sept is related thus. While on their way through a dense forest the seven sons of a couple wandered in different

directions in quest of food, the youngest remaining with the parents. In course of time the brothers were identified but each had adopted a particular sept name during migration, the youngest adopting Purty as his sept name. The descendants of all these brothers are known as belonging to the Purty clan, and no marriage can take place between the members.

#### BARAI-MUNDA SEPT

This is the name of a Ho who became the Munda, or headman, of a certain village. The descendants of this Munda all belong to Barai-Munda Killi. Hochauli is the place from which the Barai-Mundas came. It is to the west of Jorapukur. The general belief is that the Hos have all come from the north-west.

#### MALGUNDI AND KAIKA

These two septs have descended from a common ancestor. Marriage is forbidden between them. Malgundi means a Pipul tree, and Kaika also signifies a tree. While on the way a mother gave birth to two male children, one of them under a Pipul tree and the other under a Kaika tree; the descendants of the former thus came to be known as Malgundi, while those of the latter as Kaika.

#### KUDEDAL SEPT

Kudedal means blackberry juice. It is said that the ancestors of the sept on their way to Kolhan got thirsty and no water could be procured, the village Bandhs being all dried up. So they quenched their thirst with blackberry juice, but for which their lives would have been lost.

#### JAMUDA SEPT

Jamuda, Honhaga, and Khandium are all sub-divisions of the Jamuda sept, marriage relations being forbidden between them. Jamuda means a waterfall. The origin of the Jamuda sept is similar to the Kudedal. A woman gave birth to three male children at one time. The mother got very thirsty and found a waterfall in the neighbourhood. The cool water of the fall satisfied her thirst and out of gratefulness she named the first boy after the waterfall, and the descendants belong to the Jamuda sept.

## SAMAD SEPT

While hunting in Kolhan, a particular section of the tribe pitched their temporary abode near a jungle and then went out in search of game. A whole day passed but no game was to be found. The hunters grew very hungry and some got exhausted. At last a deer was killed and the hunters gathered round the game to partake of it. As the hunters were many in number, one of them took an axe and cut the meat into pieces, which were evenly distributed among them. The act of cutting meat into small pieces is called Samad by the Hos, and the descendants of this section of the tribe became known as Samads.

## CHARADS AND CHARABAYADS

On a cold day a number of Hos were out hunting when rain came pouring in and the hunters encamped for the night on both sides of a small rivulet. Those on the right bank somehow got up a fire and began to warm themselves, while their friends were shivering with cold on the left bank. The latter then besought the former for fire to warm themselves and it was sent. This shivering sensation is known as Charad or Chorad in the Ho dialect. Those without fire henceforward were known as Charads, their friends on the other side, who helped them with fire, being known as Charabayads, i.e., friends of the Charads. Marriage is forbidden between these two septs, or Killis.

# APPENDIX III WEEKLY MARKETS IN KOLHAN

<i>The days of the week.</i>	<i>The place.</i>	<i>Distance from Chaibassa.</i>
Monday.	Purnea.	10 miles.
Tuesday.	Hatgamaria. Chaibassa.	22    "
Wednesday.	Lagara. Chakradharpore.	30    " 16    "
Thursday.	Sarda. Tantanagar. Jagannathpur.	6    " 12    " 28    "
Friday.	Asura. Chaunpore.	6    " 12    "
Saturday.	Chiru.	6    "
Sunday.	Gura. Gua.	13    " 46    "



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#### BESIDES THE ABOVE:

I have taken help from a number of Government Reports on Administration, Forests, Minerals, Survey, Settlement and Revenue.

#### ABBREVIATIONS USED:—

- J. A. S. B.—Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.  
 J. O. A. S.—Journal of the American Oriental Society.  
 J. R. A. I.—Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute.  
 R. B. A.—Report of the British Association for the Advancement of Science.





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