

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA

Central Archaeological Library
NEW DELHI

ACC. NO. 74294

CALL NO. 572.55416/vid/sin

D.G.A 79

THE BIO-CULTURAL PROFILES
OF TRIBAL BIHAR



THE BIO-CULTURAL PROFILES OF TRIBAL BIHAR

74802

L. P. VIDYARTHI
AJIT K. SINGH

572.55416

Vid / Sin



PUNTHI PUSTAK

CALCUTTA

::

1986

Published by :
Sankar Bhattacharya
PUNTHI PUSTAK
136/4B, Bidhan Sarani
Calcutta-700 004

4294 12.10.87
572.55416/Vid/Sm
45 12/11

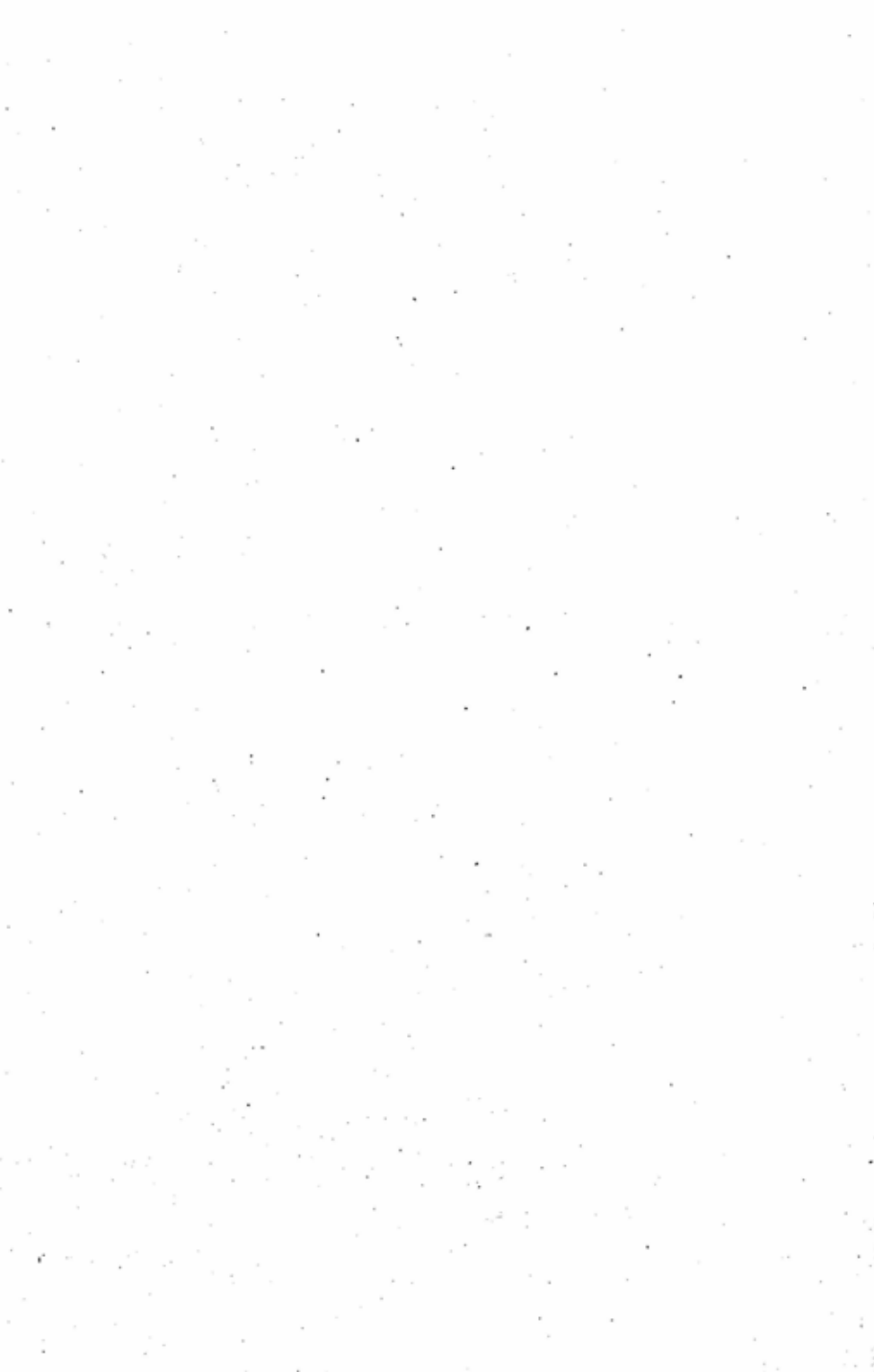
© Reserved by the Author

First Published
April 1986

Rs. 140'00

Printed by :
Bikash Hazra
BISHNU PRINTING HOUSE
38/1A, Haritaki Bagan Lane
Calcutta-700 006

DEDICATED
TO
THE TRIBES OF NETARHAT PLATEAU



OBITUARY

We, the Publishers of Social Science books, are shocked to hear the demise of Prof. Lalita Prasad Vidyarthi of Ranchi University, on 1st December 1985 at Ranchi. A great soul and a world renowned Anthropologist, he shone on the Indian scene for almost 30 years. An award winner for his Distinguished Services to Anthropology, he dominated in the field of Anthropology in India and presided over the World Anthropology meet in 1978 in New Delhi. A prolific writer, he wrote and edited dozens of books. We have begun to feel his loss. We all pray to God to give his family members strength to bear the loss and rest his soul in peace.

S. K. Bhattacharya
Proprietor

PUNTHI PUSTAK
Calcutta



PREFACE

One of the significant developments in multi-disciplinary approach to the fields of social and natural sciences is the study of eco-system at micro and macro level. There was a time when anthropologists and human geographers studied the effect of nature on man. A time has come now, when the anthropologists have to study man's role in changing the face of earth. Such a need to understand the reciprocal influence of man and his ecology led to the study of this micro region of the plateau area of Netarhat.

We have very long and close association with Netarhat plateau, from where a wide range of data have been collected for this book. The first author (L. P. Vidyarthi), has been doing field researches in this area since 1955 whereas the second author (Ajit K. Singh), lived in the area during 1975 for a full year.

Like most other scholarly works, this book is a product of the collective efforts of several persons, even though it may bear two names as its authors. It is literally impossible to acknowledge all the numerous persons who provided scholarly criticism, material assistance, and moral support in bringing this book to its conclusion. Some of them, however, deserve special mention.

Professor K. N. Sahay, Dr. N. Mishra and Dr. P. Dash Sharma took the VI year students of the Department for field work training in the area for six weeks. We have used their data as far as possible. We are specially thankful to Dr. P. Dash Sharma, for his valuable contribution, particularly on physical features of the people of Netarhat plateau. We are also grateful to Professor M. R. Chakraborty, Miss Sushma Abbi and Miss Sushmita Bhattacharya for their close association with this programme but, due to some reasons we could not utilize their work. We are most grateful to

Dr. S. Borbora whose doctoral thesis on the Asurs of the same area helped us in bringing out this volume.

We express our sincere gratitude to Sri S. K. Chowdhary (retired from Indian Foreign Service), for reading the manuscript meticulously and for giving useful suggestions.

It is a great pleasure to thank Sri S. K. Bhattacharya of Punthi Pustak, Calcutta, for his interest and care in the publication of this book.

30 August 1985

RANCHI

L. P. Vidyarthi

Ajit K. Singh

CONTENTS

	<i>Pages</i>
I. The Ecological Background ...	1-10
II. The People ...	11-39
III. Demography and Physical Features ...	40-82
IV. The Economy ...	83-122
V. The Religion ...	123-163
VI. The Changing Scene ...	164-172
Appendices ...	173-191
Bibliography ...	192-196
Index ...	197-203

Recd. from Parimal Publication Delhi 7. Bill No. 163 dt=12/9/87
 binds 140/-

INTRODUCTION

It is an attempt at making a comprehensive study of the Pat region forming the north-western tip of the Gumla district and the southern portion of the Palamu district of Bihar. Besides contributing to the world of knowledge about the all too limited Pat anthropology by portraying and projecting profiles of communities of the region that comprise a spectrum of ethnic groups inhabiting ; the area it opens up in its trail avenues for inter-disciplinary research in respect of these tiny plateau.

The area or 'region-oriented' studies which deal with people and cultures within certain geographical bounds have a positive side. They promote a multi-disciplinary research so that the findings of one discipline can serve as reference material for studies in another disciplines. In the present area-study priority is given to studying a number of tribes, their physical aspects as well as certain specific socio-economic, cultural and religious processes. This book has covered the ecological, demographic, ethnological and other aspects of life and culture of the Patman (the tribes living at Netarhat plateau). Emphasis has also been laid on the study of various ecological and socio-economic problems. The study further examines in detail the adaptability of the population of the area to their habitat through their crude technology and interactions with various ethnic groups. The economic and social processes have been identified which led to gradual transformation of these Pat communities.

It has been observed that even in ethnically heterogeneous villages, where one tribe forms a clear-cut majority with a sprinkling of families from other tribes, one will not notice any vestige of social stratification. This is due mainly to the fact that all have, more or less, the same standard of living, being dependent upon the same type of subsistence

cultivation. Moreover, no sharp distinction can be made between these people as regards their dress, appearance, food habits and household possessions etc. Their social and religious life are also to a great extent similar.

The two anthropological concepts viz. 'culture area' and 'cultural ecology' have been applied to study the ethnographic areas. A 'culture area' is a relatively small geographical unit based on the contiguous distribution of the cultural elements. The theory initiated by Boas and followed by Wissler (1917) found its final refinement when Kroeber defined these concepts more sharply (A. L. Kroeber : 1939). In India, Nirmal Kumar Bose was greatly influenced by Kroeber and Wissler's trait-distribution studies which is evident from three of his important research works : Spring Festival Culture Complex (1927), Indian Temple Architecture (1949) and Survey of Material Culture in India (1961).

The man-nature interaction have been supported by many studies, on the practical level. The study of Evans-Pritchard on Nuers is an excellent example where his reasoning is strictly ecological. But the idea of natural interaction between culture and environment is comparatively of late origin ; Redfield (1955), Laura Thompson (1961) and Vidyarthi (1963).

The concept of 'cultural ecology' given by Steward (1955) is one of the important current theoretical strategies, subscribing to the view point that an intimate relationship exists between a culture and its surrounding environment. 'Cultural Ecology' is the study of the processes by which a society adapts to its environment, and to ascertain how the adaptation entails certain changes. Its principal aim is to determine whether these adaptations initiate internal social transformations or evolutionary change. It analyses these adaptations, however, in conjunction with other processes of change. Its method requires examination of the interaction of societies and social institutions with one another and with the natural environments.

Anthropologists like Clark Wissler had a strong sense of the inter-relationships between culture and environment. Kroeber, too, in 1939 produced a minute examination of the degree of interplay between cultures and environment and their mutual relevance.

In Vidyarthi's book *The Maler : A Study in Nature-Man-Spirit Complex* (1963), social structure elements like family, lineage and village community the variety of supernatural attributes and the basic drives and anxieties, including those connected with survival of a people, are analysed in inter-relatedness and interdependence. Adaptation of social arrangement, for survival is, as part of the cultural ecology, well explained.

Vidyarthi's model of nature-man-spirit complex is applied and tested by Borbora (1979) among the Asurs of the plateau area of Netarhat. Recently there has appeared a book edited by Mann (1981) presenting eleven scholarly papers by different contributors on the theme of interrelationship of man and environment. Sinha (1980) tried to understand the Birjia tribe who are living in different ecological setting—Pat, Ghat and Valley. He analysed the life and culture of the Birjias in terms of 'Cultural Ecology'. Our discussion of Pat anthropology frankly emphasizes the following :

It presents a general Eco-cultural profile of the tribes and castes and other people of the Netarhat Pat area which has so far remained neglected.

It studies the style of life of the tribals of the Pat area under the frame work of Nature-Man interdependence as well as man-to-man interactions.

It reveals the process and the extent to which Ecology has helped to create similar ethos and world view in spite of differences in their cultural backgrounds.

It makes a comparative study of the physical characteristics of the tribals of the Pat region and trace out possible links between ecology and physical features.

The six chapters of this book reveal the total picture of

Netarhat plateau life. Chapter one deals with the physical framework of the Netarhat plateau which includes the origin of the name of the Plateau, its location, boundaries, area, topography, hydrography, recent alluvium, minerals, climate, rainfall, flora, fauna and changes in the Ecological setting.

Chapter two deals with the people of the Netarhat plateau, consisting of a number of tribe, namely—Oraon, Munda, Asur, Korwa Birjia and Kisan as well as a few castes like—Goala, Ghasi, Turi and Lohar. A short Ethnographic note is given on all the principal tribes inhabiting this area.

Chapter three throws light on the Demographic characteristics of the Pat man and some biological parameters like ABO blood groups, dermatoglyphics, phenylthiocarbamide tasting ability, colour blindness and some anthropometric measurements. At the end of the chapter a detailed analysis of the labour force has also been given.

Chapter four deals with the economic life of the Pat area. In this chapter different stages of agriculture, agricultural method, and implements have been dealt with. Closely related to agriculture is animal husbandry which has been discussed at length. The forest and the tribals are inseparable. In this modern age also the tribal life revolves around the forest. How the forests provide the Pat people with food, employment and trade is discussed extensively. The food and drinks as well as diseases and tribal remedies have also been dealt with. At the end of the chapter indebtedness and its different forms which are prevalent in the area is also given.

Chapter five discusses about the different aspects of culture of the area. The chief features of political organisation and a detailed study of religion of the Pat people have been discussed at full length in terms of sacred geography, sacred performances and sacred specialists. Socialisation of the Pat personality forms the end of this chapter.

Chapter six analyses the changing scene of Pat life. The change has been visualized in terms of Christianity, Indus-

trialisation, Community Development Projects, Schools, Tourism and Sports. How the different aspects of life of the tribes of the Pat area have been influenced by these factors of cultural change has been discussed in depth.

At the end conclusion, appendix and bibliography for collateral readings have been given.

THE ECOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Origin of the name of the Plateau

The origin of the name of the plateau is rather obscure. There is no unanimity about the name-Netarhat. According to local people *Netar* means Nature (*Prakriti*) and *hat* means market, i.e. market of nature but the two do not seem to hang together and one may wonder what the one has to do with the other. Perhaps what is really meant is a market set amidst Nature.

Some believe that there were early settlers scattered on this plateau already before the British Administration appeared on the scene and took a fancy for the place on account of its magnificent scenery and congenial climate. A creeper locally called *Mahulain*, rich in foliage and verdant in growth covered the entire area. The early settlers used to say that *Lattar* (creeper) spread to every nook and corner of this place where administrative buildings started to come up. People from outside began to pour in this locality being directly or indirectly connected with administration. The area was suddenly teeming with people as if it were a market place, that is *hat*. Thus the juxtaposition of *Lattar* and *hat*, gradually came to be called 'Latter Hat' by the local people. When the British and their associates came in contact with the people in this place, they heard this local name and in their inability to pronounce it correctly they mispronounced it as 'Netarhat'. Later on they started to write it also the same way as they pronounced it. That is how the present name 'Netarhat' seems to have come into use.

According to another belief, a creeper locally called *Newair* grew plentifully in this area covering the hill sides. This dense creeper was cleared from this area and the clearing

came to be known as 'Newairtanr'. Duncan Farm was raised on this flat ground. Its remnants are still to be found in this place. Later on this name was changed into 'Netarganj' and finally it took the present form 'Netarhat'.

Location, Boundaries and Area

The state of Bihar extends approximately from latitude 22°N to 27°N and from $83^{\circ}20'\text{E}$ to $88^{\circ}17'\text{E}$. The maximum north-south extent of the quadrilateral-shaped state is about 605 Kms. (377 miles) and the maximum east-west with about 483 Kms. (302 miles). It has Nepal on its north, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh on its west, Orissa on its south and West Bengal on its east. Bihar has an area of about 174,000 sq. kms. (about 67,196 sq. miles).

The state boundary runs for about 9 kms. (6 miles) along the Son river forming the north-western limits of Palamu district. Beyond this point the boundary passes into what is known as the Chotanagpur plateau and runs south-east in a hilly and forested country...of a gradually rising elevation till it reaches the Pat region. This Pat region is a small plateau believed to be composed of Deccan lava, now converted into Laterite and Bauxite soils, as a result of weathering, and is one of the chief sources of Bauxite (the raw material of aluminium) in India. The Pat region is about 3,600 ft. above sea level and covers the north-western corner of the Ranchi district and the southern corner of Palamu (Ahmed 1965 : 1,23,24). These small plateaux are locally known as *pats*. These flat or somewhat undulating table lands are known as the Netarhat Plateau and there is a group of plateaux contiguous to it which has an area of 16 sq. miles. The Netarhat plateau is situated between $23^{\circ}27'8''\text{N}$ and $23^{\circ}30'22''\text{N}$ latitude and between $84^{\circ}14'4''$ and $84^{\circ}17'8''\text{E}$ longitude.

Netarhat proper falls under Mahuadanr P.S. of the Palamu district and is situated at the distance of 154 kms from the Ranchi district headquarters. Mostly these Pat

areas fall within the jurisdiction of Mahuadanr Anchal (Police Station) of the Palamu district, Bishunpur, Chainpur and Dumri Anchal of the Gumla district.

Topography

The forest-clad hills on the north-western periphery of the Gumla district look like a magnificent natural wall stretching from north to south in an unbroken line. A near view shows it to consist of rocky spurs of various heights with deep valleys radiating from the central mass. Each of the pats forming the pat region is a mass-like flat-topped small plateau. Most of these laterite-topped *pats* rise above 3,500 ft. and some of them are above 3,800 ft. The average relief is 1000 ft., but at places along the northern stretch it exceeds 2,000 ft. The narrow valleys, steep-gradient and flat inter-fluves clearly suggest that the area is passing through a young stage of the cycle which was started 'de novo' after the uplift in the beginning of the Tertiary period. The dominance of valley-deepening over valley-widening explains the existence of flat topped inter-fluves and accounts for the absence of alluvial soil in the river valley : (Prasad 1968 : II, Ph.D. Thesis, Ranchi University).

The whole Pat region consists of three distinct surfaces. They are (i) the summit planes, generally flat with no apparent slopes ; (ii) the valley-bottoms constituting of narrow strips of land sloping rather gently ; and (iii) the valley-walls or the Pat sides which are steep, rocky and precipitous. The valley-walls represent the connecting slope or transition surface between the high-lying summits and the low-lying valley-floors. This transition surface is drained by a very thick net of closely spaced parallel streams. At places, this surface is rocky and bare, but by and large all the Pat sides are covered with thick forests. These conditions have rendered the Pat sides wholly unsuitable for settlements (ibid).

This is how Captain Deponce, who conducted the topographical survey in 1868, described Pats :

"In the north-west corner, and along the boundary of Jashpur, are to be seen the peculiar hill features called Pats. ...The ascent of these Pats is steep. The path winds amongst boulders of rock, or up earthy slopes covered with forest, until 20' or 30' ft. from the summit is reached ; here a precipitous rock, the edge of a horizontal stratum, bars progress except through some fissures, not seen at first view. This horizontal stratum of trap rock forms a true contour or level line, being visible like a collar on every side of the Pat. It in fact gives the Pat its form, were it not there to continued to resist the action of rainfall, these Pats would long ago have had their upper soil washed away, and would have put on the form of peaks or ridges common to ordinary hills. On the summits there is generally a small depth of soil overlying the rock, consequently very little can be grown ; forest trees, however, grow and the slopes of the Pats generally bear heavy timber. It is probable that the Pats at an early period were one continuous mass, forming a plateau. (Excerpt from B and O.D.Gaz., Ranchi, 1917 : 253).

Hydrography

The valleys of the Sankh and the North Koel are the only level portions in the highest plateau of Netarhat. The Sankh flows in a southerly direction through the broad cultivated plain of Bhitar Barwe (Chainpur P.S.) and the North Koel rises in the hills between Kurumgarh and Jori and flows through the narrow valley of Bahar Barwe (Bishunpur P.S.) towards Palamu. The waters of the Sankh descend from a great height near Rajadera forming the beautiful Sadni falls.

Most of the Pat villages, however, have water scarcity. Some natural springs also occur in a number of villages. In village Jobhipat water is scarce there being no river or such other sources of water nearby. The villagers depend entirely upon small springs the waters of which are tapped at convenient points.

Recent Alluvium

Alluvium is mostly a residual soil derived from the decomposition of granite and its intrusions. Generally, the soil capping is very thin, though in places it may be 20 ft. or more in thickness. Normally, the thickness of the soil at the base of the ridges is more than in the intervening valley. Alluvium derived from the Granite Gneiss is a coarse sandy soil. It is, however, a very rich soil, well suited for agriculture, and is already under intensive paddy cultivation.

Minerals

On the edges of the Netarhat plateaux, bauxite is found to be concentrated in the upper zone of the scarps passing downwards into highly ferruginous Laterite. Usually an overburden of Pisolitic Laterite or Lateritic soil is observed. At the base of laterite soil, there are occasional lenses of lithomargic or ochreous clays. The bauxite is mostly massive and of a grey or pink colour.

Climate

The climate of the Netarhat plateau is pleasant throughout the year. It is very much like that of the Ranchi plateau, the only difference being in respect of certain climatic factors; the Pat climate has some marked features. The Pats are rainier, cloudier, cooler in summer and colder in winter than the Ranchi plateau. Most nights are chilly, and winds, specially those blowing in the morning are piercing. During mid-and late-winter (in December and January), the temperature on grasses falls to freezing point and for more than a month hoar-frost occurs at night and continues to remain on the grass till late in the morning. The hoar-frost locally known as *pala*, causes much damage to the winter crops and the young trees. Standing plantain trees and papaya trees are seen to be destroyed by the frozen dew. This is one of the reasons why double cropping cannot be effectively carried

out in the *Pat* regions. With about 80'' normal annual rainfall Pats are the rainiest tract of Chotanagpur (Prasad 1968 : 39-40)

Rainfall

The rainfall is about 72 inches at Netarhat, but it drops suddenly below the *Pat* region to about 50 inches and then gradually falls to about 43 inches near the Son. The annual rainfall of the Ranchi plateau is around 58 inches. It decreases towards the east near the Subarnarekha valley to about 52 inches because of the lower height (Ahmad 1965 : 355, 383),

The *Pat* area includes the escarpments that intercept rain-bearing winds from the south-east (Bay of Bengal) and monsoon clouds, thus ensuring a more dependable supply of moisture. The rain water is absolutely necessary for agriculture, of course, but at the same time it is also a dangerous force, swiftly eroding the exposed hill sides. Thus although upland fields are initially productive, two or three years of repeated grain crops are enough to sap much of their vigour. As mentioned, there are two normal tracks of the Bay depressions which influence the distribution of rain-fall in the plateau region. These tracks are approximately along the lines drawn from Ranchi to Calcutta and from Daltengunj to Cuttack. The moist clouds after crossing the Chaibasa and Panch Pargana plains are forced to ascend by 1000 ft. and result in heavy precipitation on the eastern scarps of the Ranchi plateau and the adjoining areas. West of Ranchi upto Lohardaga, the rainfall decreases, perhaps because of the absence of marked elevation in between and also because much of the moisture is expended in the eastern part. The area between Ranchi and the *pat* scarps falls on the lee side of the Arabian sea branch that descends the plateau. But immediately west of Lohardaga, the winds are forced to rise by 1,200 ft. to 1800 ft. along the plateau scarps. The *pats*, therefore, receive the heaviest rainfall exceeding 70'', and at places 80''. The depressions that follow the southern track enter the plateau through the Sankh and the South

Koel basins and give heavy orographic rain all over this area' (Prasad, 1968 : 39-40).

Flora

The forests of this region fall under the Dry Tropical type, sub-classification being the Dry Sal type in which Sal (*Shorea Robusta*) is abundant. The only good specimens of Sal forests can now be seen around the *Sarnas* where on account of religious sanctity attached to them, the trees have been spared and maybe 100 to 120ft. in height with a girth of 10 to 15 ft. : in the hills and on the slopes of the *ghats*, the trees are short and stunted. In the sheltered situations, the principal companions of Sal are the *Asan* (*Terminalia Tomentosa*), *Gambhar* (*Gamelina-Arboria*), *Kend* (*Diospyros Tomentosa* or *melanokylin*, *Ebony*) and *Simul* (*Bombax Malabaricum*, the cotton tree) *Karam* (*Adina Cardifolia*), *Kusum* (*Schlichera Trijuga*), *Paisar* (*Pterocarpus Harsupium*) are also important species of trees. *Amaltas* (*Caccia Fistula*) and *Bamboo* (*Dendrocalamus Strictus*) are also found in the inferior Sal forests. *Jamun* (*Eugenia Jambolana*), *Karanj* (*Ponamia glabra*), *Bael* (*Aegle Marmelos*), *Jack-fruit* (*Autocarpus intergrifolia*), *Pipal* (*Ficus Religiosa*) and *Bar* (*Ficus Bengalensis*) are common around village sites. The *Palas* (*Butea Frondosa* and *Butea Superba*) is often abundant and cultivated on waste lands, and its wealth of scarlet blossom in the hot season is a striking sight. The convolvulaceous creeper (*Porana Paniculata*), the well-known bridal creeper, displays a mass of white flowers along the *ghats* in November and a large variety of tree and ground orchids are to be found in the jungle. Palms are seldom found but the dwarf palm (*Phoenix Acaulis*) or *Khajur* is found on the upper edge of the *ghats*.

Fauna

The wild life of the plateau area may be grouped into two—the carnivores and the herbivores (non-flesh-eating animals).

Throughout the wooded hills, valleys, and the plateau,

tigers (*Felis Tigris*) are commonly met with but they are chiefly cattle-lifters. Yet a number of cases of man-eaters have also come to light. Like tigers, leopards (*Felis Pardus*) are also common but generally they are found roaming in the neighbourhood of the villages within the forests or by the side of the forests because they are very fond of cattle, ponies as well as dogs available in the villages. The Cheetah is occasionally met with. Hyaenas (*Hyaena Straita*) are also frequently found in the village areas. They try to lift goats and kids.

On the pats and in the wooded hills, bears (*Ursus Melursus*) are most numerous. During rains and the foggy weather, they come out of the forests and damage a lot of things. They often damage the maize crops, grown even in the homestead *bari* lands of the tribals. They are very fond of *Mahua* flowers and gular fruits, plums, white ants and wild honey. On the Netarhat plateau, near Richang village, a case of a man-eater bear has come to light, 'Manikoian' and 'Rajkoia' (two types of wild dogs) have been found also in this region.

The Bison or Gaur (*Bos Gunrus*) is occasionally met with in the valleys or the foot hills of the area. Sambar (*Cervus Unicolor*), spotted deer (*Cervus axis*), and the Barking deer (*Cervulus Muntjac*) are fairly common in the deep dense forested hills and valleys below. Nilgai (*Boselaphus Tragoeamelus*) often visit this area during the winter.

The most common species of the wild life is wild pigs (*Sus Cristaitus*) numerously found in this area. They damage crops heavily, due to which the tribals have to be very careful to watch their crops at night to prevent wild boar attacks; they are trapped in pits by the tribals through *dari* or ditch trap. Similarly, the Hares (*Lupus Reficaudatus*) are found in abundance. They also damage the crops like *Gondali*, *Marua*, Paddy, *Masur* pulse etc. grown in the fields near the forests. They are caught by the tribals through the *funda*.

The Langur or Haluman (*Semnopithecus Entellus*) and the Bandar or red-faced monkey (*Macacus Rhesus*) are found all over the plateau area. In the Netarhat escarpment they are found in abundance. Their meat is much relished by the Birhors.

The Indian fox (*Canis Bengalensis*) and the Per-cupine (*Hystrix cristata*) are commonly found in these jungles. They are trapped by the Birjia and Asur through noose trap method and their meat is eaten by the tribals.

Invariably the tribal youths are seen catching or shooting birds through 'Lashathongi' or by their bows and arrows. *Ban-murgis* (wild fowl) often attack their *gondli* or *marua* crops grown in *tanr* field near the forests. There they are caught by the people through *Sima funda* method. Some of the birds such as *Bater* (Black-breasted Quail), *Buttak* (wild duck), Black and White *titor* (Black and white Partridge), *Manjur* and *Benra* (common peacock), *Parewa* or *Kabutra* (Blue pigeon), *Haril* (Green pigeon), *Lawn* (jungle Bush Quail), *Chagur* (larger Button Quail), etc. are commonly found in these areas.

Change in the Ecological Setting

The enforcement of the Forest Regulation Act 1952 has led to the tribals facing lot of trouble including serious food scarcity. Their traditional style of cultivation has been banned only with a view to check the wanton cutting of the forest, without considering the fate of the tribes. Next the hunting in the forests has been completely banned with a view to protecting the wild life. Again the stopage of wood cutting by the tribals in general has brought the iron-smelting activities of the Asur, their age-old occupation, to an end.

The implementation of the two measures described above are drastic measures undertaken by the Government and neatly affecting the tribals of the area. It has limited the scope of their subsistence. By forfeiting all the major

traditional sources of their traditional livelihood, the tribals' freedom to utilising their forests have been taken away from them to a great extent. These are the drastic and persistent changes, resulting also in a number of related side-effects which have led to a transformation of their culture in a retrograde and deleterious manner.

Since long a number of tribes of the plateau area have been living in the forested hills in isolation and far away from the mainstream. But for the last few decades their isolation has been broken and hence more or less they have come in contact with the outside world either due to the Government or to the agencies other than the Government. It shows that besides changes in their physical environment there are also changes in their social environment. For a good number of decades the tribals have been interacting with the *Baniyas* (Hindu traders), other Hindu castes, Christians, Government officials and other non-tribals.

THE PEOPLE

In Bihar we find two distinct ethnic types, one living in the plains and the other in the Chotanagpur plateau; the former are generally long headed people with a fine to medium nose, average stature, wavy hair and skin colour varying from light brown to dark tawny, and the latter are the autochthonous people generally characterised by short stature, dolichocephaly, a flat wide nose, short face, wavy or curly black hair and dark brown skin colour. The central India belt is considered the "refuge" of the jungle tribes when Aryan speakers and later Scythians and others invaded India from the west in successive waves (Dash Sharma, 1978).

The Indian aborigines mostly living in the Central India belt and the Chotanagpur plateau show the Australoid physical features which have been given ethnic labels such as *Nisada*, *Veddid* and Proto-Australoid. Some of the racial types have been designated by such linguistic terms as Kalarian, Dravidian and Pre-Dravidian by various authors. For over three decades terminological controversies prevailed, until the emergence and understanding of the "genetic concept of race" in 1952 (UNESCO statements).

Large-scale migration most probably in successive waves of two distinct linguistic groups, the Mundari-speaking peoples and the Dravidian speakers, took place in antiquity in the central India belt. The migration of the Mundari-speaking people has been somewhat under-estimated as compared to the Dravidian speakers. The Mundari-speaking Mundas were confined along the large river valleys of eastern central India and do not appear to have penetrated deep into the hinterland of the Chotanagpur plateau because of the presence of the Santals another Mundari-speaking group to the east of the plateau (Dash Sharma, 1978). In physical

features the Santals and the Mundas are quite close to each other, while the Dravidian-speaking Oraons are to some extent different from the Mundari speakers morphologically and in social customs (Sarkar, 1954).

A number of tribes and castes are concentrated around the Netarhat plateau proper and the groups of plateaux contiguous to it. These flat or somewhat undulating table lands locally known as *pat* are mainly the home of the tribal communities of the Oraon, the Munda, the Asur, the Birjia, the Kisan, the Korwa etc. These tribal ethnic groups are living together with various Hindu castes from centuries on the plateau region of *Netarhat*. These Hindu castes comprising the Ahir, Ghasi, Turi, Lohar etc. are in a minority in comparison to the tribal population of the area. The following descriptions give short ethnographic details about the tribes mainly inhabiting the plateau.

The Oraon

According to the 1971 census the total number of scheduled tribes in Bihar is 49,327,67 out of which 8,76,218 are Oraons alone. The Oraons are also inhabiting the neighbouring states of Bihar like Madhya Pradesh (3,70,652), West Bengal (2,91,173) and Orissa (1,64,619). The majority of Oraons are found in the Ranchi district where they inhabit mostly the west, north-west and centre of the district (before the Gumla district was formed). With the increasing pressures on land as well as continuous land alienation, the spread of education, the need for cash, and the demand for labour elsewhere have driven out a large number of Oraons who have migrated to different parts of the country.

The Oraons are a short-statured, narrow-headed (dolicocephalic) and broad-nosed (Platyrrhine) people. The colour of their skin is dark brown often approaching black, their hair is black and coarse with an occasional tendency to curl, although woolly hair is rare. The chest is well-developed, and so are the legs. The eyes are medium-sized and occasionally small, the colour of the eyes is dark, and there

is no obliquity in the axis of the eye-lids. The jaws are somewhat projecting, the lips rather thick, and the nose is depressed at the root. According to Sir Herbert Risley, the Oraons are classified as Dravidians. Dr. Guha has termed them proto-australoid (Guha : 1944). Some Mangoloid strain has also been traced in a recent genetical survey of the Oraon (Kirk, Vidyarthi etc. 1963).

The antiquity as well as the migrations of the Oraon are little known, though early ethnologists, particularly Roy (1915), have attempted to reconstruct to their past.

Though the Oraons in course of evolution are said to have passed through the hunting stages, and food-gathering they later developed a settled agricultural economy and an elaborate cultural complex. They also claim the honour of having introduced the use of regular plough cultivation in the Chotanagpur plateau for the first time.

The economic life of the Oraon revolves around agriculture. Most Oraon have some acreage of land under *don* (lowland) and *tanr* (upland). There is also a small plot of *Bari* land (kitchen-garden) around their mudbuilt houses where they grow seasonal vegetables and fruits. The principal crop is paddy of coarse and fine varieties. The Oraons of the Netarhat plateau grow maize which constitute their major item of food. They also raise *gondli* (a kind of millet, *panicum milliare*), *Marua* (Aleusine *Crocana*) and a couple of oil-seeds.

While the process of cultivation resembles that of the rural area of Bihar, the tools and techniques used are rather crude. There is relatively less need of irrigation in the lowland. Arrangements for irrigation for the upland are almost absent.

In addition to the agricultural resources, the forest also plays a significant role in the Oraon economy. In the chapter on economy an exhaustive account of the rôle of the forest generally in the tribal's life in the Netarhat plateau has been given.

The Oraons are divided into different clans or *kilis* or septs which take their names from birds, fish, animals, vegetables, plants or minerals. For example *Toppo* clan have taken their name from the bird, wood pecker, *Minx* and *Khalkho* from two different species of fish, *Bakhh* from a species of grass, *Khese* from paddy, *Munjhi* from a kind of creeper, *Lakra*, from tiger, *Tirkey* from young mice, *Panna* from iron and *Bake* from salt, and so on. These totems are regarded as sacred and they are respected as the Oraons ancestors. The Oraons do not harm them, eat them or destroy them ; they do not believe that they have actually descended from their totem animals or plants, but the totem is said to have helped, protected or been of some service to their ancestors. The clan name descends from father to son. Each clan is strictly exogamous and an offender, against social taboos is liable to be ex-communicated and can only be remitted after he has paid a fine and provided a feast to all the members of the *Parha*.

Monogamy is the rule of marriage among the Oraon. Clan is also considered as the basis of marriage. The Oraon who belongs to one clan usually marries into other clans of another village. Marriage between the son and the daughter of a brother or sister is not permitted.

Marriage between near relatives are not sanctioned by the community for it is believed that the *Dharmes* (the supreme deity) will punish the couple either by inflicting the loss of sight or leprosy or malignant ulcers etc. Marriages between two persons who have milk relationship are also forbidden. When two Oraon boys enter into ceremonial friendship with each other, marriage between members of their two families is not permissible although they may belong to different clans.

For marrying a girl the Oraon boys have to pay a "bride-price" to the father of the girl. The bride price is paid in the form of cash money, silver ornaments, clothes etc. After the marriage the girl comes to the house of the boy's

parents which is the main characteristic of the patriarchal family.

Widow remarriage is also practised among the Oraons. As a rule the widow of the deceased brother becomes the wife of the younger brother (Levirate marriage).

Divorce is frequent and is permissible on various grounds; for example, if the wife is lazy and neglects her household duties, if she is a thief who steals and sells grains etc. from the house, if she possesses the evil eye or is a witch, if she has been caught in adultery or she has brought sickness or misfortune and ill-luck to her husband's family, if the wife is barren or the husband impotent. If the woman is at fault, the bride-price paid by the husband must be returned before she can marry another man.

In the traditional Oraon society the largest political unit is the tribe. A tribe is divided into a number of territorial segment known as *Parha*. These are again sub-divided into a number of villages, which constitute the smallest political units. Each clan is associated with one *Parha* (a tribal section) in which it constitutes the aristocratic nucleus. A *Parha* comprises a number of villages. The number of villages, however, varies from *Parha* to *Parha*. It may consist of seven, nine and generally they are called by numbers. In a *Parha* all the villages are subject to the authority of the *Parha Panchayat*. One of the villages in a *Parha* is called the *Raja* (King) village, another the *Dewan* (Prime Minister) village, and the remaining villages are the *Praja* (subject). The *Raja* village is the head village of the *Parha*, and the headman of the village presides over the meetings of the *Parha Panchayat*. Generally the *Mahto* (Headman) acts as the *Kartaha* (Chairman) and in his absence the *Pahan* (religious head) or any elderly *Bhainhar* of the *Raja* village may be chosen to officiate as *Kartaha* (Chairman) of the *Parha* council.

The *Parha Panchayat* decides cases of infringement of certain taboos that affect the whole *Parha* or the tribe, for instance sexual union between Oraon and non-Oraon, and any

case of incest. They settle disputes regarding precedence at the Jatra festival, the right to game, and so forth, other matters which the village *Panchayat* cannot decide or in which their decision is not accepted are brought before the *Parha* council. The *Parha Panchayat* has the right to excommunicate an Oraon for sexual intercourse with a non-Oraon or for having eaten cooked food at the hands of a non-Oraon. It is believed that the breach of these taboos will affect the good fortune of the *Parha* and this is the main concern of *Parha* council.

Among the Oraons the word "Bhuinhari" means owner of the land. The Bhuinhars are the descendants of the pioneer families who cleared the jungle and brought that particular area under cultivation and became its owners. The *Bhuinhar Khunt* (maximum lineage) comprises two segments, the *Pahan Khunt* and the *Mahto Khunt*. In the original *Bhuinhar* family authority was vested in the original founder or the eldest member of the lineage. He was known as the *Pahan* and was both the ritual and the secular head. In the exercise of his secular duties he was assisted by another member of the lineage called *Mahto*. In time the descendants of these two officials came to be regarded as belonging to the *Pahan Khunt* and the *Mahto Khunt* respectively. These two lineages constitute the nuclei of the maximal lineage in a *Bhuinhari* village.

Authority in the *Bhuinhari* lineage comprises of two offices : the *Pahan* or *Baige* (the village priest) and the *Mahto* (secular head). The authority of the *Pahan* and the *Mahto* is derived from their ritual status and from their seniority in the hierarchy of lineage elders. The *Pahan* belongs to the *Pahan Khunt* and the *Mahto* belongs to the *Mahto Khunt*. Great prestige and respect are attached to the status of the *Pahan* and *Mahto* and to avoid dispute these officers are selected triennially, or in few instances at a longer interval by the magic *sup* (winnowing basket). It is believed that the selection of these officers rests in supernatural hands, so

that the headship is selected through a ritual process and is believed to have a spiritual backing. A bachelor cannot be a *pahan*. The function of *Pahan* is primarily religious. It is believed that he has sacred associations with the earth and the ancestors which give him ritual power. The *Mahto* is the secular head of the village community. He is elected triennially by the lineage elders. Usually the most influential person among the lineage heads is elected as *Mahto*. The *Mahto* leadership is an ancestral heritage and hence a person elected must belong to the *Mahto Khunt*. He is responsible for the protection of the village community from external threats and hence his duty is to maintain satisfactory relationship with the outside world. He is the chief organiser of all important public work in the village. He must be informed of all the important affairs that concern the whole lineage and the village community in general. It is a common saying among the Oraons '*Pahan gaon banata hai, mahto gaon chalata hai*' (the *Pahan* is the creator of the village, the *Mahto* maintains the village).

The *Dhumkuria* or the youth dormitory provides social and religious education to the boys among the Oraon of several areas (Roy : 1915). But, on the pat area of Netarhat, we did not find any such type of organisation. While in several areas the traditional structure and function of the *Dhumkuria* continue, in other it has completely or partially disintegrated or declined. After Indian Independence during the Community Development movement an effort was made by the development workers to revitalise them and use them as the nuclei of educational activities. It, however, could not be pursued longer and by and large this traditional school and cultural centre of the Oraon youths is on the decline.

The Oraons believe in numerous gods and deities. Their supreme benevolent god is called *Dharmes* (Sun God) whom they propitiate at every religious ceremony. Next in importance are the presiding deities of the village, namely

Desauli Sarna, Burhia, Darha, Deswali and Gairahai Khunt spirits (Roy : 1928 ; Singh : 1982).

The Oraons believe that the fate of the individuals and his community depends on their relationship with unseen forces which intervene in human affair. Therefore, all the offerings and sacrifices made are meant to protect them from the evil influences of these supernatural beings. It is particularly believed that every new stage of an individual's life and in all their economic pursuits they are threatened by the unseen forces, and therefore, Oraon society has evolved special rites and ceremonies to ensure safety at each turning point of the individual's life, and sacrifices are to be performed to ensure safety and prosperity to each new stage in the cycle of the simple economic pursuits of the community.

Successful farming is the basis of the Oraon's livelihood. A good harvest is followed by ceremony and rejoicing. The Oraons celebrate a number of festivals which are based on their agricultural operations (Singh : 1982).

The Oraons like the other major tribes have been exposed to the process of transformation. These are the traditional processes and the modern processes of transformation, which have been elaborately discussed by Vidyarthi (1968 a). Under the traditional processes, this tribe has been in contact with their Hindu neighbours and has adopted many of the Hindu cultural traits.

The Munda

The entire pat region of Netarhat constitutes a sprinkling population of Mundas. According to the 1971 census report they are 723,177 in population in Bihar. From S. C. Roy's (1912) point of view the Mundas originally inhabited north-western India. With the Aryan invasions, they receded to Azamgarh and there also they could not remain for long and finally they proceeded towards Chotanagpur. It proved a protected retreat for them as it was surrounded by hills and jungles. They cleared the forests and valleys which afforded

them cultivable land. Every family occupied land which it could till and the area generally covered by it was quite large and the groups of families which constituted a village called it *Khunt Katti Hatu* or the village of original settlers. In course of time, they developed a union of several villages which was called a *Patti*, the chief of the which was called *Manki*. But he was no autocrat, he was 'primus inter pares'. The office of the *Manki* was hereditary.

The Mundas are one of the darkest races in India, the colour of their skin being black-brown, often of a shade approaching black. The head is long, the nose is thick and broad and sometimes depressed at the root, the lips thick and the cheek bones prominent. In build they are stout and muscular and in stature somewhat below medium height. Both men and women when young may be described as comely, and their cheerful laughing countenances are far from displeasing. They live in a mixed village inhabited by other tribals namely, Oraon, Asur, Birjia, Kisan, Lohra and Chik Baraik. The materials used in house construction are mud, tiles, thatched grass and timber. Their villages have three important sites—the *Sarna*, a sacred grove where the village gods reside, the *Akhara*, an open space at the centre of the village where *Panchayats* are held and young folks assemble in the evening to dance and sing, and the *Sasan*, the burial ground where stone slabs are kept over the graves to commemorate the dead.

The dress of the Mundas is very simple and scanty; the men ordinarily wear a loincloth, with a coloured border at the two ends, called *botoi*, and use a piece of cloth as a wrapper for the upper portion of the body, known as *barhi* or *pichowri*. The women wear a long piece of cloth, called *paria*, round the waist allowing a portion of it to pass diagonally over the upper part of the body. Both young men and women are very fond of personal decoration. A young man wears round the waist a sort of belt made of cocoon-silk or plaited thread (*kardhani*) and his long hair, well oiled and combed, is tied

up at the side in a knot, with a wooden hair-comb (*naki*) stuck into it. The Munda girls are fond of jewellery and deck themselves out with earrings, necklaces, bracelets and anklets of brass, or of some more precious metal, or of lac and coloured glass. Some poorer Munda women wear in their ear, *tar sakom* as an ornament which consists of a roll of palm leaf, dyed red and set off with tinsel and lac. The Mundas tattoo their girls by way of ornamentation; three parallel lines are pricked on the forehead and two lines on each of the temples: a few marks are made on the chin; the back, arms and hands are also tattooed. The best qualities of a Munda are his keen sense of self-respect, his love of truth and honesty, and his courage; his worst qualities are his inordinate love of liquor and his improvidence.

The Mundas own most of the agricultural implements required by them. Being an agriculturist tribe, every family has a wooden plough which includes an iron ploughshare, a wooden yoke, an earth remover and leveller, a hoe and occasionally, a crow-bar with which hard and rocky soils are broken. Iron sickle is used for reaping crops. On the threshing floor they use a pitch-fork and for husking they have different kinds of mortar and pestle. For wood cutting, they have an axe, for carpentry they own an iron edge and chisel. Munda women who spin clothes maintain *charkha* and its accessories, those who press oil keep *Kulhu*. The wooden articles are manufactured by the tribals themselves while the iron ones are obtained from the market. They have very few utensils and furniture. Earthenware utensils are used for cooking; stone, wooden and metal bowls and dishes are used for the storage and serving of food. Earthen jars are used to hold water and metal *lotas* or wooden *chukas* provide small pots for keeping water. Pumpkin gourds on *cala-bashes* are used for carrying water during travel. The grains are stored in baskets while the *paila* is used for measuring grains. The valuable documents and clothes are kept in bamboo boxes. The earthen vessels, baskets and

metal utensils are obtained from the market, while the rest are their own manufacture. The household furniture consists of a cot (*parkom*), wooden stool and palm-leaf mats made by them. The stool with wooden frame and string knitting and palm-leaf mats are owned by all of them. As a result of contact with their neighbours, the growth of education and good earnings, they now keep chairs and tables which are offered to guests when they visit their homes.

The Mundas are primarily an agriculturist tribe. Agriculture is the basis of their economic life and hence all their activities are directed towards it throughout the year. Another source of their livelihood is occasional or casual labour for wages. They work as agricultural labourers in the field of rich farmers. The growth of industrialization in and around Ranchi has attracted a large number of Munda labourers. They work in the factories as labourers on the daily wage system. It is also observed that soon after the harvesting season is over in their area, they migrate to the tea gardens of Assam to seek employment as labourers. The entire family migrates together and return to their villages in time for their agricultural operation.

Besides these, the Mundas prepare *Mahua* wine which sell to their neighbours. This is not their traditional occupation. It is of recent origin and has penetrated into their economic life as a result of contact with others. The educational development among the Christian and non-Christian Mundas has brought them far from their traditional occupations. Today, they are employed peons, clerks, drivers, lawyers and magistrates. The other source of their livelihood is the weekly market, where they sell their articles for cash. The articles sold by them are mostly grains. Sometimes, they exchange their goods for goods of others. They exchange paddy for kerosene oil or tobacco leaves or for other articles required by them for their day-to-day use. In exchange, the price of the goods is calculated at the rate of the current market price. Generally, they sell their goods to every one for cash.

The forest products are also associated with their economic life. They do not have to purchase firewood as it is available in abundance in their locality. The houses are constructed from the timber found in their habitat, free of cost. Besides this, they have seasonal fruits viz. *mango*, *bel*, *jamun*, *bair* which are consumed by them.

The family system of the Mundas are of the nuclear type consisting of mother, father and unmarried children. It is found that the unmarried children set up their independent families soon after their marriage. They construct a separate house and shift there with their belongings which were used by them in the parental household. The joint-family system is not unknown to them. It is observed sometimes that their family consists as well of a widow mother or widower father, step sons and daughters. Inheritance, lineage, descent are patrilineal and are traced through the father's side.

The Mundas are an endogamous tribe. They do not marry outside the tribal community, not even among the other Kolarian tribes of Chotanagpur, namely, the Hos, the Asurs, the Birhors, etc. Within the tribe, there are a large number of exogamous clans, locally named as *kili*. They believe that all the members of a particular clan or *kili* are descendants from one common ancestor and hence they taboo marital relations within a clan or *kili*. The kilis are totemistic although many totemistic ceremonies have ceased to exist. Yet they have a story about the origin of each of the kilis which bears names of animals, plants, birds or natural objects. Risley has given a list of Munda sects numbering about three hundred and forty. Some of the clan-names of the Mundas bear the name of food-articles. Modifications have been done with regard to them. They eat those food articles for which they have social sanction. But they do not marry within the clan. The members of one clan are considered as brothers and sisters and no sexual relationship is permitted. The members of one clan help each other at the time of birth, marriage, death and on other occasions. Like the other

Kolarian tribes of the state, they too have a rule of avoidance and joking relationship system. No marital or sexual relationship is encouraged within the clan. They observe avoidance with husband's father, wife's mother, husband's elder brother, wife's elder sister, younger brother's wife etc. They may marry the widow of the deceased elder brother. The avoidance requires a certain standard of behaviour with certain categories of kinsmen and women with whom no sexual relationship or joking relationship is permitted. According to the sanction of joking relationship one can joke with elder brother's wife, wife's younger sisters and brothers etc. Marriage with wife's younger sister is permitted by the society.

The Mundas have village-*panchayat* and a *Darha* panchayat, the latter consisting of a number of villages to dispense social justice to their people. The *Parha* is a highly organised political organisation. S. C. Roy (1912) records that it emerged because of the spread of population from one village to a group of villages in the neighbourhood. It was primarily an association for the members of a *kili*, but now it is based on *kili*, as such.

Each *Darha* comprises of about a dozen villages in the *Bhuinhari* area where all belong to one *kili*. In the Mankipati, the *Parha* does not coincide with the *Kili* group.

The executive authority of the *Parha* is vested in the *Panchayat*. The officials of the *Parha Panchayat* are the *Parha*, *Raja*, the *Dewan*, the *Thakur Pande* the *Karta* and the *Lal*. Their posts are hereditary and are inherited by the eldest son. The *Parha Panchayat* exercises its jurisdiction in cases, namely, of breach of marriage laws, adultery, incest, sexual relations within the clan or with non-tribals, inheritance, partition, and boundary disputes between two Munda villages. Besides this, it settles disputes regarding the rights claimed by any one to bury the dead in the village burial ground. The method by which the *Parha* decides a dispute is through oath and ordeal. Inheritance among the Mundas is patrilineal. The property is partitioned equally among the

sons except the eldest son who gets a little more. Daughters are not given any share but they are entitled for their maintenance until their marriage. After the death of her husband, a widow gets some land for maintenance. After her death, the land is partitioned equally among her sons. In case there is no male issue, the property is inherited by the nearest agnates of the deceased. The custom of '*Ghar Damad*' is prevalent among them. After wife's father's death, he is given land by the *Panch*. He ceases to be the owner of the said land after his wife's death. The property is then inherited by the nearest agnates of his wife's father. Daughter's sons do not inherit the property. In the absence of any male issue, a Munda can adopt a boy of his own community as his son. According to their traditional laws, the adopted son inherits the property.

The Asur

Asurs are concentrated round the Netarhat group of plateau. According to the 1971 census report the Asur population in Bihar is 7027. They prefer to locate their villages on sufficiently high table land.

Iron-smelting used to be the principal occupation of the Asurs, but now it has ceased to be so. In course of our field work during 1981, only one furnace was found at village Ramjharia in the Bishunpur thana ; this was being worked only by two families who earned a very meagre living.

According to S. C. Roy (1926) the Asurs of Chotanagpur around the 1920's were divided into three sections, namely, the (1) Soika Asurs (also called Agarias, or Agaria Asurs) who live in jungles and hills and smelt iron, (2) the Birjias who also live on hills and besides following the original occupation of iron smelting, have also taken to subsidiary occupations such as plaiting bamboo baskets and the like, and (3) the Jait Asurs who now mostly live in villages and smelt iron and manufacture ploughshares and other rude iron

implements, but some families of this last section have also taken to agriculture. Their villages have become more or less Hinduized and they neither intermarry nor interdine with other sections.

Whereas according to Roy (1926) the Birjias as well as the Soika Asurs each consisted of *Thania* or settled groups and *Uthlu* or migratory group according to the Reverend Father Johann Baptist Hoffmann the Asurs were subdivided into 'Jharia Asurs' i.e. such as were settled in small villages, and *Soika* or *Uthlu* Asurs i.e. those who retained the nomadic mode of life. The settled Asurs of the Ranchi district, According to Reverend Father Hoffmann, were called by the Mundas as *Asurs Baraeko*, (Asur blacksmith) which the Asurs very much resented. The latter instead wanted to be called *Asur Mundako*. It was because those who lived on the Barway Pats smelted iron, but did not act as blacksmiths, probably because they considered that as militating against their caste.

Asurs are quite distinctive physically with high cheek bones and broad noses. They are of medium height, stout and muscular. The skin colour is tawny-brown, often a shade approaching chocolate-brown.

The Asur men ordinarily wear loin-cloth called *batoi* and use a piece of cloth as wrapper for the upper portion of the body known as *pichouri*. Now-a-days the younger generation wears *kurta* and shirt too. The women wear a long piece of cloth called *karia* round their waist. They rarely put on a blouse in their homes, but the grown-up girls wear blouses when they go to market or *jatra*. They are fond of personal decoration. Bracelets, anklets, ear-rings and other cheap ornaments of silver, brass or lac and also coloured glass beads are used by the Asur girls. The poorer women wear in their ear *Tar-Saken*, i.e. a rolled bit of a palm leaf dyed red with lac, and rings called *Dhela* in their toe. The women do not tattoo at all as they consider it annoying to the gods.

Their usual diet consists of rice, maize, millets, vegetables

and meat. Leaves of trees and plants such as Koinar, Phutkal, Kalia, Zirhool, Katchnar and also their flowers are consumed by them. They do not milk as they consider it that it belongs to the calves. Rice-beer and *mahua* liquor are their important drinks. They use the root of *Ramu* or *Charpandu* (*Ruellia suffruticosa*) in brewing rice-beer.

The Asur society is divided into a number of *kilis* i.e. clan. The objects giving their names to the clans are avoided by the members of the particular group. If it is violated it is believed to bring misfortune. Secondly the members of a group are considered kins to each other and so no matrimonial relations among them are allowed. If some one marries within the clan, sanction is withheld at first, but if in spite of it the couple are sincerely attached to each other the matter is not pressed as far as tribal expulsion. After the clan the family is the most important social unit. Descent in the family goes through the male line and the father is the leader of the family. The nuclear type of family is most common but the joint and extended family also exists.*

The Asurs follow taboos in respect of births and deaths like other tribals. Till the new mother has her bath on the sixth day the family is considered to be polluted. If a previous child has died, the new baby is first put on a dung-hill and then brought to the mother by some relatives.

Sororate and Levirate forms of marriages are allowed. As bride price, usually pigs or cash and cloth are given. There are cases where marriages have taken place years after the pair had lived as husband and wife and begotten children. There is no social stigma attached to it.

Disposal of the dead by cremation is rare, and only resorted to in case of old people. All the clothes belonging to the deceased are buried with him and those who can afford the corpse is wrapped in a new cloth. Some pieces are put into the grave and one piece is put into the mouth of the deceased. They bury their dead with feet to the south. The *Kaman* or dinner in honour of the deceased takes place on the

eighth day or a fortnight after the death. It may be postponed due to poverty.

The Asurs partially depend on forest produce for their subsistence. They collect fruits, tubers and roots. They also hunt wild animals for food. They are frequently engaged as wage labourers either in forest camps where they find employment in wood cutting or in earth-work. Recently the Asurs of the Netarhat *pat* have taken to potato cultivation.

The Asur is not numerically such an important tribe as to be studied on this criterion alone. What is so striking and distinctive, rather unique and almost unparalleled in them, is that this artisan tribe is turned into a permanent agricultural tribe by compulsion not by geographical or environmental factors but by human factors. To look into this particular phase of their transition, the sequence of the occupational shifts, which took place in the dying years of the last century, will not only satisfy academic curiosity but will also help one to know how the tribe has adapted itself and how far successfully to the changed strategies of adaptation.

The Birjia

The Birjias are found mostly on the border district of Palamau and Ranchi. According to the 1971 census report the total population of the Birjia is 3,628. They are the least known tribe as compare with others and are also one of the poorest tribes of Middle India.

The Birjias are well built, strong and dark skinned. Most of the Birjias are of medium stature except a few who are of short stature, and very few are tall, and still fewer are very tall. Some male Birjias are ball headed also. The Birjias have generally flat faces with broad noses and black eyes. They rarely take baths except on few important occasions.

Traditionally the Birjias practised slash and burn cultivation known as *beonra* but now this system of cultivation has

completely vanished from the scene. The Birjia women go to the forest in the early morning for collecting flower, leaves, fruits, roots and tubers and returns at mid-noon. Sunder (1898) reported that in the season of scarcity little difficulty is felt as all edible roots and vegetables procured in the jungle are eaten, and no one knows better than the Birjias where he can easily get them. Hunting and trapping of the wild animals or birds are seldom practised by the male Birjia. Now, they are found doing agricultural work, earth cutting timber cutting in the forests, while very few are engaged in smithy or basketry. The early history of the Birjia show that they were also smelting iron like the Asurs but now the iron-smelting has completely disappeared from the Birjia country.

The Birjia's first meal of the day which is known as *Aookma* consists of boiled pulse or maize. The meal is known as *Kal-wa-jom-ko* and consists of *mahua* and vegetables, or pulse or *bhat* made from *jhonor*. Food is prepared in *mahua* or *jatingi* or mustard oil, whenever this is obtainable, otherwise it is cooked in water only.

The *Mahua liquor* or *jhara* or *handi* (rice-beer) is very dear to them and they prepare it themselves from *mahua* flower or maize or *marua* or rice respectively. They relish beef, goat, sheep, pork, deer, buffalo, *dhamin* snakes, rats, frogs, leopard, bear, bull, peacock and all birds except vultures. They like to eat marrow, known as *tumul*. They eat cooked meat only.

They extract oil by crushing seeds between two logs of wood. Previously they were using a tree press for the extraction of oil but to-day they use a plank press, known as *patni*. To get fire they rub two pieces of bamboo against each other, in which the lower piece is split and a bit of rag is fixed between and then the upper piece is stubbed swiftly against the lower one resulting in making the rag ablaze.

The monsoon challenges their survival ; during the rainy season they become helpless due to hunger when they have

nothing to eat and on the other hand they are also attacked by various diseases. Of course, they have a number of folk medicines for curing any type of disease. They believe that any type of physical misery is caused by the evil action of some spirit, for which they consult the *mati* or the *ojha* (magic man) of the area. Now, some of them have started taking help from the doctors in the nearest hospital or dispensary due to the increasing or persistent change in their social environment.

They have their patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal type of family system. Generally their family is nuclear but joint and extended family is also not unknown. In the life of the Birjias there are three principal occasions namely—birth, marriage and death. The *chchathi* is celebrated usually after one or two or three months of the birth of the child. The time duration depends upon the economic capability of the parents and sometimes it also differs from one ecological setting to the other.

Marriage among the Birjias takes place in two stages. Firstly a *chadh bia* celebration takes place in which the Birjia boy and girl enter into a marriage contract and begin to live together as husband and wife. Lastly, for a social recognition the couple host a feast known as *bia* or *sadhi* to the Kinsmen. The couple do not celebrate the *bia* or *sadhi* just after *chadh bia* due to their poor economic condition. Hence the celebration of *bia* or *sadhi* is not performed for a long time. Now, due to their less expensive nature, *dhuku*, *raji-khusi* and *sagai* forms of marriages are preferred. The Birjia society does not care if a male keeps more than one wife but on the contrary a female cannot have more than one husband at a time. In domestic affairs the opinion of the first wife is respected. At the time of divorce or separation the children are claimed by the father. The disposal of the dead body takes place by both the process—burial and cremation. Cremation is conducted ceremonially. The death in the family brings pollution which can only be removed after due ceremonies.

The Birjias are divided into different totemic groups. There are also two cross divisions. According to the first, they are divided into *Sinduria* and *Telia* and according to the second they are divided into *Dudh* and *Rash Birjia*. The *Sindurias* use vermilion in solenization of marriage. For the *Dudh Birjia* beef is taboo but not for the *Rash Birjia*. They are not however endogamous. In case of marriage between these divisions the only thing for consideration is that the customs of the bride-groom will be followed by the bride. But marriage is not allowed within a totemistic group. If a man or woman marries into another tribe, the person, after paying a fine and by giving seven community feasts can be readmitted. Adoption is also practised.

They have two types of arrangements to settle the dispute related to their traditions and customs—one is the council of elders of the same hamlet or village, known as *Kutum Bhai* and the other is the council of representatives of different hamlets of the area known as *kutmayat*. But the matters other than the Birjia traditions and customs are settled by the five *Panchas*. They may be Birjia elders or even other than the Birjias whose voices are respected.

The Birjia speak a dialect of their own, called as *Birjiai* or *Binhiai* among themselves. But, with the people other than Birjia they speak a mixed dialect of Bhojpuri and Maghi or something similar to the *sadari*. According to Singh (1982) the Birjias observe all the festivals observed by the Asura.

The Kisan

The Kisans, also known as Nagesar and Nagesia, are a small tribe who numbered some 16,903 in the census of 1971 in Bihar. They are concentrated mainly on the *pats* and remote forest villages. Dalton (1872) described them as of dark complexion, short stature and very ugly features and probably of Dravidian origin. Their sects bear totemistic names, such as are found among the Mundas and among many Dravidian tribes.

Sunder (1898) wrote about the Kisan that service is extremely repugnant to them. They will to ploughing another's field or cutting his crops for him; but nothing beyond that. Forbes further maintains that this characteristic has acquired for them their present community name, i.e. Kisan or '*Chasa*' apparently from the Hindu population with whom they have long been in contact. It probably refers to their agricultural propensities to distinguish them from some portion of their tribe who do not cultivate. Beverly (1872) stated that they take pride to call themselves as Nagbansis. All of them were classified as Hindus in the Census of 1911 and continue as such.

Formerly the Kisans reared pigs but now they have given it up. They are much interested in poultry keeping. The male wears *dhoti* and the female *sari*. Sunder (1898) mentions that 'the wives of the Nagbansi Kisans do not wear *churies* (lac bracelets) or *taraks* (earrings). They put on bits of mango leaf or plucked and twisted palm leaves in their ears. They do not tattoo leaf or plucked and twisted palm leaves in their ears. They do not tattoo themselves, but the *Sinduria* women do so and also wear *churies* and *taraks* (Prasad : 1961). Dalton (1872) mentions that one outward difference which the Kisan tribe has carefully preserved is that while the Kol and Oraon women are marked distinctively with *godmas*, the Kisan females have no such mark. If a female of the tribe indulges in getting herself tattooed, she is regarded as having degraded herself.

The Kisan of the Netarhat plateau do not have any type of clan organisation. The cross cousin and parallel cousin marriages are tabooed, while marriages among near relatives are avoided. The Kisan society is divided into *Sinduria* and *Telia* sections. The former solemnises marriage through vermilion whereas the latter through oil the male and every son gets an equal share in the ancestral property. The daughter has only maintenance right. Adoption is also practised in case of no issue and in case of having only

daughter. A Kisan youth is selected as bride-groom and he is married to the daughter of the house on the condition that he resides with the family of his father-in-law. In such a case he becomes, the guardian or custodian of the properties left by his father-in-law after his death, but in no case does he become their proprietor.

Burial is common, but important persons are generally cremated. All personal belongings of the dead are deposited in the grave along with the corpse. On the tenth day after the death of a person all his relations shave and during the next two days *pithas* (cake of grains) are given to the dead. Some employ Brahmans to conduct the *Shradh* ceremony, but the majority are satisfied with a barber. A community dinner is given on the twelfth day. By and large the Kisans follow the local religious beliefs and customs. They propitiate certain malevolent and benevolent spirits which are known as *Bongas*. They hold the tribal festivals (Singh : 1982). Simultaneously they worship *Kali* as their village deity and also the Sun-god. Their marriage customs are substantially the same as those of the other tribes of the plateau area.

To look after their social customs and traditions, the Kisans have their own community *Panchayat*. The *Panchayat* is quite effective in discharging its functions and its meetings are called whenever a matter is reported to the community *Panchayat*. Though every elderly male Kisan is expected and welcomed to the deliberations of the *Panchayat*, the formal office-bearers of the Kisan community *Panchayat* are the *Mahat* and the *Sardar*. The *Sardar* is also called *Kotwar*. These offices are hereditary. The party which convenes the meetings of the *Panchayat* bears the cost of the *Panchayat*.

Primarily, the Kisans are crop cultivators, and grow a number of crops e.g. highland paddy, *gondli*, *jatangi* etc. Their main cash-crop is lac. But these are not enough to last for the whole year. Their main period of food scarcity is April to July, when they take to short term employment as casual labourers. Many among them also resort of living

on cooked leaves flowers, and fruits of certain trees like *Phutkal* (citron leaves), *Mahua* (*Basia Latifolia*) and *Sal* (*Shorea Robusta*).

Socialization of Pat Personality

In tribal society, there is little scope for formal instruction, or effort at child training. Among the pat tribes the Oraon only had an institution called *Dhumkuria* which is now in a moribund stage throughout the Oraon country including the pat region. The Oraon boys were admitted to the membership of the *Dhumkuria* at about eight years of age. The membership of *Dhumkuria* was compulsory. The *Dhumkuria* boys were divided into three age-groups, known as *Turs*. The first group consisted of the youngest boys and hence it was called the *puna-jonkhas* (novices). This was the lowest grade. The members of the second group formed the intermediate class and were called *majh-turid jonkhas*. The third and highest grade consisted of the eldest members and were called *koha-jonkhas* (elder boys). The duration of membership for the first two classes was three years and for the elder members till they got married. The *Dhumkuria* boys were known as *Dhangars* and the girls as *Pelos*. The supervision and control of the dormitory was in the hands of the *Dhangar-mahato*.

The officers of the *Dhumkuria* were changed every three years. The functioning of the *Dhumkuria* was well defined and well managed. How it socialized and controlled its members may be witnessed when the *Mahato* addressed his successor while making over charge of his office as 'take care that no one may find fault with you or with the boys'. When an offence is committed by any of the boys do justice to all the parties concerned, and when you feel perplexed in any matter and do not know what to do refer that matter to the village *Mahato*. When relatives of any Oraon family of the village come to the village, see that they do not find cause to complain of deficient hospitality. When presents of sacrificial

or other meat have to be distributed among the villagers or sent to other villages, see that the *Dhangars* do their duty properly (Prasad, 1961 : 89).

Unlike the Oraon the other tribes of the pat area did not have in the past nor do they have now any dormitory type of institution like the *Dhumkuria*. In most of the villages the tribes have some abandoned house which is the only place in the village for the young boys and girls to relax during the night. In the late night when the boys and girls finish their dance in the *Akhra* they go to relax themselves in such houses where they spend their night in each other's company. Day-by-day this type of institution is vanishing from the tribal scene. It is evident therefore that in such societies all that the children imbibe is through '*informal socialization*', *tradition, myth and dance and music*. Moreover, specialized arts and crafts are few and ordinary manual labour requires no special training. In the case of the *Asurs*, traditionally an artisan people, their boys learn blacksmithy from the elders simply by watching them.

It has been observed that among the tribes of the Netarhat pat, generally the children are brought-up with love and affection. One can rarely find that the children are beaten by their parents or siblings. This is the general character of the tribes that they are submissive and they have harmonious relationship ties with the family members. The parents do not train their children in the habits of cleanliness and they show very little concern about this matter. Toilet training is also absent among them. Suckling continues till the child is about three years old, but even after weaning the child occasionally nurses as long as the mother's milk is available. While working, the mother carries her child on her back, wrapping it by a broad piece of cloth and tying the ends of the cloth in her front. The grown-up brother or sister also carries it on his or her back in the same fashion when the baby is entrusted to them. With the birth of another baby, and the development of an ability

to walk and to cope with the world generally, the infant gradually becomes what Margaret Mead has called a 'Yard child' rather than a 'house child'.

As soon as the tribal children attain the age of five years they start participating in their parents' work. They are also encouraged to do so. The process of socialization first begins from the *Akhra*. The young girls line-up themselves together with the elder ones while dancing and singing. The younger boys also copy their elders for playing musical instruments, dancing and singing. While dancing and singing, the minor boys and girls try to copy with enthusiasm all the actions of the elder persons. The smaller girls from their own row during dances behind the rows of senior girls and imitate the steps, learn the rhythm and memorise the songs and their tune. The minor boys like-wise imitate the singing, keep watch on the proceedings as eager spectators and learn to play the musical instruments during appropriate moments. For the seniors the smaller boys arrange beds in the common sleeping house of the village and get fuel-wood ready for them. They also run errands for their elder brothers.

In the socialization of tribal children, dance and song play an important role, as these two are inevitably associated with most of the socio-religious occasions during weddings, worship, and festivities etc. Because these are socially such vital elements, informal but regular instructions are always imparted in these arts.

The minor children learn from their parents and senior siblings, different types of kinship terminology informally and forms of address to be used in case of different categories of relatives and proper attitudes to be shown to them.

From their mothers and other elderly women, the girls learn their first lessons in house-hold chores by merely observing their activities; or imitating them wherever and whenever possible. No instruction is so necessary in cooking as it is so simple. Mat weaning is taught to them by their mothers and elder sister. Toy husking-levers and winnowing fans are

made by the father or some other persons on implorings from the children, and the art of grinding, winnowing and shifting etc., are learnt with sand or dirt substituted for grains. Minor girls learn to play surrogate mothers by making toy babies and fondling and nursing them. They learn from a very early age the technique of collecting wild vegetable products, firewood, grazing animals etc.

Into different agricultural activities the adolescent boys follow the older ones or their fathers and help them in many ways. Their small-scale endeavour to lighten their father's burden helps them to pick-up the intricacies of agricultural technology. We observed how an Asur of Shakhupani helped his adolescent son to pick up the art of balancing a pair of *sikuar* with bundles of millet-straws tucked in each of them and carrying it a little distance towards the threshing floor. The training was informal and he was just instructing and guiding from a distance while wholly engrossed in his own work.

Because of sharing of a common sleeping room at night, due to working together in the agricultural fields, or due to playing together, a bond of strong friendship is developed among boys or girls. Nobody loses temper and nobody provokes a play-mate so as to create an ugly scene. The boys while at play do not quarrel among themselves.

There are a number of games played by boys and girls. While grazing their cattle they (boys and girls) play together on the outskirts of the village. The boys and girls learn the likes and dislikes of society and also the customs from their playmates. They are well up in the Do's and Don't's of their society. Children's play-groups exist virtually unnoticed as part of the village ambient no interference coming from the adults, and too much solicitude shown by a person, generally by an outsider, is regarded rather as supererogatory. They learn the traditions, myths, folk-tales about their society and culture from their grand-parents and such other elderly persons. This learning acquaints them with their past, and create impressions about the past glory.

The elder members of the society or their fellows point out the good and bad habits. Any control exerted on many children's behaviour outdoors comes from older brothers, or sisters, the senior playmates, or any adult who happens to pass by. Evidently, without any formal education the children learn many things informally as they grow up and pass through various stages of infancy, childhood and adolescence, and attain adulthood. Without any formal initiation ceremony to usher the boys and girls into adulthood, marriage invests them with the social status, or by being married, boys or girls becomes informally socialized in order to become a full-fledged member of the village community and to start the same cycle of life through which they themselves have passed.

Political Organisation

In almost every community there is some form of regulating authority, however rude, which determines in some degree the relations to one another of the members of the community. Law therefore, is exclusively concerned with social life in one of its most important manifestations—the political order. It regulates the relations between man and man, and between individuals and the wider group, called in modern times the state. The main function of Law, as observed in every society, is two-fold, to maintain the balance of justice and giving everybody his due.

The Oraons and Mundas of Chotanagpur have their well developed political organisation known as *Parha*. A lot has been said on *parha* panchayat of the Oraons. The other tribes of the Netarhat plateau are guided and governed by their traditional *Panachayat* known as *Chatta*. The *Chatta Panchayat* consisting of a head and few assistant members is run through kinship bond. The post of head (*Kartaha*) is hereditary. The leader selected for *Chatta Panchayat* must possess qualities of good leadership. The post of *Kartaha* proceeds hereditarily but sometimes when his son is not

considered able, then selection is made from the group of villagers and an elder person takes this post. The selection of *Kartaha* is verbal. For such the villagers in an assemblage tell the name of a particular person whom they think is suitable for leadership. When the majority agrees on the choice of a particular person then he is selected as chief of the *panchayat*.

The function of the *Chatta* is mainly to maintain social order and custom. The cases of internal disturbances, adultery, *dhuka-dhuki* and *orharia* are taken into consideration in the *panchayat*. The meeting of the *panchayat* is fixed which is held in the village *Akhra* or under some trees. Generally, the cases of land, property, quarrels, civil and criminal type disputes and confrontation for solution to a modern *Panchayat* or *Gram-panchayat* and go thereafter to the police station.

If anyone wishes to call the *Panchayat* to decide the case he brings it to the knowledge of the *Kartaha*. The complaint is made verbally. The complaint is generally filed through the *Pradhan* of the village who informs all the villagers. The villagers are informed about the venue, time and other particulars earlier. On the appointed date and place, elders of the village assemble at the place fixed for the hearing. The *Kartaha* is assisted by the *Pradhan* in the meeting place. When both the parties are present along with villagers, the complaint is lodged either by the *Pradhan* or the concerned person. The rate of fine is determined according to cases concerned and the ability of person who has to pay the fine. Usually the cases concerned with marital problems, divorce, and adultery come into the *Panchayat* for judgement. The *dhuka-dhuki* for type of acquiring mates in tribal society and *orharia* type of cases are more common.

The members of the same tribe of a *Chatta* are known as the *Pancha Bhai*. If a member of other caste group or tribal group attends a meeting of *chatta*, he is known as *isit*. An *isit* may though attend a *Chatta* but he is not entitled to

speak. They are allowed just to listen to and observe the proceedings of a *Chatta*.

If an offender is fined by the *Chatta* it is known as *Pancha Kharcha*. The '*Pancha Kharcha*' is distributed equally among the members of the village. The *Kartaha* arranges a communal feast once in 3 years. Every member of the village pays respects to the *Kartaha*. Besides the *Kartaha* the other members of the *Chatta* are known as four *Panch*, thus there are five members in the *panch bhai*, one Head and four *Pancha*. If a person is found guilty he is liable to a fine of Rs. 5 to Rs. 50. If he fails to produce that fine before the *Chatta* he is given repeated warning otherwise he is excommunicated from the group. If a man is excommunicated nobody from his tribe ever participate in any function held at his residence. And if he pays the fine (the money), it is distributed immediately among the members of the group so that it was to everybody's knowledge that the said man has confessed his guilt and has also paid the fine. In such a case he is not excommunicated from the group. If a man is excommunicated and he attends a communal feast he is not served food in the same line where the other members of his group take food.

Chapter Three

DEMOGRAPHY AND PHYSICAL FEATURES

The study of the composition of population is important in many respects. It includes the study of physical, social and economic characteristics of the people (Thomson, 1953). The composition of a particular community gives us an all-round microscopic views of a set of people dealing with the physical aspects like age, sex etc. as well as social aspects like income, occupation, literacy and family type.

For recording the demographic data on the Kisan, Birjia and Oraon tribes four hamlets of Netarhat proper namely Jamtoli, Bartoli, Sarnatoli and Nayatoli and for the Asur tribe Sakhnapani, Polpolpat and Jobhitoli villages were studied intensively and extensively.

In the four *tolies* (*hamlets*) of Netarhat, only three tribes are represented by the Birjia, the Kisan and the Oraon. Besides, two families of Sahu are inhabiting in Bartoli. The numerical strength of the families are as follows : Jamtoli-53 families, Bartoli-33 families, Sarnatoli-12 families and Nayatoli-5 families.

In the four *tolies* of Netarhat (Jamtoli, Bartoli, Sarnatoli and Nayatoli) 101 families (excluding two families of Sahu) were enumerated with a total population of 705 individuals of which 380 are males and 325 are females. The table below gives the family and sex-wise distribution of the three tribal populations of Netarhat plateau, namely the Kisan, the Birjia and the Oraon.

Table 1

Tribewise population composition of the four *tolies* (Jamtoli, Bartoli, Sarnatoli and Nayatoli) of Netarhat

Tribe family	No. of		Male		Female		Total	
	Abs.	%	Abs.	%	Abs.	%	Abs.	%
Kisan	78	77.22	294	77.34	248	76.30	542	76.88
Birjia	22	21.78	75	19.76	70	21.54	145	20.56
Oraon	1	0.99	11	2.89	7	2.15	18	2.55
Total	101	99.99	380	99.99	325	99.99	705	99.99

It is evident from the table that the Kisan is the predominant tribal group representing 77% of the total number of families of the four hamlets. Only about one percent constitute the Oraon families and the rest about 22% is represented by the Birjia.

Though there is only one Oraon family Bhagat (joint family) which may be negligible in strength considering its influence, however, it is interesting to note that this particular family has 18 members in its household.

The tribewise population distribution of the *tolies* is given below. Sarnatoli and Nayatoli population have been clumped together as the number of families are small. There are only twelve Kisan families in Nayatoli.

Table 2

Tribe-wise Population distribution
Jamtoli

Tribe family	No. of		Male		Female		Total	
	Abs.	%	Abs.	%	Abs.	%	Abs.	%
Kisan	33	62.26	129	62.92	113	62.08	242	62.52
Birjia	19	35.85	65	31.71	62	34.06	127	32.82
Oraon	1	1.88	11	5.36	7	3.85	18	4.65
Total	53	99.99	205	99.99	182	99.99	387	99.99

Tribe-wise Population distribution

Bartoli

Tribe	No. of family		Male		Female		Total	
	Abs.	%	Abs.	%	Abs.	%	Abs.	%
Kisan	29	93.54	110	94.82	80	93.02	190	99.05
Birjia	2	6.45	6	5.17	6	6.97	12	5.94
Total	31	99.99	116	99.99	86	99.99	202	99.99

Sarnatoli and Nayatoli

Kisan	16	94.11	55	93.22	55	96.49	110	94.82
Birjia	1	5.88	4	6.77	2	3.50	6	5.17
Total	17	99.99	59	99.99	57	99.99	116	99.99

Thus the tribewise population distribution of the four tolies shows that the Kisan is the predominant group in all the tolies.

The totemic clan organisation is the usual general characteristics of the Indian tribal population. The tribal population of the four tolies of Netarhat are represented by only few clan groups. The table 3 shows the clanwise distribution of the tribal population of four tolies of Netarhat.

Table 3

Clanwise distribution of tribal population
of the four tolies of Netarhat

Tribe	Clan	Male		Female		Total	
		Abs.	%	Abs.	%	Abs.	%
Kisan	Nagesia	294	77.34	248	76.30	542	76.98
Birjia	Suraj	23	6.05	25	7.69	48	6.80
	Lakra	52	13.68	45	13.48	97	13.75
Oraon	Lakra	5	1.31	4	1.15	9	1.28
	Ekka	6	1.57	3	0.92	9	1.28
Total		380	99.95	325	99.90	705	99.99

Thus it is evident that Nagesia, the only single clan representing the Kisan tribe, is spread in all the four tolies. Whereas the two other tribal groups, namely, Birjia and

Oraon, are represented by at least two distinct clans. As is evident from the field informations there is inter-marriage among the Kisans of the four *tolies*, which suggest, that either the term Nagesia is not a clan name, or the Kisans practice clan endogamy, or Nagesia is just a synonym of Kisan. As the tradition goes, after their migration from Surguja (M.P.) they settled at Netarhat plateau and developed as a local group based on generations and territory, and later to a larger extent territorial endogamy developed.

The age group composition is one of the basic factor for understanding the population trend. The table 4 shows the age and sex distribution of the four hamlets of Netarhat. It is evident from the table that more than half of the total population (54.10%) is formed by persons upto the age of 20 years.

Table 4

Age and sex distribution of the four *tolies* of Netarhat

Age group (in years)	Male		Female		Total	
	Abs.	%	Abs.	%	Abs.	%
0-1	8	2.10	2	0.61	10	1.42
2-5	74	19.47	47	14.46	121	17.09
6-10	58	15.25	46	14.15	104	13.98
11-15	41	10.78	37	11.38	78	11.26
16-20	31	8.15	42	12.92	73	10.35
21-25	31	8.15	25	7.69	56	7.94
26-30	27	7.10	26	8.00	53	7.51
31-35	20	5.26	13	4.00	33	4.68
36-40	15	3.94	15	4.61	30	4.25
41-45	14	3.68	21	6.46	35	4.98
46-50	17	4.97	15	4.62	32	4.53
51-55	15	2.94	8	2.47	23	3.27
56-60	9	2.31	10	3.07	19	2.69
61-65	11	2.84	8	2.47	19	2.69
66-70	4	1.05	5	1.54	9	1.28
71 & above	5	1.30	5	1.54	10	1.42
Total	380	99.99	325	99.99	705	99.34

Tables 5, 6 and 7 shows the age and sexwise distribution of the Kisan, the Birjia and the Oraon tribe of Netarhat. It is evident from the table that more than one-fourth of the population is covered by children falling within 10 years. The children of pre-adolescent age and young adults upto 25 years of age, each constitute about 30% of the total population. The rest 40% of the population is represented by adults ranging from 31 years and above. This general trend is observed in all the communities, namely Kisan, Birjias and Oraon. (See tables 5, 6 and 7). It is further evident that higher the age group the lesser is the number of individuals representing that age group.

Table-5

Age and sex distribution of the Kisan in
four *talies* of Netarhat

Age group (in years)	Male		Female		Total	
	Abs.	%	Abs.	%	Abs.	%
0- 1	6	2.04	1	0.44	7	1.29
2- 5	58	19.25	35	14.11	93	16.78
6-10	45	15.30	32	12.90	77	14.20
11-15	32	10.88	31	12.50	63	11.62
16-20	22	7.48	32	12.90	54	9.96
21-25	26	8.84	17	6.85	43	7.93
26-30	18	6.12	21	8.46	39	7.19
31-35	15	5.10	8	3.22	23	4.24
36-40	11	3.74	12	4.83	23	4.24
41-45	11	3.74	19	7.66	30	5.53
46-50	15	5.10	12	4.83	27	4.98
51-55	12	4.08	8	3.22	20	3.69
56-60	6	2.04	8	3.22	14	2.58
61-65	10	3.40	6	2.41	16	2.95
66-70	3	1.02	3	1.21	6	1.10
71. & above	4	1.35	3	1.21	7	1.29
Total	294	99.48	248	99.97	542	99.57

Table 6

Age and Sex distribution of the Birjia in
four *tolies* of Netarhat

Age group (in years)	Male		Female		Total	
	Abs.	%	Abs.	%	Abs.	%
0-1	2	2.66	1	1.42	3	2.06
2-5	12	15.96	12	17.04	24	16.55
6-10	12	15.99	12	17.04	24	16.55
11-15	8	10.64	5	7.10	13	8.96
16-20	8	10.64	9	12.78	17	11.72
21-25	4	5.32	8	11.36	12	8.27
26-30	8	10.64	4	4.68	12	8.27
31-35	4	5.32	5	7.10	9	6.20
36-40	4	5.32	2	2.84	6	4.13
41-45	2	2.66	2	2.84	4	2.75
46-50	2	2.66	3	4.26	5	3.44
51-55	3	3.99	-	-	3	2.06
56-60	3	3.99	2	2.84	5	3.44
61-65	1	1.33	2	2.84	3	2.06
66-70	1	1.33	2	2.84	3	2.06
71 & above	1	1.33	1	1.42	2	1.37
Total	75	99.73	70	99.40	145	99.89

Table-7

Age and Sex distribution of the Oraon in
four *tolies* in Netarhat

Age group (in years)	Male		Female		Total	
	Abs.	%	Abs.	%	Abs.	%
0- 1	—	—	—	—	—	—
2- 5	4	36.36	—	—	4	22.22
6-10	1	9.09	2	28.57	3	16.66
11-15	1	9.09	1	14.28	2	11.11
16-20	1	9.09	1	14.28	2	11.11
21-25	1	9.09	—	—	1	5.55
26-30	1	9.09	1	14.28	2	11.11
31-35	1	9.09	—	14.28	1	5.55
36-40	—	—	1	14.28	1	5.55
41-45	1	9.09	—	—	1	5.55
46-50	—	—	—	—	—	—
51-55	—	—	—	—	—	—
56-60	—	—	—	—	—	—
61-65	—	—	—	—	—	—
66-70	—	—	—	—	—	—
71 & above	—	—	1	14.28	1	5.55
Total	11	99.99	7	99.97	18	99.96

The tables 8, 9 and 10 shows the marital status among the Kisan, Birjia and Oraons of Netarhat. It is evident from the table that the minimum marriageable age is between 16 to 20 years group among the males, while among the females, in Birjia and Oraon families the marriage age group has been recorded to be lower (11-15 years) than is compared to the Kisan (16-20 years). However, this observation is not of much significance particularly in view of the fact that Birjia families constitute about 22% and the Oraons only 1% of the total number of families recorded in this survey. A larger number of families of these two communities might have given a better picture.

Table 8
Marital Status among the Kisan

Age group (in years)	Male					Female				
	Un- Marr- ied	Marr- ied	Di- vor- ce	Re- mar- ried	Wi- dow- er	Un- marr- ied	Ma- rried	Di- vor- ce	Re- mar- ried	Wi- dow- er
0-5	64	—	—	—	—	36	—	—	—	—
6-10	45	—	—	—	—	32	—	—	—	—
11-15	32	—	—	—	—	31	—	—	—	—
16-20	19	3	—	—	—	19	13	—	—	—
21-25	10	16	—	—	—	17	—	—	—	—
26-30	2	16	—	—	—	20	—	—	—	1
31-35	—	13	2	—	—	8	—	—	—	—
36-40	—	11	—	—	—	12	—	—	—	—
41-45	—	8	3	—	—	18	1	—	—	—
46-50	—	14	1	—	—	12	—	—	—	—
51-55	—	10	—	—	2	6	—	—	—	2
56-60	—	6	—	—	—	8	—	—	—	—
61-65	—	8	2	—	—	3	—	—	—	3
66-70	—	2	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	2
71 & above	—	3	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	3
Total	172	110	8	—	4	118	118	1	—	11

Table 9

Marital Status among the Birjia

Age group (in years)	Male				Female			
	Un- marri- ed.	Marr- ied	Di- vorce	Wi- dow- er	Un- marri- ed	Marr- ied	Di- vorce	Wi- dow- er
0-5	14	—	—	—	13	—	—	—
6-10	12	—	—	—	12	—	—	—
11-15	8	—	—	—	3	2	—	—
16-20	5	3	—	—	5	4	—	—
21-25	2	2	—	—	1	6	1	—
26-30	—	8	—	—	—	4	—	—
31-35	—	4	—	—	—	5	—	—
36-40	1	4	—	—	—	2	—	—
41-45	—	2	—	—	—	2	—	—
46-50	—	2	—	—	—	3	—	—
51-55	—	3	—	—	—	—	—	—
56-60	—	1	—	2	—	1	—	1
61-65	—	—	—	1	—	2	—	—
66-70	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	2
71 & above	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1
Total	42	31	—	3	34	31	1	4

Table 10
Marital Status among the Oraon

Age group (in years)	Male			Female		
	Un- married	Marri- ed	Wi- dower	Un- married	Marri- ed	Widow
0-5	4	—	—	—	—	—
6-10	1	—	—	2	—	—
11-15	1	—	—	—	1	—
16-20	—	1	—	—	1	—
21-25	1	—	—	—	—	—
26-30	—	1	—	—	1	—
31-35	—	1	—	—	—	—
36-40	—	—	—	—	1	—
41-45	—	1	—	—	—	—
46-50	—	—	—	—	—	—
51-55	—	—	—	—	—	—
56-60	—	—	—	—	—	—
61-65	—	—	—	—	—	—
66-70	—	—	—	—	—	1
71- & above	—	—	—	—	—	1
Total	7	4	—	2	4	1

Table 11
Family types among the Kisan, Birjia and the Oraon

Family types	Tribal group	Number of families	Percentage frequency
Nuclear	Kisan	43	42.51
	Birjia	10	9.90
	Oraon	—	—
Joint	Kisan	35	34.65
	Birjia	12	11.88
	Oraon	1	0.99
Total		101	99.93

Table 12

Marital Status among the Kisan, Birjia and the Oraon

<i>Popula- tion</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Un- married</i>	<i>Marr- ied</i>	<i>Di- vorced</i>	<i>Re- married</i>	<i>Wi- dower</i>
Kisan	Male	294	172	110	8	—	4
	Female	248	118	118	1	—	11
Birjia	Male	75	41	31	—	—	3
	Female	75	34	31	1	—	4
Oraon	Male	11	7	4	—	—	—
	Female	7	2	4	—	—	1

The tables 11 and 12 shows family types and marital status of the Kisan, Birjia and the Oraons. It is evident from the table that majority of the Kisan families are of Nuclear type while in Birjia joint families are more in number. There is only one Oraon joint family.

Table 13

Distribution of family size in the tribal groups of the four hamlets

<i>Family size</i>	<i>No. of families</i>	<i>Percentage frequency</i>
1	1	0.99
2	—	—
3	4	3.96
4	12	11.88
5	15	14.85
6	20	19.80
7	14	13.86
8	12	11.88
9	8	7.92
10	5	4.95
11	3	2.97
12	2	1.98
13	—	—
14	—	—
15	4	3.96
16 & above	1	0.99
Total	101	99.99

Birth Rate

One of the frame work for analysing population growth concerns the rate of birth and the factors which influence it. The birth statistics of a region also goes side by side with sex distribution. On an average, in the span of reproductive age women can bear 12 children. The fundamental assumption of fertility in an actual level of performance in a population is based on the number of live births that occur. Fertility is intertwined with mortality and age-sex composition of the population under study. For females, the period of fecundity (i.e. biological capacity to conceive and bear children) may extend around age 14 to almost 50 years. Fecundity of women is distinctly higher in the middle years of the reproductive period.

Taboos on marriages play an important role in birth rates. As referred earlier the Kisan have only one clan called Nagesia which is divided into three sub-groups, namely, Telis, Dhuria and Senduria. The Telis and Dhurias intermarry but the Sendurias regard themselves as superior. The Kisans of the four *tolies* belong to Dhuria and Talia sub-group of Nagesia. The Birjias and Oraons practice clan exogamy.

In the our *tolies* of Netarhat, the marriage age of girls and boys are comparatively low. Among the Kisan, Birjias and the Oraons, the marriage age of girls varies from 10 to 13 years and for boys it ranges between 14 to 17 years.

The crude birth rate is the ratio of total registered live births to the total population, in a year, multiplied by 1000. The birth rate study is important for the knowledge of growth of population. The birth rate per thousand in India in the last seventy years shows that there is decline in the birth rate (in 1901-10 it was 48.1, in 1961-70 it was 41.1). The intrinsic birth rate in India as revealed by 1961 Census is 40.0 for males and 42.7 for females and which is coming to an average of 41.3 persons. The registered birth rate in India was 22.4 in 1960 (Demographic Year Book 1961, United Nations).

Table 14

Birth rate of four *tolies* of Netarhat

Year	Total No. of male	Birth rate	Total No. of female	Birth rate	Total No. of population	Birth rate
1979	380	7	325	3	705	10
		18.42		9.23		14.18

This value of birth rate at Netarhat of the four *tolies* is considerably low as compared to the India's average (22.4) in 1960. While in 1961-70 census the birth rate has been reported to as 41.1. The reasons for this low birth rate in the four *tolies* of Netarhat as compared to the Indian average has not been thoroughly investigated.

However, during the field investigation in the four *tolies* of Netarhat we came across informants, who confided that 11 males and 1 female in the total of four *tolies* have undergone family planning operation. This may not be a significant number so as to reduce the birth rate in the four *tolies*.

Table 15

Age wise distribution of first and second Marriage among the Kisan, Birjia and the Oraon

Age at the time of marriage (In years)	First Marriage				Second Marriage			
	Kisan		Birjia		Oraon		Kisan	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
10-13	1	14	—	5	—	—	—	—
14-17	7	63	1	22	—	5	—	—
18-21	55	52	20	8	4	—	1	—
22-25	48	3	11	1	—	—	2	—
26 & above	11	2	2	—	—	—	5	—
Total	122	134	34	36	4	5	8	—

From the above table it is clear that the maximum frequency of remarriage or second marriage is among the

Kisan males. There is no second marriage among the Birjia and the Oraons. Among the Kisan two persons are having double wives. The other male person among the Kisan married after the death of their first wife.

Birth of the child as well as average number of children per family is also effected by the differences of age of the husband and the wife at the time of marriage.

The table below shows the age difference of husband and wife at the time of marriage among the Kisan, Birjia and the Oraons. In all the three tribes of the four *tolies*, the age difference of 5 to 6 years is found to be the preponderant (50% and more) case among the mating pairs.

Table 16
Age difference among husband and wife at the
time of marriage

Age difference in years	Kisan		Birjia		Oraon	
	No. of pairs	Percen- tage	No. of pairs	Percen- tage	No. of pairs	Percen- tage
Below 2	8	6.55	2	5.55	—	—
3 - 4	39	31.96	11	30.55	2	40.00
5 - 6	52	42.62	18	50.00	3	60.00
7 - 8	16	13.11	4	11.11	—	—
9-10	5	4.09	1	2.77	—	—
11 & above	2	1.63	—	—	—	—

Death Statistics

The crude death rate is perhaps the most commonly used measure of mortality. It may be defined as "the ratio of the number of deaths which occur within a given population during a specified year, to the size of that population at mid year". However, the crude death rate does not provide a very accurate indicator of mortality conditions, since it is very much effected by age-structure. Further, differences between two populations in their sex ratio will, also affect the crude

death rate, since at each age, death rates for females are usually somewhat lower than for males. The level of mortality in a society appears to have a direct influence to its fertility.

According to 1961 census of India the intrinsic death rate is 17.8 for males, 21.7 for females and for the total population it is 19.7. In the background of this the crude death rate, when the four *tolies* of Netarhat are considered together, is as follows. (The crude death rate is ratio of the total registered deaths of some specified year to the total population, multiplied by 1000).

The table 17 shows the death rate of the four *tolies* of Netarhat.

Table 17

Crude death rate of Netarhat

Year	Total No. of male	Death male death	rate	Total No. of female	Death female death	rate	Total popu- lation	Total death	Death rate
1975	326	4	12.26	294	2	6.80	620	6	9.67
1976	340	2	5.88	303	3	9.90	643	5	7.77
1977	357	2	5.60	311	1	3.21	668	3	4.49
1978	374	2	5.34	321	1	3.11	695	3	4.31
1979	380	1	2.63	325	1	3.07	705	2	2.83

The table above shows that the overall death rate of four hamlets of Netarhat in the year 1975 was highest (9.67) while the death rate was found to be lowest (2.83) in the year 1979. This lowered death rate in the four *tolies* may be because of improved health, sanitation and medical facilities.

Infant mortality has special position in the scale of death rate of an area, because it affects vitality of population growth involving infants who die before they complete one year of age. Infant mortality is regarded as a measuring bar of the health and social progress of the country as the life of children is directly dependent on the society. In the present investigation among the four *tolies* of Netarhat the informa-

tion about the death of infants was taken by interviewing the parents and other members of the hamlets.

The table 18 shows the infant mortality rate in the four hamlets of Netarhat from 1975 to 1979.

Table 18

Infants mortality rate at Netarhat

Year	Total no. of birth	Total no. of infant death Male	Female	Total death	Infant death (per 1000)
1975	27	3	1	4	144.44
1976	28	2	—	2	71.42
1977	26	1	1	2	76.92
1978	30	—	1	1	33.33
1979	10	1	—	1	100.00

It is evident from the above table that the death rate of male infant is greater than that of female infant.

No case of abortion or still birth was reported by the members of the *tolies*.

Table 19

Absolute Frequency, Percentage Frequency and Gene Frequency
of ABO Blood Group of different-population of Netarhat

Sl. No.	Tribe	Total	O			A			B			AB			p	q	r	x^2
		No.	Abs.	%		Abs.	%		Abs.	%		Abs.	%					
			Fre-	Fre-	que-	Fre-	Fre-	que-	Fre-	Fre-	que-	Fre-	Fre-	que-				
			que-	que-	ncy	que-	que-	ncy	que-	que-	ncy	que-	que-	ncy				
1.	Kisan	133	30	22.56	40	30.07	39	29.32	24	18.05	24	18.05	0.276	0.271	0.453	1.5428		
2.	Oraon	64	9	14.06	21	32.81	21	32.81	13	20.32	0.316	0.315	0.369	0.0179				
3.	Birjia	47	5	10.64	11	23.40	23	48.94	8	17.02	0.232	0.423	0.345	0.5687				

The table 19 shows the ABO blood group frequencies among the Kisan, Oraon and the Birjias of Netarhat plateau. It is evident from the table that blood group A and B show almost similar frequencies among the Kisan and the Oraon tribes while among the Birjia tribe the blood group B shows more than thrice (about 49%) the percentage of A blood group. The frequency of O blood group is highest in Kisan (22.56%) and lowest among the Birjia (10.64%) while the Oraons show an intermediate frequency (14.06%) between the two.

Table 20

Frequency of taster and non-taster individuals
among the Kisan, Oraon and the Birjia
samples of Netarhat plateau

Popula- tion	Sex	Taster		Non-Taster		Total	
		Abs.	%	Abs.	%	Abs.	%
Kisan	Male	56	65.1	30	34.9	86	100.0
Kisan	Female	26	52.0	24	48.0	50	100.0
Kisan	Total	82	60.3	54	39.7	136	100.0
Oraon	Male	25	62.5	15	37.5	40	100.0
Oraon	Female	13	54.2	11	45.8	24	100.0
Oraon	Total	38	59.4	26	40.6	64	100.0
Birjia	Male	23	65.7	12	34.3	35	100.0
Birjia	Female	6	54.5	5	45.5	11	100.0
Birjia	Total	29	63.4	17	36.6	46	100.0

It is evident from table 20 that the Kisan and the Oraon show about 60% taster frequency while the Birjia tribe is showing higher frequency 63% as compared to the other two tribes.

Table 20A

Table showing the frequency of tasters and
non-taster among Kisan, Oraon and Birjia of Netarhat

Population	Taster	Non-Taster	Total	t-Gene Frequency
Kisan	82 (60.30)	54 (39.70)	136 (100.00)	0.630
Oraon	38 (59.37)	26 (40.63)	64 (100.00)	0.637
Birjia	29 (63.43)	17 (36.57)	46 (100.00)	0.604

However, it is interesting to note that the three population groups are showing more or less, 60.40 taster/non-taster frequency in the three population at Netarhat.

Table 21

Frequency of finger dermatoglyphic patterns
types among the Kisan, Oraon and the Birjia
samples of Netarhat

<i>Population</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Whorl</i>	<i>Loop</i>	<i>Arch</i>
Kisan	Male	91	52.6	43.2	4.2
Kisan	Female	42	47.0	46.0	7.0
	Total	133	49.8	44.6	5.6
Oraon	Male	40	53.3	42.2	4.5
Oraon	Female	24	54.6	42.9	2.5
	Total	64	53.9	42.6	3.5
Birjia	Male	34	41.5	50.9	7.6
Birjia	Female	10	39.0	44.0	17.0
	Total	44	40.2	47.5	12.3

It is evident from the table that the frequency of whorls are higher in the Kisan and the Oraon tribes as compared to the Birjia which shows higher frequency of loops.

Table 22
Statistical Consideration of Measurements
of Adult Birjia Male (n=24)

<i>Sl. No.</i>	<i>Measure- ment in mm.</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>Mean ± S.E.</i>	<i>S.D. ± S.E.</i>
1.	Height Vertex	24	1448-1691	1553.7 ± 11.65	56.99 ± 8.83
2.	Height Acromion	24	1191-1379	1278.9 ± 9.88	48.35 ± 6.98
3.	Height Radiale	24	909-1051	972.0 ± 8.53	41.76 ± 6.03
4.	Height Stylium	24	681- 797	733.3 ± 7.04	34.43 ± 4.97
5.	Height Dactylium	24	524- 698	563.5 ± 8.23	40.25 ± 5.81
6.	Max. head length	24	175- 201	189.2 ± 1.54	7.55 ± 1.09
7.	Max. head breadth	24	135- 155	141.7 ± 1.12	5.51 ± 0.79
8.	Min. Frontal Breadth	24	99- 131	112.7 ± 1.19	7.32 ± 1.05
9.	Bizygomatic Breadth	24	111- 141	131.2 ± 2.45	7.10 ± 1.02
10.	Bigonial Breadth	24	94- 113	102.2 ± 1.09	5.35 ± 0.77
11.	Nasal Height	24	38- 53	44.5 ± 0.77	3.77 ± 0.54
12.	Nasal Breadth	24	35- 44	39.1 ± 0.49	2.40 ± 0.34
13.	Nasal Depth	24	14- 19	16.3 ± 0.31	1.55 ± 0.22
14.	Morphological Facial Height	24	96- 117	105.7 ± 1.21	5.92 ± 0.85
15.	Cephalic Index	24	69.38-80.21	74.9 ± 0.54	2.60 ± 0.37
16.	Nasal Index	24	73.58-105.26	88.3 ± 1.87	9.01 ± 1.30
17.	Morphological Facial Index	24	72.72-96.39	80.6 ± 1.06	5.14 ± 0.74

Table 23
Stature of Adult Birjia Male (n=24)

<i>Range variation</i> (According to Martin)	<i>No. of Individual</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Medium 165	2	8.3
Very short (130.0-149.9)	2	8.3
Short (150.0-159.9)	18	75.0
Lower medium (160.0-163.9)	2	8.3

It is observed from the table 23 that the majority of the adult Birjia male individuals (75.0%) are of short stature.

Table 24

Cephalic Index of Adult Birjia Male (n=24)

<i>Range variation (According to Saller)</i>	<i>No. of Individuals</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Hyperdolichocephalic (x-70.9)	3	12.5
Dolichocephalic (71.0-75.9)	12	50.0
Mesocephalic (76.0-80.9)	9	37.5

The above table shows that 50% adult Birjia male are dolichocephalic, 37.5% are mesocephalic while 12.5% are hyperdolichocephalic.

Table 25

Statistical Consideration of Measurement of
Adult Kisan Male (n=73)

<i>Sl. Measure- No. ment in mm.</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>Mean ± S.E.</i>	<i>S.D. ± S.E.</i>
1. Height Vertex	73	1428-1727	1574.1 ± 8.16	69.69 ± 5.76
2. Height Acromion	73	1168-1442	1298.4 ± 7.81	66.75 ± 5.52
3. Height Radiale	73	890-1089	988.6 ± 6.12	52.28 ± 4.32
4. Height Stylium	73	677- 848	748.8 ± 5.43	46.41 ± 3.84
5. Height Dactylium	73	503- 658	570.6 ± 4.96	42.44 ± 3.51
6. Max. Head Length	73	174- 204	191.3 ± 0.78	6.69 ± 0.55
7. Max. Head Breadth	73	130- 155	139.8 ± 0.60	5.19 ± 0.42
8. Min. Frontal Breadth	73	99- 126	133.2 ± 0.70	6.04 ± 0.50
9. Bizygomatic Breadth	73	110- 148	132.3 ± 0.83	7.15 ± 0.59
10. Bigonial Breadth	73	93- 120	105.5 ± 0.66	5.69 ± 0.47
11. Nasal Height =	73	35- 58	44.8 ± 0.51	4.38 ± 0.36
12. Nasal Breadth	73	35- 45	39.4 ± 0.27	2.33 ± 0.19
13. Nasal Depth	73	12- 21	16.6 ± 0.23	1.97 ± 0.16
14. Morphological Facial Height	73	94- 122	107.5 ± 0.69	5.90 ± 0.48
15. Cephalic Index	73	68.15-81.03	71.9 ± 0.36	3.13 ± 0.25
16. Nasal Index	73	85.51-110.00	88.5 ± 0.96	8.28 ± 0.68
17. Morphological Facial Index	73	69.06-92.37	81.4 ± 0.66	5.70 ± 0.47

Table 26

Stature of Adult Kisan Male (n=73)

<i>Range variation</i> (According to Martin)	<i>No. of Individuals</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Very Short (130.0-149.9)	9	12.3
Short (150.0-159.9)	38	52.05
Lower Medium (160.0-163.9)	5	6.8
Medium (164.0-166.9)	15	20.4
Upper Medium (167.0-169.9)	2	2.7
Tall (170.0-179.9)	4	5.4

It is observed from the above table that the majority of the adult Kisan male individuals (52.05%) are of short stature and next majority (20.4%) is of medium stature.

Table 27

Cephalic Index of Adult Kisan Male (n=73)

<i>Range variation</i> (According to Saller)	<i>No. of Individuals</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Hyperdolichocephalic (x-70.9)	15	20.6
Dolichocephalic (71.0-75.9)	48	65.8
Mesocephalic (76.0-80.9)	9	12.2
Brachyocephalic (81.0-85.4)	1	1.3

The above table shows that 65.8% adult Kisan male are Dolichocephalic, 20.6% are Hyperdolichocephalic while 13.5% are both Mesocephalic and Brachyocephalic.

Table 27 shows the percentage of cephalic index of adult Kisan male individuals.

Table 28

Statistical Consideration of Measurements of Adult
Kisan Female (n=35)

Sl. No.	Measure-ment in mm.	No.	Range	Mean \pm S.E.	S.D. \pm S.E.
1.	Height Vertex	35	1372-1705	1478.2 \pm 12.28	72.58 \pm 8.68
2.	Height Acromion	35	1130-1394	1219.0 \pm 10.78	63.75 \pm 7.62
3.	Height Radiale	35	849-1083	932.4 \pm 8.74	51.69 \pm 6.18
4.	Height Stylium	35	640- 835	707.2 \pm 7.25	42.88 \pm 5.12
5.	Height Dactylium	35	456- 651	558.2 \pm 6.63	39.19 \pm 4.68
6.	Max. Head Length	35	166- 201	184.5 \pm 1.41	8.39 \pm 1.00
7.	Max. Head Breadth	35	123- 149	135.6 \pm 1.07	6.38 \pm 0.76
8.	Min. Frontal Breadth	35	98- 119	108.4 \pm 0.95	5.65 \pm 0.67
9.	Bizygomatic Breadth	35	105- 139	126.6 \pm 1.26	7.46 \pm 0.89
10.	Bigonial Breadth	35	74- 113	97.4 \pm 1.64	9.70 \pm 1.16
11.	Nasal Height	35	35- 48	40.4 \pm 0.45	2.66 \pm 0.31
12.	Nasal Breadth	35	31- 43	36.3 \pm 0.44	2.64 \pm 0.31
13.	Nasal Depth	35	11- 19	15.4 \pm 0.34	2.01 \pm 0.24
14.	Morphological Facial Height	35	82- 112	100.1 \pm 1.17	6.94 \pm 0.83
15.	Cephalic Index	35	68.55-81.97	73.5 \pm 0.48	2.88 \pm 0.34
16.	Nasal Index	35	66.66-105.12	89.6 \pm 1.29	7.68 \pm 0.91
17.	Morphological Facial	35	65.60-91.42	76.6 \pm 1.07	6.34 \pm 0.75

Table 29

Stature of Adult Kisan Female (n=35)

<i>Range variation</i> (According to Martin)	<i>No. of Individuals</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Very Short	4	11.4
Short	21	60.0
Lower Medium	3	8.5
Medium	3	8.5
Upper Medium	2	5.7
Tall	1	2.9
Very Tall	1	2.9

It is observed from the above table that the highest concentration of the adult Kisan female individuals 60% to be in short stature category and next concentration (11.4%) to be in the very short category.

Table 30

Cephalic Index of Adult Kisan Female (n=35)

<i>Range variation</i> (According to Saller)	<i>No. of Individuals</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Hyperdolichocephalic	12	34.3
Dolichocephalic	19	54.3
Mesocephalic	4	11.4

The above table shows that the highest concentration (54.3%) adult Kisan female to be in the Dolichocephalic category 34.3% are Hyperdolichocephalic while 11.4% are Mesocephalic.

Table 31

Comparison Between Birjia Male and
Kisan Male by "t" Test

Sl. No.	Measurements	Kisan		Birjia		Value of "t"
		x_1	σx_1	x_2	σx_2	
1.	Height Vertex	1574.1	69.69	1553.7	56.99	0.226
2.	Height Acromion	1298.4	66.75	1278.9	48.35	0.236
3.	Height Radiale	988.6	52.28	972.0	41.76	0.248
4.	Height Stylium	748.8	46.41	733.3	34.43	0.268
5.	Height Dactylium	570.6	42.44	563.5	40.25	0.121
6.	Max. Head Length	191.3	6.69	189.2	7.55	0.208
7.	Max. Head Breadth	139.8	5.19	141.7	5.51	0.253
8.	Mini. Frontal Breadth	118.2	6.04	112.7	7.32	0.053
9.	Bizygomatic Breadth	132.3	7.15	131.2	7.10	0.109
10.	Bigonial Breadth	105.4	5.69	102.2	6.35	0.423
11.	Nasal Height	44.8	5.38	44.5	3.77	0.052
12.	Nasal Breadth	39.4	2.32	39.1	2.40	0.090
13.	Nasal Depth	16.7	1.97	16.3	1.55	0.160
14.	Morphological Facial Height	107.5	5.90	105.7	5.92	0.216
15.	Cephalic Index	71.9	3.13	74.9	2.60	0.738
16.	Nasal Index	88.5	8.28	88.3	9.01	0.016
17.	Morphological Facial Index	81.4	5.70	80.6	5.14	0.105

It is evident from the above table that these two population does not shows statistically significant difference.

It is evident from the tables, 23 to 30 that the stature of the majority of Kisans and Birjias of both sexes falls with the range of short stature and long head (dolichocephalic). Further in all the 17 measurements (Table 31) takes for the two populations, no statistically significant difference was observed.

Finger-Prints of the Asur

Finger-prints of the Asur were also collected from 40 male Asurs living in Jobhipat area of Netarhat plateau. The prints collected according to Cummins and Midlo's (1943) instructions were classified according to Galton's three-fold classification. The following indicies have also been calculated from the frequencies of the above three patterns Dank-maijer's (Arch-Whorl) index, pattern intensity index and Furu-hata's (Whorl-Loop) index. The essential results are summarised in tables 32-35. The Asur data have been compared with the available data on another tribal populations of Bihar.

The present sample size is extremely small for any population dermatoglyphic study. However, the dermatoglyphic analysis has been presented here just to record our observations among the Asurs. Table 32 suggest that the whorl and loop patterns are showing similar frequencies among the Asurs, while this is not so in case of Kisan, Birjia and Oraon samples.

Table 32
Frequencies of pattern types on individual fingers in Asur (Male n=40)

Pattern frequency	Left hand					Right hand					Total L & R Total	
	I	II	III	IV	V	Total	I	II	III	IV		V
Whorl Abs.	25	21	10	21	9	97	24	24	17	25	10	100
%	62.50	52.50	47.50	46.50	22.50	48.50	60.00	60.00	42.50	62.50	25.00	50.00
Loops Abs.	14	17	20	16	30	97	15	14	23	15	30	97
%	35.00	42.50	50.00	40.00	75.00	48.50	37.50	35.00	55.00	37.50	75.00	48.50
Arches Abs.	1	2	1	1	1	6	1	2	—	—	—	3
%	2.50	5.00	2.50	2.50	2.50	3.00	2.50	5.00	—	—	—	1.50

Table 33

Handwise Distribution of Principal Papillary Patterns
(N=40)

<i>Patterns</i>	<i>Left hand</i>	<i>Right hand</i>	<i>L & R Combined</i>
Whorls	97 (48.50%)	100 (50.00%)	197 (49.25%)
Loops	97 (48.50%)	97 (48.50%)	194 (48.50%)
Arches	6 (3.00%)	3 (1.5%)	9 (2.25%)

Table 34

Occurance of Summary and Asymmetry among the
Asur Males (n=40)

<i>Population</i>	<i>Summary</i>	<i>Asymmetry</i>
Asur male	17 42.50%	23 57.50%

Table 35

Pattern Type Indices and Pattern Intensity Index

1. Population	...	Asur
2. Furuhashi's Index (W/L.100)	...	101.54
3. Dankmeijer Index (A/W.100)	...	4.57
4. Pattern intensity Index	...	14.65

Ethnic Composition of Asur

The following table shows the ethnic composition of the three villages namely Sakhuapani, Polpolpat and Jobhitoli ; where a house-to-house census on population and allied matters were taken during the last quarter of 1977 and early 1978.

Table 36

Showing Ethnic Composition of Three Villages
(in total number of families)

<i>Villages</i>	<i>Tribes</i>			<i>Remarks</i>
	<i>Asur</i>	<i>Munda</i>	<i>Oraon</i>	
Sakhuapani	31 (86.11)	nil	5(13.89)	double ethnic village.
Polpolpat	31 (100.00)	nil	nil	single ethnic village.
Jobhitoli	31 (88.57)	3(8.57)	1(2.86)	multi-ethnic village.

Total : 93 (91.18) 3(2.94) 6(5.88)

(Percentages in Parentheses)

The table 36 shows that the three villages under study are principally Asur villages, the total number of Asur families being 93 averaging 31 families in each village and having an overwhelming and impressive majority of 91.18% of the total families comprising the villages. The other two tribal groups comprise only 9 families in between them. There are 6 Oraon families in all having a percentage of 5.88 of the total number of families, followed by the 3 Munda families having the percentage of 2.94 of the total number of families comprising all the three villages.

Out of these three villages, Polpolpat is a mono-tribal or single ethnic village having a population of only Asurs, while Sakhuapani having 5 Oraon families can be called a double-ethnic village, whereas Jobhitoli having a sprinkling of both the Mundas and the Oraons can be termed a multi-tribal or multi-ethnic village.

Population Pattern

The table appended below shows the composition of the total population of the three villages under study where the population was recorded in a house-to-house census.

Table 37

Showing total population (percentages in parentheses)

<i>Villages</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Average no. of persons per family</i>
Sakhuapani —	124(51.03)	119(48.97)	243	7.8
Polpolpat —	107(52.20)	98(47.8)	205	6.6
Jobhitoli —	119(48.97)	124(51.03)	243	7.8
Total :	350(50.7)	341(49.3)	691	

Average number of persons per family (when the villages are combined) is 7.4 persons.

From the above table it is evident that the total population of Asurs in view of the smallness in the size of the villages and number of families comprising them, is rather large. In Sakhuapani village there is a population of 243 Asurs and the males numbering 124 (51.03%) have an edge over the female population numbering 119 (48.97%). The Polpolpat village has the lowest population having only 205 souls, but here the ratio of males to the females is slightly more in comparison to the former village. Here the males number 107 (52.20%) and the females number 98 (47.8%). The Jobhitoli village is unique in the respect that here the female population exceeds the male population, the number of the former being 124 (51.03%) and the males comprising only 119 persons (48.97%).

The villages have in all 93 Asur families and so the average number of persons per Asur family is 7.4.

The table 38 shows the age-wise distribution of the Asur population in the three villages under study. Census of the population was taken on a house-to-house basis and every attempt was made to ascertain the age of the persons correctly so far as possible.

Table 38

(Showing age-wise distribution of Asur population of the three villages under study)

<i>Villages</i>	<i>Sakhuapani</i>		<i>Polpolpat</i>		<i>Jobhitoli</i>	
<i>Age range</i>	<i>Total no.</i>		<i>Total no.</i>		<i>Total no.</i>	
<i>(in years)</i>	<i>of persons</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>of persons</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>of persons</i>	<i>%</i>
0-4	40	16.46	37	18.05	28	11.52
5-9	49	20.16	37	18.05	40	16.46
10-14	33	13.58	24	11.70	38	15.64
15-19	21	9.64	21	10.24	26	10.70
20-24	19	7.82	22	10.73	17	7.00
25-29	19	7.82	17	8.29	17	7.00
30-34	18	7.40	18	8.78	22	9.05
35-39	12	4.94	9	4.39	20	8.23
40-44	6	2.47	6	2.93	9	3.70
45-49	7	2.88	5	2.44	7	2.88
50-54	3	1.24	4	1.95	7	2.88
55-59	4	1.65	3	1.47	7	2.88
60-64	7	2.88	1	0.49	2	0.82
65-69	4	1.65	—	—	3	1.24
70 +	1	0.41	1	0.49	—	—
Total :	243	100.00	205	100.00	243	100.00

This table shows that in the Sakhuapani village the maximum number of persons is in the age-group of 5-9 years totalling 49 persons, the percentage being 20.16% in a total of 243 persons, closely followed by 40 persons (16.46%) in the age-group of 0-4 years and 33 persons (13.58%) in the age-group of 10-14 years.

In the village Polpolpat the age ranges 0-4 years and 5-9 years i.e. children upto 9 years of age comprise the maximum number of persons in the entire village population of 205 persons. The number in age-group 0-4 years and age-group 5-9 years is 37 each, the percentage in each case also being 18.05%. In this village persons of the age group of 10-14 years comprise the second largest group, their number being

24(11.70%), closely followed by 22 persons (10.73%) in the age-group of 20-24 years.

In the village Jobhitoli, too, as in Sakhuapani, the maximum number comprising the village population of 243 persons belong to the age-group of 5-9 years, the total number being 40 with a percentage of 16.46%, closely followed by 33 persons (15.64%) in the age-group 10-14 years, and the third largest group is comprised of 28 persons (11.52%) in the age-group of 0-4 years.

On the analysis of the data it becomes very clear that in all the villages children comprise the maximum number of the village population. The following table shows the combined population of persons of the various age-groups.

Table 39
Population in various age-groups

Age-range	Sakhuapani	%	Polpolpat	%	Jobhitoli	%	Total	Total %
0-4 yrs.	40	16.46	37	18.05	28	11.52	105	15.20
5-9 yrs.	49	20.16	37	18.05	40	16.46	126	18.23
10-14 yrs.	33	13.58	24	11.71	38	15.64	95	13.75
15-49 yrs.	102	41.98	98	47.80	118	48.56	318	46.02
50+	19	7.82	9	4.39	19	7.82	47	6.80
Total :	243	100%	205	100%	243	100%	691	100%

Table 39 shows that if the entire population of the three villages where population census was taken is combined, we find that maximum number of persons come from the age-group 5-9 years which has in all 126 persons and a total percentage of 18.23%. The second and third largest groups are also formed by persons of age-groups of 0-4 years (105 persons—15.2%) and age-group of 10-14 years (95 persons—13.75%). In between them the children and the adolescents comprise 326 persons and form a percentage of 47.18% or almost half of the entire population.

The number of persons, from the age of 15 years upto 49 years, comprising the labour force of these agricultural

villages is however, impressive. Combining the three villages under study, we find the total population coming under this age-group from 15-49 years to a total of 318 persons of whom 166 persons (52.2%) are males and 152 persons (47.8%) females, averaging a work-force of 3.4 persons (1.8 males + 1.6 females) per family, in a total of 93 Asur families in the three villages. Considering the distance to the fields from the settlement sites and the difficulty in transporting manure and harvested crops this work-force is however not much adequate in a family which averages 7.4 persons. But considerable help is also accorded by the adolescent boys and girls in the age-group of 10-14 years who total 95 individuals (13.75%) in the three villages, when they help their parents and brothers in various agricultural works, because by the time they reach the age of 12 years or so the boys become expert in ploughing and doing other agricultural works. Moreover girls from the age of 10 years are very much helpful to their mothers in various domestic works including cooking, bringing water etc. Children of the age range of 5-9 years help in tending cattle and bringing fire-wood etc. Many of the old persons are also active. Lucas of Sakhuapani even at the age of 65 is much active and in spite of owning servants and hired hands and having grown-up son to look after the agricultural works manages much of the work himself. Such auxiliary works, as collecting juru leaves, khajur leaves etc. and making of leaf-vessels for storage of grains, and rain-coats from juru leaves are mostly done by aged persons. They also make during gossiping hours ropes by twisting/winding juru bark, to be used in connection with various agricultural works.

During the hunger-months, it is the adolescent boys and girls and comparatively more elderly persons who engage themselves in various collecting activities sparing the able-bodied persons to devote their energy in the agricultural activities. A small fraction of the population belonging to the age-group ranging from 5 years to 19 years (32 from

Sakhuapani, 12 from Polpolpat and 25 from Jobhitoli having a percentage of 11.07%, 4.15% and 8.65% respectively in a total of 289 persons coming under this age-range) live in residential school hostels at Sakhuapani and Jobhitoli and these 69 boys (23.8% or roughly $\frac{1}{4}$ th of this population can therefore be excluded as providing any assistance to their respective households in the agricultural activities.

If the subsidiary occupations such as collection of jungle produce, working as day-labourers, or on contract systems in the bauxite quarries (*khadans*), or fishing, and small game or bird hunting are taken into consideration, it is found that these, along with agriculture, constitute an occupational complex which now persists in every household. This seems to suggest value-orientation of the people towards self-sufficiency at the individual family level. No other occupation, not even smithy or carpentry, indicates specialisation of function at the village level. Only one occupation which approaches somewhat towards specialisation of function at village level is the art of tile-making because Labhu Asur of Polpolpat is an expert tile-maker and it is one of his family's subsidiary means of livelihood. But ordinarily all the persons know these arts and somehow manage their own works themselves, but cooperation from neighbours is always forthcoming.

Distribution of skill : All the males above the age of 18 or so know the art of collecting and processing of *juru* bark and making of ropes used for various agricultural works. By this time they also become expert in collecting *juru* leaves and sewing these into storage vessels, rain-coats etc. Girls above the age of 10 or so are likewise adroit in weaving mats from *khajur* leaves. Naturally those of younger age-group are not skilful in these arts, but still some elderly persons are known for their superior skill or swiftness of hands.

Analysis of labour-force : From table 39 it can be seen that 46.02% of the total population in the three villages combined are able-bodied workers. If seen in terms of sex

distribution 55.97% of the total male population and 44.03% of the total female population coming in the age-range of 15 to 49 years are workers. Although it is not possible to indicate the participation rate of the labour force in the various agricultural and other economic activities of the villages under study, it may be very well surmised that barring a few physically disabled persons and full-time students, everybody above the age of 6 is economically more or less active, the activeness varying according to age and physical fitness.

Table 40

Workers and Non-workers by age and sex

Age-group	Total Population			Workers			Non-workers		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
All ages	350	341	691	222	268	490	128	73	201
0-14	156	170	326	81	99	180	75	71	146
15-49	166	152	318	117	152	269	49	—	49
50-64	22	16	38	22	16	38	—	—	—
65 +	6	3	9	2	1	3	4	2	6

M = Male, F = Female

For our purpose we are here considering population in the age-range of 15-49 years to constitute the labour-force of the villages.

From the above table it is found that 70.91% of the total population are workers. There is some significant difference between the males and the females. Among the males 45.3% are workers; the corresponding number among the females is 54.7%.

With reference to the labour force or population in the age-group of 15-49 years, however, we find emergence of an altogether different picture. Whereas the labour force of the there villages covered by the survey is 318, the work-force is 490 or approximately 154% of the labour-force. This high

participation rate in the active economic life is due to the fact that 180 persons out of 326 below the age of 15 years, and 41 persons out of 47 above the age of 50 years are observed to be economically active.

Recapitulating the above, it can be stated that diversification of occupations exists in the village at different levels. The family level occupations consisting of various agricultural activities, gathering of food-materials by hunting and fishing and the collecting of various forest products reflect the attempts made towards self-sufficiency in the primary needs of life so far as the individual household is concerned. There are some occupation such as smithy, carpentry, hair-cutting, shaving of beard, tile-making, repairing of houses etc. which are village-level occupation within the traditional framework. These while providing for some of the essential needs of the village community, do not lead to any division of labour. However, the other occupations such as working as peons or assistants in residential schools, helper to the village *vaid*, watchman in the *grain-golas* (ware houses), *munshis* (record-keepers) in bauxite quarries or cooks or *rexas* in hostels or private houses etc. which have been introduced only a few years ago represent the non-traditional sector of diversification of village economy and link the villages with the regional economy in the process.

Table 41

Non-workers by sex, broad age-groups and
nature of activity

Age-group	Total Persons	Non- workers		Full-time students		Infants/Children attending schools and persons physically disabled		
		M	F	M	Total	M	F	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
All ages	201	128	73	69	69	59	73	132
0-14	146	75	71	20	20	55	71	126
15-49	49	49	—	49	49	—	—	—
50-64	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
65 +	6	4	2	—	—	4	2	6

From the table 41 showing non-workers it can be seen that out of a total of 201 non-workers of all ages as many as 26 are children below the age of 5 years out of which 55 are boys and 71 are girls, and hence all of them are dependents. Another 20 boys of 0-14 age-group are full-time students. A total of 69 boys from the approximate age of 6 years to 22 years are students and boarders of residential schools. In the age-group of 15-49 years out of the 49 workers all are full-time students. In the age-group of 65 plus years, 4 males and 2 females are economically inactive, being physically disabled.

The high proportion of working-force among the population undoubtedly reflects their social attitudes. It has been observed that the children begin to take interest in the agricultural and other economic activities from a very early age that is from 10 or 12 years or so. Non-agricultural activities like drawing of water, taking care of siblings, herding animals etc. are started much earlier. Thus, through a continuous process of slow adaptation and informal training the children prepare themselves or are prepared by people around them, to play their part in the struggle for existence.

The children in course of time are thus geared into the vertex of the economic life without any sudden and noticeable change of role from other aspects of life.

Table 42

Age-group	Unmarried			Married			Widowed			Divorced		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
0-14	156	169	325	—	1	1						
15-19	30	14	44	3	21	24						
20-24	3	2	5	22	31	53						
25-29	1	—	1	19	32	51						
30-34	2		2	30	26	56				—	1	1
35-39				30	8	38	1	1	2	1	—	1
40-44				10	10	20	—	1	1			
45-49				10	7	17	1	1	2			
50-54				8	5	13	1	—	1			
55-59				7	3	10	3	1	4			
60-64				5	4	9	1	—	1			
65 +				4	—	4	2	3	5			
Total:	192	185	377	148	148	296	9	7	16	1	1	2

Marital status: From the table 42 it can be noted that there is only one girl married in the age-group of 0-14 years. She is Lichi Asurin, aged 14 years and is the wife of Golhan aged 16 years of Sakhuapani. The girl is from the same village. So it can be inferred that there is no married male or female younger than the age of 14. There are only 3 married males in the age-group 15-19 against an overwhelming number of 21 married females in the same group. However, in this age-group also unmarried males and females are approximately double the number of married persons. The 3 cases of married males in the 15-16 age-group are rather therefore exceptional. From the age-group of 20-24 years the number of married persons begins to far exceed the unmarried ones. In the age-groups 25-29 years and 30-34 years married

persons form an overall majority as in these two age-groups only 3 males remain unmarried. From the 35 years upwards marriage seems to be universal, as there is no unmarried person above the age of 35 years. Of course there are a number of widower and widows numbering 9 and 7 respectively who have remained single during the period of survey.

From the present table, it is further noted that there are two divorces, one male and the other female. The divorced girl lives with her parents family. She was divorced because she was mentally deranged.

It is observed from the table that the maximum number of married males is found in the age-groups 30-34 and 35-39, while the corresponding age-groups for females are 20-24 and 25-29. It is, therefore, quite obvious that Asurs marry when they attain a normal age of marriage. The girls, it seems, get married round about the age of 17-18 years and boys get married around the age of 22-23 years. If both the sexes are taken together it can be inferred that people get married round about the earlier part of the twenties. By the time the people attain an age group of 30-34 years, all of them get married.

Labour needs and division of work according to sex

By commonsense arrangement made almost everywhere, the heavier tasks of tilling the soil with plough, harrowing, felling big trees, extracting bamboo from the groves, using bow and arrow or taking part in hunting etc. are the prerogative of men. In other economic activities no rigid or pronounced division of labour is made between the sexes. There are few occupations which are regarded as purely masculine- or purely feminine-tasks. Many of the men's occupations today are done by women, and vice versa. Under their present socio-economic system, both the sexes are 'rice-winners' of the family. Women are equally actively engaged in all the spheres of economic activity-from the collection of forest products to working as day-labourer in the mines.

So far as practicable the adults never infringe the particular type of works assigned to a particular sex. To plough is forbidden to women, but they would, in ordinary cases, never undertake any heavy agricultural operation either. The men can and do cook occasionally, but they too would not like to undertake grinding grain in *jantas* or *dhenkis* readily, or perform other arduous tasks associated with the processing of food.

In the absence of an older sister to act as nursemaid to a baby, any of the grand-parents or an older brother may be called upon to fill the role. In the absence of a son to herd the animals, a daughter is substituted. Likewise, in the absence of a cook, some girl or woman relative is asked to do the cooking. This way, the 'various household labour needs can be met by flexible role assignments'.

In the agricultural activities, as we have already observed, the inadequacy of labour is remedied by 'borrowing' labour from neighbouring families or from relatives. Visiting relatives or neighbours may look after the child when the mother is ill or inconvenienced due to some other cause. A person from another household may be entrusted with the herding of cattle on occasions, on the understanding that similar help will be forthcoming to the former when the need arises.

When the members of a family cannot cope with their agricultural works, agriculture labour may be imported from outside more or less permanently. The *dhangar* and *dhangrin*, as the male and female servant are termed locally, are paid mostly in kind and fed and housed in the employer's house. He or she becomes a member of the employer's household and takes part in the family's life and activities. There is no difference in status between the employer and his servants. They are not underestimated or looked down upon. As most *dhangars* and *dhangrins* are drawn from the same village, they pass their nights with other children of the village together in the common sleeping houses after taking part in the

dancing and singing. We have not observed any feeling of inferiority complex to have developed in the minds of the children engaged as servants, as their companions never treat them with indifference. So, although in the Asur villages, the members of an individual household provide most of the energy required for their subsistence activities and thus help maintain the agricultural ecology, some comparatively well-to-do families meet their labour and man-power shortages by engaging extra-hands. These extra-hands are again provided by some families of the same village for whom the man-power is surplus or redundant. Thus a continuous interaction and interdependence go on between families within a village, which may sometimes extend the periphery of the village when agricultural labours are imported from distant villages.

The table 43 will give an idea about the types of economic activities and the division of work according to sex and age among the Asurs of the villages.

Table 43

Sex-and age-wise distribution of economic activities				
Sl. No.	Types of activities	Men	Women	Children
1.	Ploughing, harrowing	*	—	—
2.	Weeding, transplanting, watching, harvesting	*	*	—
3.	Threshing by treading with feet	—	*	—
4.	Threshing with animals, winnowing	*	—	—
5.	Husking, processing of grains into food items	—	*	—
6.	Oil pressing	*	*	—
7.	Labour in mines/wage-earners in mines	*	*	—
8.	Collection of juru barks and rope-making, making or leaf-vessels and rain-coats	*	—	—

Sl. No.	Types of activities	Men	Women	Children
9.	Manufacture of implements, weapons for hunting and fishing	*	—	—
10.	Repairing of agricultural tools	*	—	—
11.	Grinding and remodelling of metal parts of tools	*	—	—
12.	Hunting of animals, bird-catching	*	—	—
13.	Cutting and felling of trees, extracting bamboo from groves	*	—	—
14.	Making houses (mud walls)	*	*	—
15.	Making houses (frame-work, posts, roof, tile-fitting)	*	—	—
16.	Making houses (manufacture of tiles)	*	—	—
17.	Making houses (plastering and painting)	—	*	—
18.	Carrying loads, fuel, carrying water	*	*	—
19.	Plaiting of mats	—	*	—
20.	Cooking	—	*	—
21.	Tending of cattle, goats	—	*	*
22.	Helping hands in domestic works	—	—	*
23.	Collection of eatables from forests	*	*	*
24.	Collection of juru (mauhlain) leaves, <i>Khajur</i> leaves	*	*	—

(Legen : * : participate, —: do not participate)

It is evident from the above table that whereas the children are mostly engaged in tasks which are not directly connected with the agricultural operations, the women share many of the agricultural works alongwith the men. In case of agriculture the harder tasks of ploughing, harrowing, threshing with animals etc. are allotted to the men whereas the lighter tasks of husking, cooking etc. are performed by women. This division of labour also comes into play in all other activities such as oil-pressing, making houses, working in mines etc. where both the sexes take part and in each case it is noticed that the heavier burdens are always borne by the men ungrudgingly.

The multifarious nature of economic activities engages the Asur throughout the year. Ploughing is a year-round job. House building or repairing takes place during a couple of months. Women and children remain busy throughout the year in cooking, tending cattle and other sundry household activities in a tedious repetitive routine.

Chapter Four

THE ECONOMY

Agriculture

For the present moment, agriculture is the basis of plateau man's economy and subsistence. The tribes in general and *pat* tribes in particular, have become a special concern to the nation for their low technological development and general economic backwardness. In comparison to the cultivators of the plain areas, the *pat* tribes who are settled agriculturist possess bigger agricultural holdings. That they can not produce enough crops to last throughout the year is done mainly to their poor technology and the low productivity of the soil, which are undoubtedly of paramount importance in agricultural economy.

The factors of physical geography, composed by the small, flat-topped plateaus, separated by deep cut, gorge like narrow valleys, appear to have directly influenced the location, distribution and density of settlement in this area. The plateau tribes are settled agriculturists and possess comparatively bigger agricultural holdings than those of the other tribes of the plain areas of Chotanagpur. In spite of their big land-holding, they cannot produce enough crops for the whole year because of poor technology and the low productivity of the soil. Among the habitable mountainous areas of Chotanagpur the plateau region inhabited by a number of tribes is a type by itself.

In the plateau region the location and distribution of settlements differ, governed by such factors as scarcity of habitable sites and scarcity of water-forms. The flat summits are mostly devoid of streams. "The rain water is discharged in the manner of sheet-flow. The streams originate from the margin of the plateaus and roll down the slopes. The sub-surface is rocky and hard. Bold relief augments the rate of

underground seepage. These conditions do not favour the construction of wells. The plateaus, thus, suffer from acute problem of water-supply. Problems, of water supply limits the number and size of the settlements'. (Prasad, Ph.D., Thesis 1968 : 253).

Scarcity in the plateau region is rampant due to another factor. It is accentuated by the very nature of the soil. The summits are topped by a layer of volcanic rocks which have weathered and form the plateau soils. Under the hot humid climate, the soils are subjected to a leaching process. The degree of leaching varies from place to place and so does the agricultural utility of the soils. Thoroughly bleached soils have been converted into laterites which are unfit for cultivation. The habitability of the plateaus is directly related to the degree and extent of the laterization. Laterization usually attains its maximum in the central elevated portions of the plateaus (Prasad, *ibid.*).

Ahmed (1965 : 57) wrote that laterite soils are infertile, porous, light and deficient in mineral constituents. Laterite occurring in tropical regions may be derived from igneous, sedimentary and metamorphic rocks, e.g. granite, basalt, sand-stone, shale, schist and gneiss. Weathering leads to the washing away of silica, alkalies and lime etc., and the residue, which is mainly an admixture of iron and aluminium oxides, roughly in equal proportions, is known as laterite. While writing about the area Ahmed states that the chief defect of the laterite soil is its marked acid reaction. With the removal of acidity it can be rendered reproductive. Any rock containing some alumina and iron will be weathered into laterite (Ahmed, *ibid* : 67).

Thus thoroughly leached and devoid of potash, phosphorous lime, magnesia, nitrogenetic, the soil becomes unproductive. If however, laterite soils are mixed with clayey matter derived from other rocks, they become productive. The generally red colour of laterite soils is due to a high percentage of iron oxides.

The high-level laterite, if found where it was formed originally, yields soils which are different from those derived from secondary or transported laterite. The former type consists of gravelly and porous soils; on hilly situations the connections containing iron pellets, while in lower situations the soil is clayey but red and infertile. Soils derived from secondary laterite are dark heavy loams and clays retaining sufficient moisture and are, therefore, more productive than the former.

Classes of Land

The agricultural holdings of the *plateau* area of Netarhat are mainly divided into two major classes viz. *don* (low wetland) and *tanr* (up dryland). The tribals produce rice in low land-*don* and coarse rice as well as *rabi* crops (crops which are harvested by January-February) are grown in *tanr* land. The *don* occupy the hollow intervening portions between the continuous ridges of uplands. Those lands which lie at the bottom of the depression are known as *garha*. The relative values of the lands almost entirely depend on their position. The best rice lands are those which lie at the bottom of the depression. These lands suffer less from the effects of drought than any other classes and they produce a finer type of rice. Although "excessive flooding of the fields is rather uncommon, yet these lands are more liable to inundation". The soils of the depressions and valleys derive their richness from the washings from above. "The detritus washed down from the uplands' and slope makes the soil of these areas relatively moist, and more clayey.

The lowlands or *dons* in the valleys and depressions may be divided into three classes as follows, according to their respective elevations :

(a) *Class I don* : The lands which are continually wet and can grow both the winter rice-crop and also a summer rice-crop if the cultivators wish to have a double-cropping of rice. These lowest *don* lands at bottom of the depressions between the ridges are called *garha loyong*.

(b) *Class II don* : These lands can also be used, if needed, for growing winter rice to be harvested sometime in in November-December. These are terraces found at the middle elevation.

(c) *Class III don* : The don lands of this class known as *Choura don* land are comparatively less productive and situated further up the sides of the slopes and immediately below the *tanr* lands.

If the don lands are made into compartments by raising ridges (*aar*), these are known as don or *loyong*, *keyaris* or simply *keyaris*.

The first two classes include the lowest fields, while the third form the upper terraces. For all practical purposes, however, the class which has been recorded as *don II* may be regarded as the first class rice land. *Garha loyong* lands, owing to the water and spring flowing over these or some stream-lets irrigating these, receive moisture throughout the year. Because these lands contain moisture all the time, a summer crop, rice or wheat, locally called *tewan* rice can be raised. Seeds are sown or transplanting is done in February and the crops are harvested in June-July.

Again the uplands may be classed into three different types, namely :

(a) *Class I tanr* : This land consists of somewhat more fertile upland fields lying in or near the villages. These comparatively narrower fertile belts, locally called *bari* or *bakhri* lands, receive considerable quantities of manures in the form of cow-dung and village refuses owing to their proximity to the homestead areas, and are therefore rich in organic substances. These lands are fenced well, in many instances by raising stone-walls (without masonry), and are cultivated each year to raise two to four varieties of crops. This class of *tanr* land includes, however, only a small fraction of the total cultivated area. Confined usually to narrow strips or sometimes even to wide blocks, this class of land encircling part of the settlement or in the midst of it, is actually an

extension of the homestead areas. This constantly manured multiple-cropped area is used by the tribes to raise two of their valuable cash-crops, namely, *surguja*, mustard etc. which have a distinct place in tribal economy but have very little consumption value for them.

(b) *Class II tanr* : The lands which are more remote from the village sites comprise this class of lands. These lands are comparatively level and somewhat free from stones. These have some capacity to retain moisture. But as the soil here is void of humus content, it can maintain its fertility only through regular manuring.

(c) *Class III tanr* : The lands which are usually remote from the village sites constitute this class of upland. These are rather slopy and very stony and have very little depth of soil and little or no capacity to retain moisture. These are useless for cultivation and cultivated only once in several years-being allowed to lie fallow all the years for regeneration of some fertility by the natural growth of weeds and grass serving the purpose of green manure.

Agricultural Operations

(a) *Selection of field to be cultivated in a particular year*

As stated before, after three years of regular cultivation the class II and III *tanr* lands become totally unproductive and impoverished. In order that some fertility may be regenerate in the lands by the growth of some type of natural vegetation etc., these lands (class II and class III *tanr* land) are then left as current fallow lands for a couple of years. Depending on the quantity of land the owner of such land possesses, the fallow land may again be brought under cultivation after the lapse of some years, usually 3 to 8 years, and cultivated for another period of 2 to 3 years. This may be termed as some type of shifting cultivation or rather a variation of it and is locally termed *palla*. It is a shifting cultivation through plough cultivation method in a restricted sense.

The practice of keeping large acreage of these holdings as current fallow by rotation to recoup fertility could have been stopped, had it been possible to make extensive use of chemical fertilizers in these lands. The Asur cultivators remember well which upland¹ area is to be kept fallow in a particular year. This decision is taken just after the last seasons harvest when the poor yield is sometimes not at all harvested and left to be trampled and eaten by cattle. The decision of leaving out agricultural lands from cultivation is taken always at the family level and usually by the head of the family, or by an elder son in consultation with the father.

(b) *Ploughing*

It does not require much fore-thought for leaving out a particular patch of upland and selecting another one for cultivation. In the context of the agricultural operations, the first of this series of processes has not much importance. For a family as well as for the whole village, the ploughing marks the beginning of the busy agricultural season as it is an almost full-time work and is done all the year round, excepting two severe cold months i.e. December and January and during the months the crops are in the fields. Most grains, including dry rice or *gora* are grown in the uplands between June and December, the reason being that neither the paddy fields earmarked for *gora* cultivation, nor ordinary fields lend themselves to cultivation until the rainy season begins. Serious and systematic ploughing is therefore undertaken from the month of April-May after the celebration of the *Sarhul* festival. No ritualistic performance is undertaken on the eve of the first ploughing. The present day people do not remember anything about the ritualistic observances at the time of cutting and clearing of new tracts of forests

1. Upland is used to mean only the class II and III *tanr* lands. The class I *tanr* land is always referred to as *bakhri* land.

when they were shifting cultivators, even if there had been any, due mainly to the introduction of settled and plough cultivation.

Plough or *hal* is considered as an unit of land which represents, according to the 'Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in the District of Ranchi 1902-1910 (Patna : 1926)', the acreage that a single household can conveniently cultivate. In a few places in Chainpur and Bishunpur where the majority of the population is located, the cleared spaces on the top of the hills, locally known as *pat* are measured in *hals*. These areas are mostly cultivated by Asurs and Bhuinhars, who pay rent according to the number of ploughs which they have. Thus a *hal* of land is the area cultivated by one plough (Ibid, heading No. 215).

The average farmer reluctantly settles on a pair of bullocks stunted in growth (and sometimes on a pair of buffaloes although the number of draught animals is not negligible). Sometimes they also use for traction the cows and female water-buffallow which are not needed for milk production. However, the people who use the females of such animals are hesitant to disclose this fact to the outsiders.

The yoke (*juat*) is laid across the necks of a pair of bullocks, which should be of approximately equal height for convenience during tilling. The *juat* is a flat piece of wood, carved into designs. To keep the animals in position and to provide a means of fastening the rope (*mundaris*) running around their necks, the wooden pegs are inserted into the yoke.

A pole (*harsa*) attached to the plough is tied to the centre of the yoke. The plough share (*thothora*), moves exactly parallel to the ground and the plough share is provided with an iron plough-shoe (*pal*).

The posterior portion of the plough-share is raised to enable the iron-tip to go deeper into the soil from time to

time. The plough with its narrow and straight iron-shoe does not go as deep into the soil as to effectively turn the soil, but makes a continuous channel in it some three to five inches deep. With one hand the plough is handled while the other hand is engaged in driving the animals on.

With their bullocks, the ploughmen leave their house early in the morning. Ploughing is done upto about 11 a.m. when the cultivators return to their homes and take their meals. The plough and yokes are left in the fields to resume ploughing next morning. Only when different plots of lands which lie elsewhere are to be tilled, the plough and yoke are brought home. Ploughing is rarely done in the afternoon and in rare cases when it is done, it is restricted to the bakhri lands. Those who use bullocks for traction, always use them in pairs. Buffaloes are not used singly. The same plot of land will be ploughed by 2-4 ploughs simultaneously. Rarely if ever a plot of land will be tilled by a single plough at any one time.

There is every chance of much land left out unfurrowed if a single plough is used for tilling, as the plough-shoe is very narrow in shape.

In the plateau of Netarhat it has been witnessed that on the basis of mutual obligation and reciprocity, there are some arrangements for co-operative labour. In cases of mutual help forthcoming from the neighbours in a village, a family which has no male member to do the ploughing owing to death, illness, absence or such other cause, some members from neighbouring families do the ploughing for the family in distress. Besides such help on an inter-family level, a cultivator having only one bullock may be provided with another by a family having one extra. A person who borrows the animal ploughs his land continuously for eight days and on the ninth day as a gesture of goodwill, obligation and reciprocity he ploughs his benefactors land. Locally this help is known as *pasri*.

A person having no bullocks and no plough of his own

may cultivate his land by borrowing these two from another but this is a different type of *pasri*. With the borrowed plough and animals he ploughs the land of the owner for five or six days in a week and in return the owner of them will, with all the ploughs in his possession, till the lands of the borrower once or twice a week. This arrangement works for the entire period that the cattle are taken on loan. In such type of mutual help on an inter-family level, entertainment is not much obligatory. This borrowing of others' ploughs and draft animals has however some obvious disadvantages. As both ploughs and animals are limited in number, even if lands could ultimately be cultivated, it is not always done at the earliest and most suitable period. Sometimes it happens that the borrower can only get the plough when the work of the owner is completely done.

There are instances when a needy family is helped in various stages of agricultural operation like ploughing, transplanting and harvesting etc. by the village people, with or without a direct appeal from the family in distress. The villagers do not demand any remuneration for this because such help may be necessary for all sometime or the other. Everybody is however pleased when he or she is entertained with rice-beer, however meagre the quantity be, in recognition of the labour he or she has put in. In some other type of such cooperation, a family may seek the help of members of other families in various stages of cultivation, in order to expedite the works for some reasons or other, such as, say, to finish the harvest within a short time so as to save the crops from threatening rain, or to finish transplanting of seedlings at the right time. In recognition of such help, the helpers are treated to rice-beer and sometimes entertained even with meals.

(c) *Harrowing of land*

More than once, each plot of land is ploughed. The winter-hardened clods of earth are broken and by means of a harrow

(*pata*) the grounds are levelled to some extent. The harrow as devised by themselves simply consists of a forked branch of a tree with a long and flat transverse piece attached to the two forked ends. This somewhat triangular frame of wood for smoothening the ploughed land is made to be drawn by bullocks or buffaloes, and the operator stands over it at the time of operation to add the required weight for effective pulverisation. *Bakhri* lands where multiple crops are raised are harrowed before the raising of the maize crops. The lands are ploughed once again, after the maize is harvested. The ploughed land is not harrowed with care, so that the big clods of earth remain there. On these uneven fields *surguja* and mustard seeds are sown broadcast.

(d) *Manuring*

Adjacent to each settlement of the plateau area lie the *bakhri* lands. In the *bakhri* lands the people throw cow-dung as well as the waste of other animals. Wastes are dumped by each household in a particular place each day month after month. Other organic matters and household wastes are also thrown into the dung pit (*gobar-garha*). As the *bakhri* lands are near at hand, the cultivators can transfer the manure to these without much effort. Moreover as these are adequately fenced, the cultivators can concentrate their agricultural effort on these manure-rich lands, and utilize them for raising one of their best and most substantial crops such as maize and also two of their cash-crops.

Many families are left with only a little stock of manure to be supplied to the upland cultivated areas and also to the low-lying areas, after a plentiful supply of such manure to the *bakhri* lands. Whatever amount is left is carried to and utilized in the nearby upland areas. *Don* are rarely manured as they always retain some amount of fertility and also receive a good amount of water, it may be though rainwater collected in the *Keyaris* or through irrigation from nearby sources of water. Moreover the stalks of paddy

left out from the last harvest not in the water and enrich the soil through decomposition. Among the villages studied by us use of chemical fertilizers was seen to be very limited. Over and above their own ignorance about the method of use and quantity to be used, another factor which hinders the application of fertilizers is that the same are to be purchased and the tribal cultivators are not in a position to make such purchases.

In different places of the *bakhri* lands the maize plants are dumped after the harvest. Sometimes the maize plants are also propped against trees in irregular stacks and they are usually scattered in the fields so as to rot, and in some instances burnt just before the sowing seasons. The ashes or the organic matters then provide added nourishment to the soil already replenished by a rich supply of cow-dung. The harvested plants of *surguja*, *gondli*, *marua*, etc. are sometimes spread in the fields so as to rot during the course of several months, before the next plantation of crops is on, and these by then turn into useful manures.

(e) *Sowing (ropa)*

During the busy agricultural season sowing is undertaken at various times for the variety of crops cultivated; ritualistic observances accompany these operations. Sowing is of two types: the sowing of seeds in the dry and dusty upland fields is known as *buna*, whereas sowing in the mud in the low land (*don*), area is known as *lewa*. In both these cases the seeds are sown broadcast. It is usual to cultivate the lowland where it is possible to turn the field muddy after the rains by transplanting seedlings, but once in three or four years planting is done in these fields also by sowing the seeds broadcast. Likewise, some suitable upland tracts of land are selected and prepared occasionally for transplantation of millet (*marua*) seedlings after heavy rains when it is possible to turn the tracts muddy. *Gora* paddy or upland rice is always raised by sowing the seeds broadcast. It is usual

while sowing seeds in mud to bring the seeds to the point of germination by being soaked in water for about 20-24 hours.

A small seed-bed (*bira-bari*) is specially prepared where paddy (*basu*) seeds and *marua* seeds are sprouted and reared. They are carefully uprooted after some weeks when the plants have taken root and are fit for transfer. The soils of the other fields, lowland soil for paddy, and upland soil for *marua*, have, in the meanwhile, been prepared, and the uprooted seedlings are taken there and laboriously transplanted into them.

Sowing operations naturally involve the procurement of seeds, and it creates rather a problem for most of the tribal families. All the families, however, immediately after the harvests, whatever poor yield they may get, store separately a quantity of grains as seeds. Bunches of maize ears are preserved by hanging from the roofs above the hearths. But as their supplies of food continue to dwindle, the grains stored as seeds are gradually used up for consumption. The grain-golas at Sakhuapani and Jobhitoli villages cater to the needs of almost all needy villagers, but the economic plight of the latter is such during the months of scarcity that grains borrowed from grain-golas as seeds are quickly exhausted as the cultivators are left with nothing except these to fall back on. Due to these obvious reasons, and due to their incapability of purchasing potato-seeds, the cultivators cannot engage themselves in the most productive and profitable enterprise of potato raising. Sometimes potato (*ahua*) seeds supplied free or at a nominal price through government agencies are received late and then instead of being planted, these are put to use as instant food-items. Another draw-back of receiving borrowed seeds, such as paddy late is that the cultivators in that case have no time left for growing the seeds in separate plots and transplanting them. In such cases, where transplantation would have yielded a comparatively larger quantity of crops, the seeds are simply sown broadcast in *don* lands, thus minimising the

yield. The maize (*jinhor*) seeds are the first to be sown in the beginning of the agricultural season. In June these are sown broadcast in the rich manured and well protected *bakhris* just about the time rain starts to pour. Paddy seeds also sprout in the seed beds by this time. There are two varieties of *marua* millet. One is the earlier variety known as the *bhadoiya darnur/dandur*, and the other late variety, known as *aghanoa darnur*. Two different species are recognised in each case, namely, *laphra* and *khopa*. The earlier variety is sown in late June while the later variety in late July.

The *soh* or *bhukha gurli* and *serali gurli* are the two varieties of *gondli* (*gurli*) which are recognized by the local people. All *soh gurli* species are early varieties while the *serali gurlis* belong to late variety. The earlier variety is sown in late April or early May and the late variety in late June.

As the cultivator is totally dependent on the monsoon for carrying on his agricultural works, he is subjected to several constant hazards due mainly to the characteristically variable rainfall. If the rains do not come in time, the possibility of a luxurious maize harvest is threatened, for although the sowing can be completed before the advent of the rains, the saplings need water for their nourishment and growth. So, for such summer crops as maize, rains must come early enough. To take the opposite calamity, if the rains do not continue late into autumn i.e. till November, and end abruptly at the end of summer, the winter crops such as *gora*, low land paddy and millets (specially *marua*) are threatened to a great extent, as excepting the low land areas all the other lands will suffer from deficiency of water. Finally, if the rains come too fast and furiously at any one time in the season, there is the danger of flooding in some areas and the washing away and destruction of crops in upland areas. The cultivators cannot, however, always expect such a 'perfect' monsoon season in which the rains come soon enough, stay long enough, and fall with even

regularity. Such a season is rather the exception, not the norm (Bertocci, 1974 : 96).

Sometimes during mid-May, as soon as the first rains begin to come down, maize seeds are sown broadcast. At the first onset of rain (during early or mid-May), potato seeds are also planted. The tribals cultivate only the *barsati* variety or the variety which take only about 60-70 days to mature. *Gora* paddy is sown broadcast during late April or early May. In late June or July, paddy seedlings are transplanted in the *don* areas. *Urid dal* seeds are sown in some *tanr* lands in the July or early August. So are seeds of *Kurthi dal* (horse grains). Sweet potato creepers are planted by this time. After the harvest of maize, the *bakhri* lands are ploughed and harrowed but not effectively. *Surguja* (*jatangi*) seeds are sown broadcast in late August. Mustard (*man*) seeds are also planted the same time or in early September in nearby tracts. Barley (*jo*) seeds are sown in the months of late September or early October in suitable upland areas nearer the settlement areas. Sowing of wheat may take place in irrigable plots of *tanr* lands during this month. If some *don* areas lie fallow during this period due to want of seeds or *bira*, these tracts may be utilized for cultivation of wheat which will mature and ripen early.

In some kitchen-gardens (*kulki*), the villagers raise some varieties of common vegetables on a small scale. These gardens are simply small plots of land, attached to the homestead area or adjacent to it, and adequately fenced with light twigs placed vertically and tied to upright posts so close together as to prevent the entry of chickens and pigs. The villagers who possess *kulkis*, however, raise such vegetables, although in very negligible quantities, such as sweet gourd (*kohra*), gourd (*tumba*), ladies finger (*bheroa*), jhingi, cucumber (*bodela*), tahar, chilli (*marsi*), brinjal (*bhata*), french bean (*malhan*). Whether there is a *kulki* or not, in almost all the villager' houses one can notice the gourd plant.

grown at the backyard or sometimes a papaya tree (papita) in some corners.

The cultivators are disencumbered of a major worry once the seeds are sown in the prepared fields and seedlings transplanted in irrigable lands. The cultivators have nothing to do except to wait and see how the crops fare in the next few months. Although a major load is off their head, their spirit is at a low ebb during this period because the general scarcity prevailing during the time almost bring them to the brink of disaster. Their first crop, maize, will have been harvested only in mid or late July or even a few days later. Whereas under more favourable conditions the cultivators could have tended the crops more seriously and attentively by supplying water, or by weeding etc. at the initial stages when the crops need attention most, the cultivators themselves or other members who could contribute a lot towards a proper growth of the crops, remain busy during this period in gleaning from the forests, or otherwise making a living some how. Over and above the unpredictable and unstable productivity of the soil, other factors also raise their ugly heads as the plants grow and begin to flower and bear fruits. Vagaries of nature are always there. There may be a drought, or less and insufficient rain, or too much rain, each of which is injurious to plants. The prosperity of the crops depend to a great extent on the seasonal distribution of the rainfall month by month than on its actual amount during the whole year. To some of these natural vagaries and to these of what they consider the supernatural beings the tribals have no answer.

One of such natural vagaries is the attack by several types of insects and pests. Instead of doing something to counteract the attack most of the cultivators leave it to fate and propitiate some spirits to save the crops. Insects like *nandna pillu*, *kira pillu*, *banki pillu*, *larka pillu* and *gandhi* take their toll on a large scale.

Maize plants which have borne fruit, attract bears (*dhali*)

and when the dense forests are near the villages as in the recent past, destroy crops ready for harvesting. The people reported to us that the bears are not afraid of arrows and even if arrows hit their targets, these do not seem affect the bears much. They continue eating and only when their appetite is full, they leave the fields. Some of the people construct field-huts to keep watch over the ruinous wild animals. To tide over these crisis, the people from time to time invoke 'supernatural' assistance. Sympathy from and protection through the spirits in this critical period are secured through religious rituals and magical means.

The tanr lands which are situated at some distance from the village settlement fall easy victims for such marauding animals as bears and wild boars, as these lands are unfenced and remain unprotected at night.

(f) *Weeding* : Over and above the half-starved condition of the cultivators, the large tracts of land brought under cultivation almost at a time also pose a problem and hamper organised attendance. In spite of all this the cultivator knowing fully well that weeds are harmful and that their presence would further damage the meagre produce, makes an effort to weed out the harmful grasses, creepers etc. growing along with the crops. As the process of weeding by hand is laborious, and monotonous, naturally he has to exert and engage himself in this process much against his will. It always results therefore in some concerted effort, in the agreeable company of cultivators having fields near his. Only in this way he is able to take help from his relatives or co-villagers as everybody has his own field to attend to.

The weeds do a great damage specially to the two types of millet. As weeding is required for more than once during the rainy season, the cultivators cannot cope with their excessive growth, and dejected, leave everything to destiny.

(g) *Harvesting* : Harvesting operations are undertaken as soon as the crops mature and ripen. Reaping of maize

ears is done earliest in point of time. Paddy and all other cereal crops are harvested with sickles (*datrom*). The curved and serrated iron-blade is purchased from the market and a wooden handle (*danum*) is fitted to it. Harvesting of maize is followed by the celebration of *Raj Karma* festival in September.

During the days of scarcity a variety of paddy known as *pasra* means a lot to the needy villagers. It grows on its own in the *don* areas from the seeds which had dropped in the fields during the last harvest. These grow along with the cultivated paddy rather as 'weeds'. They ripen a few days earlier than the planted variety. If these are not harvested as soon as they mature and ripen the seeds fall down to germinate next year. In order that they may be collected before they fall on the ground, women and girls pluck the ears of the paddy from the stalks by hand and go on collecting them in bamboo baskets.

This variety which has a more luxuriant growth can easily be distinguished from the cultivated one by its black-coloured coating and the long pedicels. When stocks of maize and upland paddy are almost exhausted, gondli, still unripe, and paddy too still not ready for harvesting, several kilograms of this *pasra* paddy during such time proves to be a boon to the needy ones. As in the case of other varieties of paddy, the grains are first boiled, then spread in the sun and then husked. The different crops with their usual periods of harvest are given in the table (by 'usual' period is meant the period in which crops, sowing of which was done in the right time, come to mature and ripen and the harvesting is generally undertaken by most villagers).

Table 44

Sl. No.	Crops/Cereals	Land where grown	Sown during	Period of Harvest
1.	<i>Jinhor</i> (maize)	bakhri	pre or early rains	last July-August
2.	rainy-season potato	tanr II	early rains	September
3.	<i>Marua</i> (millet, early variety)	tanr II	mid-rains	late September
4.	<i>Gondli</i> (early)	tanr II	mid-rains	early September
5.	<i>Marua</i> (late)	tanr II	mid-rains	early November
6.	<i>Gondli</i> (late)	tanr II	mid-rains	late October/November
7.	<i>Pasra</i> paddy	tanr II	—	late October
8.	a. <i>Urad dal</i>	tanr II	mid-rains	late October
	b. <i>Kurthi</i>	tanr II	early rains	late October
9.	<i>Gora</i> paddy	tanr II	mid-rains	late October
10.	<i>Surguja</i>	tanr II & bakhri	late rains	December
11.	<i>Don</i> paddy	don	mid-rains	late November/early December
12.	<i>Sarso</i> (mustard)	bakhri	late rains	late December/early January
13.	a. Wheat	tanr II	late rains	February/early March
	b. Barley (jo)	and bakhri		
14.	Sweet Potato	tanr II	mid-rains	late October
15.	<i>Masur</i>	tanr II	late rains	January
16.	<i>Rahar</i>	tanr II	early rains	late November/December
17.	<i>Lautni</i> * <i>chatka</i>	bakhri	early winter	late December/January

* *Lautni* is a brown-coloured oil-seed of the size of mustard seeds.

(h) *Threshing* : Threshing platforms (*kolom*) are specially prepared in suitable places in one's own upland cultivated

areas where all the crops which need a threshing to sever the seeds from their stalks and ears, are threshed. The platforms are prepared by individual families nearer to their cultivated fields, so that the crops harvested would not have to be carried a very great distance for threshing. Trouble arises when a family owns lands scattered far apart from one another. In that case such a site is chosen which lies central, as far as practicable to most of these fields; sometimes *koloms* are shared between two or more families under mutual agreement. The *kolom* is prepared by clearing a plot of land (a square area approximately 20' x 20' in size) from grasses and cleaning and levelling it with hoe (*kuddi*) and broom. It is then given a liberal painting with a paste of cowdung mixed with water. It is done in order to smother the dust in the cleaned area. This application of paste may be repeated more than once at an interval of 2-3 days before the yard is ready to be used. In the course of the threshing period it may be given several more coatings of cowdung paste in order to make it foot-proof from dust.

A family level festival is observed in order to propitiate the spirit residing in the *kolom* by offering nominal sacrifices, before any threshing operation is undertaken.

Reaping the harvest is woman's work, but men also share the work equally. Work-parties of women and girls go together cutting grain with sickles. The harvested crops are carried to the threshing floors always by men with the help of *koilis* suspended from two ends of a long carrying pole (*bahinga*) carried on shoulder. The straws of corns are placed cross-wise on the ropes and spread on the ground. These ropes connect the two U-shaped wooden pieces. Both the U-shaped pieces are then brought together, so that one end of the *bahinga* can be introduced below them. The other end of the *bahinga* is likewise placed below another pair of U-shaped pieces, so that the weight of the straws is equally balanced. One end of such a *bahinga* is always fitted with a stout iron-tip (*shambi*) so that it can be planted on the earth

with a thrust. The straws are then stacked against the pole and tied around securely by a rope already spread on the ground. When a rope (*pagha*) only is used to fasten together the straws without the U-shaped *koili*, the tips of the *bahinga* are made to pierce into each stack of straws.

The sheaves of grain are scattered over the floor in a thick mass and bullocks are driven around and around to thresh the seeds from the stalks. After an hour or so of such treading, threshing is completed. A number of bullocks ranging from 2-9 is used at a time during the operation. Four or five of these animals are tied together by single main rope (*majha*) with an arrangement of a set of ropes (*juri*) each put around the neck of an animal. From time to time the sheaves are lifted, turned over and scattered by means of a pitch for (*akhain*). The driving of these animals and the pitching of the hay are men's work.

Small quantities of crops are threshed in a field itself by trampling with feet. A mat (*chatai*) is spread on the ground and bunches of crops are placed on it.

Marua is threshed by beating vigorously with a long wooden pole. Mustard and *Jatengi* are also threshed in this manner.

The threshing grains are collected in bamboo baskets (*dhaki*) of various sizes, their tiny holes filled by cowdung paste and carried by women on their heads, or by men with the help of balances (*sikuar*), and a pole (*marar*). The balances are made of rope-work, each rope is called *doir* and the *dhaki* is placed inside the rope-work.

(i) *Winnowing*: After driving the animals for house on for the necessary trampling, the men again get to work at the arduous task of winnowing, which is 'initiated by pitching and tossing the threshing mixture, repeatedly into the air with pitchforks'. The hay is then stacked at a place nearby. Winnowing fans (*hata*) are filled with grains and these are held high above the heads and by a rhythmic to-and-fro motion these are allowed to fall on the ground. Most of the

chaff is blown away in the process in the breeze (as during this period a wind usually blows) and heavier grain kernels get collected in a pile. The chaff and straw are saved as animal fodder.

The work with the grains are then taken over and continued by the women. They do some further cleaning and collect these in carrying baskets to be taken home and stores.

It is usually in the threshing floor itself that the apportionment of harvested grains takes place. The cultivators who worked on *sajha* or *adh-batai* basis will take their shares apart. The person who applied the seeds and manure (he usually the person owning the plough and draft animals) will first take out the quantity of seeds used in cultivation and also some quantity towards the cost of the manure used. The remainder will then be divided into two equal shares, each party taking one half. The plough and cattle, owner, may, on compassionate grounds, give away a further small quantity of grains to the other person from his own share. The 3 : 2 distribution system (major share going to the landless partner) between the two parties, one landless and the other landowning, does not apply in all cases but this is the general rule. In all cases, however kindness and neighbourly feelings prevail and the landless and cattleless tiller is not exploited or made to suffer by the other party. The straw to be used as animal fodder is also equally shared.

According to the villagers of Sakhuapani no 3 : 2 system of distribution exists and in every case 50 : 50 apportionment is practised, the party providing seeds, however, is entitled to take a part of his contribution first.

Sometimes the *Sajhi* system of cultivation leads to internal conflicts between the persons entering into the agreement. In the majority of such cases the trouble is started by the person who is landless and cultivates another person's land with his own plough and cattle. The landless cultivators using his own seeds for cultivation, may sometimes altogether deny to share the produce with the owner

of the cultivated land. If the land-owner is not present at the time of threshing of grains, which may not always be possible, the cultivator may say that the produce is so meagre that it is not worth apportionment, or that there is nothing left for distribution after the amount of seeds sown in the fields is taken apart. Such a case of deceitful apportionment was reported from Sakhuapani when a landless cultivator entering into a partnership with another having land on a crop-sharing basis refused equal sharing of the crops harvested. Some other cases of 5 : 1 or 5 : 2 distribution (major share going to the person cultivating the other's land) instead of the usual 50 : 50 distribution are reported from other villages.

Further apportionment of grains takes place at home. The cultivator measures out a quantity of grains and carefully stores them in vessels (*mora*) made with paddy straw (*busu*) for use as seeds in the next year. He measures out a substantial portion for repayment of grains borrowed from grain-*gola* and also the amounts due to others. *Surguja* and mustard which have little value among the tribes as consumer items of food, are in most cases, sold immediately after harvest, before a rise in the price index. Because of their hurry in disposing of these grains, these do not fetch a good price in the market. Payments of land revenue, and interests and also the repayment of previous loans are, however, made from this cash earning. Cleaned grains are stored in the dwelling house itself in bamboo baskets varying in size and number. From a *bhauka* (big bamboo basket) or *potong* (big leaf-vessel) to a *dhaki* all sort of big and small baskets and storage vessels are used. Usually some dark corners of the kitchen (*rasoa ora*) are used for keeping these baskets. Maize ears are hung from the ceilings after baring open the seeds by removing the scales. Several corns are tied together by means of the split scales. If the supply lasts more than 2 months, the corns are spread in the sun once or twice monthly.

Wooden platforms (*macha*) for storing paddy straws

(*busu*) are constructed usually in the *bakhris*, near the *koloms*, at a height of 6' to 7'. After threshing of paddy the straws are stacked there for future use as fodder for the cattle. When the stock will be exhausted gourd seeds are planted below the structures so that the creepers can have a nice support to climb up and spread their arms.

Once the grains are inside the house, it is now the almost exclusive duty of the womenfolk, with the technology at their command, to transform these into food items. Their tools include the husking lever (*dhengki*), the grinding wheels (*jantha*), the grinding slab and rod (*siluoit*), winnowing fan (*hata*) and an assortment of cooking vessels ranging from earthen-ware vessels to those made of aluminium.

The first crops are always taken by individual families by offering something in the name of *dhartimai* and *bhagwan*. Deceased ancestors are remembered before partaking of the first food crops and cereals. Whenever possible these are also shared with relatives and neighbours.

Cattle wealth

S. C. Roy (1915 : 70) wrote about Chotanagpur cattle that "they were a very poor breed and the cows and she-buffaloes yielded a very small quantity of milk". The same is applicable even now to the cattle possessed by the plateau people. The cows and bullocks are medium sized, weak and ill-fed. The cattle among the plateau people is not distributed equally among the families.

Milk Production : Milk production in relation to the cow is a minor aspect of the cow's contribution to the eco-system. The plateau people in the past abhorred drinking milk. They had also an idea that the cow's milk is meant only for the calf. The new trait of milking has entered into their culture only recently. Even now the adults do not prefer milk, but notwithstanding such abhorrence for milk the children are now given milk. Most of them who milk cows are how-

ever not experts in the art of milking. A number of milk-yielding cows are let go without milking because they do not remain steady at the time of milking. Cows are meant not for their milk, but for calves, which, when grown up into bullocks, may be used in cultivation. The cows contribute to the plateau people's material culture in more important ways than milk production.

Traction : Harris (1966 : 52) said that "the principal positive ecological effect of India's bovine cattle is in their contribution to production of grain crops. Some form of animal traction is required to initiate the agricultural cycle, dependent upon ploughing in both rainfall and irrigation areas. Additional traction for hauling is provided by animals, but by far their most critical kinetic contribution is ploughing". Under the existing land tenure patterns of the people having land but no bullocks get their lands tilled by bullocks borrowed from one who can spare. For this he is to plough the land of the owner once a week. Or one without bullocks may allow another to till and cultivate one's land for half share of the crops. Bullocks cannot be, however, shared between individual and adjacent households simply because of the fact that in this area, the agricultural season is dependent on the monsoon. Although ploughing is carried out throughout the year, barring a couple of months during winter, yet the pace of work gets intensified in conformity with the seasonal conditions.

The plight of cultivators is such that those having only one bullock and lacking the means to purchase another, employ one of their cows (if available) as a draught animal. This practice of employing a cow to draw a plough, though it sounds odd (and though the persons practising it felt a bit embarrassed to divulge it to an outsider), is not unparalleled.

Poverty among the people, is the sole reason why even the cow could not be spared from hauling the plough. The cow is used in ploughing as one of the pair. No two cows,

as a general rule, are yoked to the plough simultaneously. When buffaloes are used for traction, they are always used in pairs. But buffalo-traction is limited in occurrence.

Dung : Cattle dung provides the principal source of manure to cultivators. The dung is collected each morning and deposited in a particular place meant for it. From here in due course the dung is carried to the fields. Garbage is also thrown here and a rich compost is produced after a few months. Manuring is of vital importance to the infertile lands, but the people do not try to collect the dung wasted in the hill-sides or in rejected lands where the cattle graze. Since animal droppings are so important for enriching the soil, the families owning more cattle are decidedly better off. People with less number of cattle or no cattle at all, are seen collecting animal droppings here and there.

Pasture : Waste lands are ear-marked as grazing lands for the cattle. There are huge quantities of fallow areas where cultivation is not done for 3 to 4 years. Grasses are abundant here, though not luxurious. The cattle graze also in the jungle areas. Moreover, when the harvest is over, the cattle are allowed to graze in the agricultural fields. The cattle are never fed in stalls, except ritually on one occasion in the year (on the day of the Sohrai festival). Except two or three dry months towards the end of winter, the cattle get a more or less plentiful supply of grass. In the evening when they are brought back to the village, all seem to be well-fed. When grasses wither during the dry months, they are given fodder of paddy straw, stocked in wooden platforms after the harvest. Whatever attention is paid to the cattle, is also paid to the male stock used for ploughing showing a general neglect towards the cow or the female calf.

The cow, bullock or buffalo, are economic assets. At the time of need, cows are sold. Cattle are sometimes taken to the weekly market at Adar, at a distance of about 24 kms. from Sakhuapani village, for sale. Sometimes prospective

buyers come to the village itself and purchase cattle at a lower price, to sell in the weekly market with a small margin of profit. Male calves are usually not sold.

As the agricultural lands, whether *tanr* or *don* (except *bakhri*) are not fenced, the cattle always graze under somebody's supervision which involves driving them to and fro and for guarding them. Same is the case with goats. Cattle sometimes get lost in the jungle. Cow bells (*tharki*) made of wood, and also sheet-iron bells are put around the necks of most cows and bullocks in order to locate them when lost. As sufficient care is taken in guarding the animals, there rarely become an occasion of village quarrels through straying into someone's cultivated land to feed on the standing crops.

Keeping cattle is no problem as these demand no attention from the owners except in cases of diseases. Generally the children of the age-group of 10-12 are given the charge of tending the cattle. Those who can afford keep *dhangars* (servants) for tending cattle. The cattle are taken out for grazing early in the morning and brought back at 10.30 or 11 a.m. The cattle-tender takes his meal at home and after taking rest for some time take the cattle back to graze until sunset, when they are finally brought back and tethered, in most cases in the open, because only a few families have permanent cow-sheds or stalls.

Although expert appraisers opine that 'one large animal is a more efficient dung, milk and traction machine than 2 small ones, in the context of the habitat of the plateau men, the under sized cattle are better suited to the atrocious conditions they experience during some particular years. This breed seems to be best adapted to the people's eco-system to the 'regular seasonal crises of water and forage and general year-round neglect'. Moreover, the place of cattle in the village economy cannot be understood as Swift (1957) remarked, unless it is realized that owing cattle itself is a favoured way of holding reserves.

Pigs and fowls are reared in almost all the households. They are generally used for sale at the time of necessity and are rarely used for consumption. When a household is without any pig, a female pig may be obtained by it from a neighbour or co-villager having many on the condition that the former will rear the pig but the progeny will be equally shared by both the owner and the rearer. Chickens are also used as sacrificial birds. Eggs are sold in the market. The goats are mainly reared for sale. These are always herded family-wise by some girl or woman in the nearby open areas.

If the subsidiary occupations such as collection of jungle produce, working as day-labourers, or on contract systems in the Bauxite quarries (*khadans*) or fishing and small game or bird hunting are taken into consideration, it is found that these along with agriculture, constitute an occupational complex, which is now the normal feature in every household. This seems to suggest value-orientation of the people towards self-sufficiency at the individual family level. No other occupation, not even smithy or carpentry, indicates specialization of function at the village level. Only one occupation which approaches somewhat towards specialization of function at village level is the art of tile making.

But ordinarily all the persons know these crafts and somehow manage their own specialised tasks themselves, but co-operation from neighbours is always forthcoming.

All the males above the age of 18 or so know the art of collecting and processing of *juru* bark and making of ropes used for various agricultural needs. By this time they also become expert in collecting *juru* leaves and sewing these into storage vessels, rain-coats etc. Girls above the age of 10 or so are likewise adroit in weaving mats from *khajur* leaves. Naturally, those of an younger age-group are not skilful in these crafts, but still some elderly persons are known for their superior skill and deftness of hand.

Forestry and Tribal Economy

The tribals of the plateau region depend upon forests for food, shelter, employment and trade.

Food : Although they live on agricultural produce like rice, cereals, millets, they supplement their diet by varieties of wild tubers, roots, fruits and berries, edible flowers and honey. Fruits such as *Mahua*, *Chironjee*, *Bel*, *Shitafal*, *Kend*, etc. found in forests are relished by the tribal people. An additional source of food supply comes from wild game and fish. The tribal people have a right to collect fruits and flowers free of cost. They consume these items partly and the rest sell in the local market.

Employment : For employment, tribal people are largely dependent on forestry operations such as logging, afforestation, road and building constructions, collection of minor forest produce and forest-based industries. Forestry operations are essentially labour-intensive and provide job opportunities to unskilled and illiterate labour at their very door step. Not only this, operations such as collection of *Kendu* (*Biri*) leaves, Sal seeds, and large varieties of minor forest produce provide employment to men, women and children during the lean months of April, May and June. It is estimated that nearly 2.5 crore of rupees is paid annually on wages by the Forest department on collection of Kendu leaves and Sal seeds alone.

Trade : Most of the fruits, flowers and tubers which the tribals collect free of cost from forests are consumed by them partly and the rest is sold in the local market. This adds to their income. They also collect fire-wood, leaves (for *pattal* and *donas*) and twigs (for *datwan*) free of cost and sell them in the local market.

In addition, lac cultivation and *tasar* culture are the two important trades with which the tribal people are wholly linked-up traditionally.

Forest

In India forests and tribals are inseparable. They are linked up with each other culturally and traditionally. Forests play important roles in many spheres of the life of the tribals. In spite of the large scale cutting of the forests through different agencies, the tribals even to-day thrives in the lap of nature. According to our information, the entire Netarhat plateau, comprising of numerous ravines, hillocks and plateaus, was at one time a huge forest consisting mainly of *Sal* (*Shorea Robusta*) trees.

According to the District Gazetteers of Bihar and Orissa (1977 : 125), McPherson and Mallet wrote that 'the long range of hills which runs north from Palkot to the borders of Palamu and forms the watershed between the North and South Koel, is generally covered with forests containing only *Sal* of very poor growth and shrubs such as *Woodfordia* and *Cleistanthus*'.

In various stages of agricultural operations, the trees were most recklessly felled. Simply to make a plough or even to secure the honey secreted in its top, a large tree would be chopped down in its entirety. The worst form of waste however, was the indiscriminate cutting of *Sal* saplings to make fences all around the cultivated areas near the villages where depredations by domestic animals were most likely. The same practice was found to be still in vogue in a number of villages. To make an enclosure for a wedding or to construct a pandal for it, *Sal* saplings were found to be most handy.

The forests were, and in a restricted sense still are, the chief sources of alternative food for the people, once the crops have failed, or the produce of the fields exhausted. Besides being the alternative source of food, the forests provide medicines, raw materials, vegetables, fuel etc. for the villages, although the rights and concessions in the use of forests have been gradually curtailed. The dependence of

the plateau villagers on the forests, though eroded to a great extent, has not been fully lost. The importance of the forests on the plateau's economic life is still great and can be understood as follows :

(1) *The forest as a source of food*

All around the village and far into the forests, one can find useful fruit trees of different varieties,

Mango trees of local variety (*Mangifera indica*) are by far the most numerous. During the months of February/March one can see the mango trees all along the valleys and on the slopes in full blossom. During the summer months of May and June when the food supply dwindles, mangoes serve as secondary and supplementary food to the villagers. The collection of mangoes is done by young and old alike. The mango has however no important place as a cash fruit for sale in the market as even huge quantities of them usually fetch a nominal price.

Wood-apples (*Bel*, *Aegle Marmelos*) and Tamrind (*jojo*, *Tamarindus Indica*) are other useful varieties of fruit trees which abound in the villages and in the forests, and provide the people with edibles during the months of hunger.

Jack fruit trees (*kathal*, *Artocarpus integrifolia*) form another variety of important fruit trees. The fruits ripen, or when even green become edible, in the summer at the same time as mango and form a rich and useful supplementary food to the villagers of the plateau.

Jamun (*Jam*, *Eugenia jambolana*) comprise yet another variety of fruit trees for the village people.

The fruits of the trees just outside the village area or in the forests can be utilized by anybody and everybody. But fruit trees standing on the demarcated lands of some villagers cannot be used as such. Prior permission, which is readily accorded, is usually sought. In most cases, however, the owner of the trees generously distribute a quantity of fruits to his or her relatives and neighbours, if not to the whole

village. Trees outside the jungle, trees planted by a *raiyat* or his ancestors belong absolutely to the *raiyat*, if situated within the holding. The *raiyat* can take the timber, fruit, and other produce freely and without permission. Trees nurtured by *raiya*s, though not actually planted by them, are also governed by the same custom. Trees are seldom planted by *raiya*s outside their holdings. There may be some trees the fruits of which are enjoyed by all the villagers in common without any restriction. In the same way, the timber of trees belongs to the whole village community. Nobody has the right to cut the trees, but when they fell down in course of time, the whole body of villagers, has the right to take the timber.

Besides these fruit-trees which are utilized to the maximum, there are other varieties of important trees, barring the omnipresent *Sal* trees, which comprise the natural vegetation. These are the *Pipar* (*Ficus religiosa*), *semar* (*Bomba Malabaricum*), *Karan* (*Nuclea cordifolia*), *Bhelwa* (*Semicarpus anacardium*), *Karanj* (*Pongamia glabra*), *Kusum* (*Schlechera trijuga*), *Khajur* palm (*Phoenix acanlis*), *Datepalm* (*Phoenix sylvestris*), *Neem* (*Azadirachta Indica*), hog plum (*auran*), *Kend* (tril, *Diospyros melanoxylon*), and others, which are made use of by the people at various times.

Tar (Palm, *Borassus flabellifer*) and *Mahua* (*Bassia latifolia*) trees are not conspicuous in the plateau areas, nor are Bamboos (mud, *Bambussa* sp). *Mahua* trees are found in abundance in plain areas only far away from the villages and Bamboo trees are found in the dense forests and on the hill slopes. The *Mahua* trees which provides people with fruits (*duri*) and flowers (*maikam*) in areas where it is found in abundance has no economic importance. *Mahua* flowers which can be eaten in several ways do not find a regular place in the plateau people's dietary. Anybody who wishes to have them in the diet can procure them, however, from the forest or else from the market where it is sold very cheap.

Over and above these summer fruits which are used by

the villagers as food and in some cases, as a means of earning some cash however negligible, there are such fruits locally known as *peeyar* (*Buchanania latifolia*), *serka*, *gullar* or *lowa*, *porho* or *ghui*, *behra* (*Terminalia beberica*), *paer* or *pakri amrut* (Guava), which are available during different seasons of the year. These smaller varieties of food are mostly collected and eaten by the children tending cattle and goats in the forest areas. When these fruits ripen or become fit for consumption their joy knows no bound.

The tribals collect a large number of tubers and roots from the forests, as well as honey (*hurumus*) from the trees. During the crucial months the villagers are engaged in collecting leaves, tubers, mushrooms etc. to supplement their meagre diet available at home. One of these tubers known locally as *gethi kanda* is bitter to taste and needs some processing before it is considered fit for consumption. The hairy coat is removed and then the whole tuber is sliced into thin slices and left in the running waters of a stream for a day or two. The slices are then boiled for a considerably longer time to remove the bitterness and harmful elements.

Haser Kanda and *Sudgu Kanda* are two varieties of tubers having a hairy coat and are almost tasteless. These longish and big tubers are simply boiled and eaten. *Biraini Kanda* and *Pitharu/Daru* (*Dioscorea belophylla*) are two varieties of tubers which have a sweet taste. These are fit to be eaten after boiling. *Panialu* (*Dioscorea oppositifolia*) is another such variety.

There are a few varieties of tubers which are cultivated as regular crops and also procured through collecting. *Sakhin Kanda* is one such variety of big-sized tuber which can be eaten after boiling or can be made into curry by adding spices. *Sakar Kanda* (*Ipomoea batatas*) which occur in two varieties—red and white and *Kashiya Kanda* (*Dioscorea anguina*) are very sweet tubers and fit for use after boiling or in the raw state. Another tuber, *Aru Kanda*, a big sized tuber is made into curry or fried in oil.

Ratna Kanda and *getti* or *Bichka Kanda* (*Dioscorea bulbifera*) are roots of small sized taro, which are boiled and then tamarind added to them to neutralize the ill-effects of raphides and make them fit for consumption.

Varieties of leaves, flowers and vegetables are also collected in different seasons. These are *Sing-Sag* or *Koinar Sag*, *Munga Sag*, *Katai Sag*, *Phutkal*, *Kachnar* leaf (*Bauhinia tomentosa*), *Jirhul* flowers (Larger *Stroemia regina macrocarpa*) etc. Green Sarso (*man*) leaves form an important item of vegetable food during November-December.

Different spices of edible mushrooms (*ood*) are also recognised and are procured during the rainy season (June to August) through collecting techniques. These are washed and then fried on pans. Salt, or wherever possible, spices are added to taste. *Sarkilom ood* and *Utud ood* are two varieties which grown in uplands (*tanr*). Mud ood which is known as *Khukhri* in *Sadri*, grows on Bamboo. *Gai Bornda ood* (whitish in colour), *Sugabornda ood* (yellowish), *Patka ood* (whitish), *Rang rangi* (whitish), *Bilai ood* (brownish, big-sized) etc. grow in jungles and the villagers have a knack of distinguishing these from the poisonous varieties of mushrooms. To the *Rangrangi* variety, Tamarind is added during preparation because it is somewhat bitter in taste.

Besides these, the forests provide food, fodder, water, and shelter to their domesticated animals such as cattle and goats. It is fascinating to observe the large herds of cattle and goats driven away from, and back to the villages, by the cowherds and goat-tenders, in the morning, noon and dusk, a cloud of dust rising from the village streets from their hooves, and to hear the chorus of tinkling and jingling sounds emanating from the bells hanging from the necks of scores of these animals.

The forests play another role as the only source of providing herbal medicines to the village folk. Varieties of jungle roots, shoots, leaves and barks are collected by the recognized *deccais* or medicine-men, or by people who have some

knowledge about these. After the preparation of medicines from them, these are prescribed in different ailments. Native Pharmacology or Therapy in most cases brings about sure cure in minor ailments, such as fractures, wound, coughs and colds, stomach-ache, worms in the intestine, minor burns, insect bite etc. and enable the patients to undergo treatment within the village boundary. Cattle and other domesticated animals are also treated by the indigenous medicines.

The people also take to hunting and fishing whenever they find time to supplement their meagre food supply and to vary the monotony of their diet. These two methods of food-getting, along-with collecting, they have not yet totally forgotten. The forests around their villages formerly provided suitable settings for the abode of wild games. Nowadays due to the dwindling forest areas near the village sites, game animals are scarce nearby and can be hunted in thick jungle areas illegally far away from their homes as hunting is greatly restricted in reserved forests. Individual hunting of game animals is rarely, if ever attempted villagers do not possess modern fire-arms nor even a muzzle-loader. The technology for hunting still comprises the old but reliable bow (*aa*), arrow (*sar*), pellet-bow (*mud-gulail*), spear (*balom*), axe (*tanga/tangia/balua*) of various shapes and sizes, but the spoils of the chase are extremely poor, very much so when compared with what is said to have happened in the past.

The birds with the following local names are hunted and eaten. *Tinr Khain*, *Jhika*, *Chighuan*, *Chikra*, *Kowa* (crow), *Maina*, *Chuga*, *Panrki*, *Buru Seem* (wild chicken), *maraha* (peacock) etc. Young boys occasionally carry a catapult (*rubber-gulail*) with them to aim their pellets at the birds which sometimes hit their target.

(b) *Forest as a source of providing materials for shelter*

The houses of the tribals of the plateau area are sturdily built and provide comfortable shelter during the heavy rains and biting cold. The construction of such houses is made

possible as all the materials are available free of cost from the forests and the habitat. The person who wants to construct a house has therefore only to put in physical labour in order to extract the materials for the preparation of the house as well as the meagre household belongings. Bamboo, which is most essential material used in house construction by a large number of tribes elsewhere is not regarded by the plateau people as such, because one has to cover a long distance for procuring these. The walls of the house are made of mud and are topped with a frame-work of split timber, over which tiles (*khapras*) are placed. Doors are made of planks of wood, which gives easy manoeuvreability to the door.

The people's dependence on nature for supply of materials for construction of their houses is almost total. The forests play a direct role in providing the raw materials such as timber. Almost invariably Sal trees are utilized for these purposes as they are durable and easily procurable. Earth for walls, and tiles are also obtained from the locality.

(c) *Forest as a source of providing other important raw materials*

Raw materials for use in the manufacture of other items of daily necessity are also wrested from the forests where these abound. Ropes which are essential for various purposes, such as are used in *Juat* (yoke), *majha* and *Turi* (tethering ropes), wooden slippers, *Koilis* (contrivance for carrying paddy straws), *Sikuans* (balances for carrying purposes) etc. for hanging and binding are manufactured by the people from the barks of *Juru* or *Lao*, a creeper found in abundance. The usual process of extracting fibers from the bark is by rotting it in water in the fields. These are then mixed with a black soil (*Kale-mati*) and dried, and then made into ropes with or without the help of a turner (*dhera*).

The leaves from these creepers (*Juru Sakem*) are extensively used for preparing leaf-cups (*Puru*) used to keep

food items during meal-time and for distributing rice-beer. *Sal* leaves are rarely if ever used for these purposes. Rain coats (*Chukru*), storage vessels (*Potongs*) are also made by sewing large number of *Juru* leaves. The women are more adroit in collecting these leaves as to tear them easily off from their pedicels requires a special twist of the fingers.

Juru leaves of late have attained some economic importance in the plateau area. These leaves are collected in huge quantities and circular leaf plates are prepared from them by sewing together suitably cut portions of leaves. Local people are engaged by contractors for plucking these leaves during off-seasons. These leaf plates are supplied by the contractors to different places where these are in great demand. Leaves of dwarf palm-trees (*khajur*) are collected from distant jungles as these trees are not found in great number in near-by areas. The collecting of these leaves needs some planning and organisation as several persons form a team and leave the village to spend a few days and nights in the jungles so that sufficient quantities of the leaves can be collected. *Rher* (*Heteropogon contortus*) is also sometimes collected from the jungle for use in the construction of small sheds etc. *Sutri* and *Thepa* are two types of plants which are grown in *Bakhri* and upland areas by sowing their seeds. The fibres of these plants are used for making ropes. These plants, after harvesting, are kept in water for a few days and when they begin to rot, they are taken out of water and rope fibres are extracted from them. *Sabai* grass is also collected from far away jungles of the Palamu district in an organised manner. During October-November, when these tall grasses have a luxuriant growth they are collected in huge quantities and are used in making ropes, to be used in the making of *Sikuars* and such other items used in agricultural activities.

(d) *Fire-wood from the forest*

Cutting of the fire-wood from the forest is the main supplementary source of income for most of the tribes of the plateau.

region. They have facilities to cut the fire woods only from the village forest and not from the reserve or protected forests of the area for their domestic purpose as well as for selling. Sometimes for cutting the fire-wood from the forest the plateau people have to walk even from two to four miles across a number of hills. Men and women may both go to forest to cut the dry woods. Sometimes the young boys and girls also go for cutting the wood. They start for the forest in the morning and return in the evening with bundles of fire-wood. Fire-wood serves a dual purpose. It is used for personal consumption and it is also sold in the market when they need money or other items of food. They sell the fire-wood in the nearby market or in the urban center of Netarhat or to the Government employees who are engaged in other services there.

Indebtedness

Man's life is full of natural calamities over which he has no control. For example, floods, illness, drought etc. are some of them. Besides these, there are social obligation which must be obeyed in order to live in society. Even the poor section of the people have to spend heavy sums to fill these social obligations. Marriage, death, child birth, festivals, etc. are some of the social obligations.

Thus when man becomes the victim of natural calamities, his financial conditions become worse and he has to take a loan. When he is ill and has not enough money for his treatment, he has to take a loan again. Similarly, to make up the heavy expenditure on the occasion of deaths, marriages, and child births, he has to take loans.

Thus it becomes obvious that indebtedness is an inevitable phenomena in man's life. A man hardly escapes from indebtedness. Once a *pat* man gets into the clutches of the Bania or Indian Shylock, it becomes extremely difficult to extricate himself from his grip. The plateau folk have the lowest per capita income depending mainly on agriculture and

its allied economic activities. Their low standard of living and poor economic condition very clearly speaks of their poverty. The heavy burden of indebtedness hardly allows them to think of the comforts and facilities of modern civilized life. They live in backward villages without the developed transport system and diverse occupational opportunities. All the villagers are dependent on agriculture. If there is sufficient rainfall, the crops are good and the villagers are happy. If there is drought or crops fail due to any other reason, the villagers have to take loans. Thus, they take loans from time to time. Most of them are indebted to either the *deshi* mahajan, or to the government institution or to the Christian Mission.

Types of Loan

The loans taken by the villagers can be mainly divided into two type :

- (1) Agricultural loan.
- (2) Non-agricultural loan.

(1) *Agricultural loan*—This type of loan is taken for agricultural purposes such as for seeds, manure, for cattle etc.

(2) *Non-agricultural loan*—This type of loan is taken for food grains, clothes, treatment of disease, education, celebrating marriage etc. and others. It is also taken in cash or kind.

Credit Agencies

There are number of credit agencies for the people of the plateau area. They give loan to them from time to time when asked for. These credit agencies can be mainly divided into two categories—The Government Credit agencies like Grain Gola, Co-operative society etc.

The second category of credit agency is a neighbouring well-to-do family. This is the Non-government Credit Agency. Another Credit agency is the Christian Mission.

Causes of Indebtedness

The most important and the chief cause of the existing indebtedness is the ancestral debt which is handed over from father to son : generation after generation without any equitable restrictions. *In fact the people are so accustomed to be in debt to take it over from their fathers and to pass it on to their sons that they accept indebtedness as a settled fact and a natural state of life.*

Failure of crops due to late or irregular monsoons, India is subjected to frequent failure of rains and the resultant famines. The frequency of failure of crops is due to drought or excessive rainfall and so they rush to the money lender for loan.

Education—To educate their children and to send their children to other place for education they need money and for which they take loans.

Absence of any subsidiary industries enabling them to keep themselves engaged when agricultural operations stop.

Want of good roads and other means of communications which help people to go to market to sell their products at a reasonable price.

Village customs and traditions stand in the way of their modernisation.

Repayment of Loans

The plateau men always make efforts for repayment of loans. Though they do not think that it needs to be indebted, they are happy to be free from indebtedness. They think of repaying the loan because they are not sure when in future, necessity for taking another loan will arise. If they have not repaid the previous loan nobody will give them a further one. Ways and means of repayment of loans can be divided into the following categories.

- (1) Cash
- (2) Agricultural yield
- (3) Land
- (4) Cattle.

Cash

Many of them go to work at various centres where labour is employed and where they earn their wages in cash. They try to save as much as possible and bring it home to pay off the old debt. Then they sell mustard seeds and other vegetable which are grown in Bari land when it is very necessary. Some times grains are sold in the market to bring cash in which is also used for repayment.

Agricultural yield

This is the main source of repayment of loan in the plateau area. As the villagers are agriculturists, it is easy for them to repay in grains. The repayment is done just after the harvesting of crops.

Land

It is also a method of repayment of loan. The land is not given to the lender. He is only allowed to take the agricultural produce of that land for a certain period which is fixed.

Cattle

Cattle is a very important item in the agricultural operation of the plateau men. It is not easily parted but when circumstances compel, they dispose of one or two of his cattle to repay the loan.

Chapter Five

RELIGION

Primitive people of all times have to depend on some supernatural or preternatural beings in various situations of their life. It is generally accepted by many that inabilities, uncertainties, deprivation from expectations lead one to believe that there are some supernatural powers who cause all these things. Naturally, the supernatural powers are conceived in various forms and it is believed by some that sometimes they appear in their anthropomorphic forms. Then these powers are categorised or graded with certain specific attributes. They are appeased by prayer, propitiation and offering including sacrifices to avert dangers and calamities. Sometimes dance and music or other festivities of a secular nature are ritually observed during such worships to please the so-called supernatural or preternatural beings.

The tribes of the Netarhat area were found to believe in many supernatural beings. Some of these are regarded by them as benevolent, others as malevolent. The benevolent beings are categorised as such and ranked high in their estimation, whereas the malevolent spirits are dreaded by all and are believed to always demand a special type of worship and ritual observances for their appeasement. There is a strong belief among them that such worship, prayer and other types of appeasement keep the supernatural or preternatural spirits under control and cause their satisfaction which brings good fortune and success and helps an individual to avert misfortune and calamities. Even many natural catastrophes like excessive rain, drought, famine, epidemics, pestilences are attributed to the dissatisfaction of some or other such assumed supernatural or preternatural spirits.

It is also admitted that all different tribal groups or

communities have their special types or belief patterns, which are expressed through a set of rites, rituals and ceremonies. Sometimes, people living in a common geographical region, though belonging to different castes and communities, also believe in some common divinities or supernatural beings. Sometimes, the impact of a superior or a local culture causes much assimilation. In such cases, the traits of one culture are embedded into the matrix of another culture and in course of time these become indistinguishable from one another. However, for our present purpose, the religious pantheon of the tribes of the area of study has been described to show the nature of prevailing belief-systems, from which it will appear that in many cases they believe in some deities and spirits, both benevolent and malevolent.

The religious beliefs and practices among the tribes of the Netarhat plateau are discussed and analysed here in terms of three analytical concepts constituting a 'sacred complex', formulated by Vidyarthi in his book 'Sacred Complex of Hindu Gaya' (1961 B). The sacred complex of the tribes is thus discussed under the three following heads.

1. Sacred Geography
2. Sacred Specialists, and
3. Sacred performances.

Tribal pantheon

Bhagwan

He is considered to be the most powerful agency. He is termed under different names, e.g. *Mahadeo*, *Parmeshwar*, *Dharmesh* and *Sing Bonga*. He is believed to be the creator of all human beings and animals and plants. He is also the Creator of the Universe, rivers, seas, oceans, hills and mountains and dales. According to local tribals, God, i.e. the Supreme Being has not only created the universe, but also taught them a discipline, i.e. their ways of life and behaviour patterns. All these people believe that *Bhagwan* never does any harm to anybody or to his creation. So, He is considered

as benevolent. He is believed to dwell in *Saragpur* or heaven. He protects the human beings in times of their need and distress.

Most of the tribes identify *Bhagwan* with *Sing Bonga* or *Suraj Bonga*. The legend which is in vogue among them is that,—“*Thuti Mahadeo* is the Creator of the Universe”. Besides, *Suraj Bhagwan* also protects all animals and life from destruction. This belief is not only prevalent among the particular tribe, but among almost all the tribal groups living in the Chotanagpur plateau. Naturally there are occasions and days on which *Bhagwan* is worshipped by them with specific types of offerings and sacrifices by some specialists. Table given below, gives the details of some aspects and attributes of the Supreme Being as visualised by the tribal groups of the people of Chotanagpur.

Table 45

Bhagwan or Supreme Being (Attributes and Sacrifice patterns)

Sl. No.	Tribe	Called As	Identification	Sacrifices Made
1.	Oraon	Dharmesh or Dharma	Sun	White he-goat or White Cock
2.	Munda	Sing bonga	Sun	White Cock
3.	Asur	Sing bonga	Sun	White Cock
4.	Kisan	Surya bonga	Sun	White he-goat and White Cock
5.	Birjia	Bhagwan	Sun	-do-

It is obvious from the above table that all these neighbouring tribes believe in the Supreme Being variously designated by them as *Bhagwan*, *Singbonga*, *Dharmesh* or *Dharma* or *Suryadeota*. He is identified with the Sun and is always offered a sacrifice of white cock or he-goat.

To most of the tribals, the Sun is considered to be a powerful deity and the source of light and energy, who

removes darkness, warms up the earth and the human body and gives all plants and animals their life. He sustains the Universe and sets up a style of life, a pattern. That is why, before all village or communal festivals are started, his worship along with procedural sacrifices commences. The village priest called *Baiga* or *Deohar*, in course of worshipping the God, sacrifices a white cock. Sometimes families also worship the Supreme God individually when familiar sacrifice of a white cock is generally made to him.

Bhagwan is supposed to keep watch over everyday life and activities of human beings on this earth. Crops grow at his command. Rain obeys him. If anybody violates his norm or command, he is automatically punished and may take re-birth in a lower form of life. For a man of honest aptitude, a seat is placed in the heaven. Thus we find the doctrine of Karma and concept of re-birth associated with their religion and the primitive mind is attuned in accordance with the Greater Hindu Philosophy around them.

Dharti Mayee

Dharti Mayee is the name given to Mother Earth, who is considered to be a Goddess, who sustains life through both celebrations and propitiations with elaborate rituals, when a black cock is sacrificed in her name. Even before the start of agricultural operations i.e. ploughing and transplantation, her worship is obligatory. Even after the harvest, she is generally worshiped with pomp. *Dharti Mayee* has no definite anthropomorphic form. Even no symbol of her is made before the worship, but sacrifices are made in her name for getting her favour. She is ever kind to all and never does any harm to anybody.

Maria Devi

Maria Devi is represented as the goddess of disease and sickness. In actual term, she is considered to be the chief controlling deity of all sorts of diseases. If she is displeased with anyone, then the person will inevitably suffer from a

disease. Naturally, every attempt is made to please her through the best efforts of the worshippers who believe in her evil potency. Naturally, she is considered as a malevolent deity.

All people are generally afraid of epidemics and other kinds of diseases. Whenever any epidemic disease, specially cholera or small-pox spreads out in the villages, the people become panicky and consider that this has been caused by the anger of *Maria Devi*. So the villagers assemble and decide to appease her by arranging her worship through sacrifices. A special place is selected by the villagers for this purpose. This place is cleared of all the weeds and grass and plastered with cowdung. An elevated platform or tabernacle is constructed there, which is known as *Debi marap* (*Devi Mandap*). A temporary shed of straw is prepared there resting on poles of bamboo or wood. Then a curved piece of wood is placed vertically on the platform beneath the shed. This represents the deity. An elevated mound of mud is also erected by its side as her seat, which is popularly known as *Pahan*. Generally the place of propitiation in the village is selected on its fringes or outskirts.

In her propitiation, offering of sacrifices are compulsory. He-goats, rams and cocks are sacrificed. Plenty of such sacrifices are made to appease her hunger, lest she might kill the villagers through epidemic diseases. In this celebration, the village priest or *Baiga* takes the leading role. He worships her. The assistant priest or *Deohar* sacrifices the animals. Generally a community worship is arranged in the month of *Chaitra* (March-April). This celebration is popularly known as *Chait-Parab*. Besides this usual celebration, a special celebration is also arranged at times when the villagers promise to do so individually after being affected by epidemic diseases. In all these cases, a goat or ram fowl is sacrificed to appease the wrath of this malevolent deity.

Shikari Chandi

She is considered to be the goddess of hunting. An

annual celebration is arranged for her worship during the *Sarhul* festival. She has a permanent shrine popularly known as *Sarhul Sarna* (a place where a few trees of the virgin forest are kept intact and uncut). This festival commences when *Sal trees* begin to blossom heralding the beginning of the tribal New Year, but there is no fixed day for her worship. It varies from place to place from *Chaitra* (March-April) to *Jaistha* (May-June).

Her worship is performed by the village-priest *Baiga* and she is generally offered the sacrifice of a black cock. If she is pleased, it is believed that the hunting expedition will be a success.

Thus the goddess *Chandi* has profound impact on the mind and society of these people, as her favour is considered necessary for success in hunting.

Ancestral spirits constitute the gamut of the tribal religious pantheon. They strongly believe that each person possesses a *Mua* i.e. soul. This soul resides within the body itself. After the death of a person, this spirit goes out of his body, but clings to its environs and looks after the welfare of his family. With such beliefs the tribes consider it proper to propitiate the souls of their departed ancestors with the idea that their souls would look after the family welfare. Naturally, on different occasions these souls are invoked and worshipped. Particularly, on all festive days, i.e. during *Diwali*, *Fagua* etc. these ancestral spirits are worshipped. The *Birjias* worship these ancestral spirits during the name-giving ceremony too.

Basically, these spirits are considered benevolent in nature. The *Kisans* believe that these spirits may become angry and cause harm to the family if they are not properly invoked during the festive days.

The ancestral spirits are always considered as benevolent in nature and are invoked and propitiated from time to time, as the family members decide during such contingencies.

The next category of the supernaturals are considered to

be evil spirits supposedly hovering around the neighbourhood. They believe that these evil spirits may cause harm to anyone of the locality due to their intrinsically malevolent nature. They roam about here and there, though they generally nestle near the cremation and burial grounds and other unhallowed places where the carcasses of domestic animals are disposed of. They assert that generally the souls of the persons dying prematurely become such spirits. Unmarried persons and pregnant women also become these evil spirits and they always wait for a chance to trap a lonely passerby or other persons, who come to be afflicted or possessed by them. The malevolent spirits which the Birjia affirm exist have been classified by the term '*Bonga*' by Dasgupta (1978). He made the classification of these evil spirits as follows : (i) *Churali*, (ii) *Darha Khunt*, (iii) *Dakin*, (iv) *Jaral Bonga*, (v) *Tangal Bonga*, (vi) *Katal Bonga*, (vii) *Dubal Bonga* and (viii) *Baghut*. He also identified some other minor evil spirits designated as *Besra Bonga*, *Gorea Bonga*, *Mirgi Bonga* and *Mai*.

In reality, however, the existence of all these spirits is not known to the people of this locality. Some elderly persons only, during the interview told us that they could identify these or their presence by symptoms anywhere.

All the villagers, specially the elderly persons are well acquainted with the presence of *Churail* in their village. If a pregnant woman dies before the birth of the child or immediattly after the birth, her soul is sure to become a *Churail*. In such cases, the dead body is buried not in the normal burial ground, but outside the village or on the fringe of the village. No traditional mortuary rituals are performed in this case. The souls of such women are considered to be dangerous and pernicious. It is absolutely an evil or malevolent spirit they think. It pursues and afflicts the villager or the passerby when it gets an opportunity. It sometimes enters into the womb of another pregnant women and creates obstruction at the time of

delivery. It tries to kill her with a view to getting her as her companion.

To get rid of such calamities the tribals, especially the Birjias and the Kisans, seek the help of sorcerers or witch-doctors who are popularly known as *Deona*. They entrap the spirit by a magical spell and put it into a tube which is closed and sealed with a lid. This is then buried and the spirit remains impounded inside the earth due to the power of the magical spell of the *Deona*. We were told that it remains so buried until it is released by a counter-spell by any other *Deona* on the request of his relatives, or on the spirit personally giving the undertaking to leave the haunted place for ever.

There are some other attributes of these evil spirits. People believe that the *Churali* may be seen in human form, having unrolled hair flowing down to the waist, or sometimes, sitting with a baby on her lap. It remains ready at a place until the shadow of a passerby falls on her. When the shadow of the passerby touches her, she gives out a terrific yell and he falls into a swoon and becomes spirit possessed.

Some elderly persons were contacted and they gave an accurate account of the activities of these spirits. They also said that in all these hamlets, some places are clearly known as the residing place of some evil spirit or the other. These are *Sarhul Sarna*, *Kasa Sarna* and so on. These *Sarnas* are avoided and treated in different ways according to the nature of the spirits and sacrifices are made to appease them. These *Sarnas* are generally avoided by the women who are pregnant.

In course of enquiry it was found that most of the women refrain from going to *Ghanti Sarna*. This type of *Sarna* is inhabited by a *Darha* spirit, which is a malevolent male spirit who sometimes appears at dead of night. It looks like a demon with all its body full of coarse hair of different sizes, the headman of the village described an event about

the nature of the *Darha* spirit. It said that once an European lady came to this village and went to visit this place. While returning the *Darha*-spirit entered into her womb and to everybody utter surprise, she gave birth to a hairy baby. This event is so well known that none of the women of the village go to this site. Hence it has become almost a prohibited place.

The *Atanga Sarna* of this locality is similarly avoided by the local people. There was tragic incident involving this *Sarna*. Once a man from a distant place came to Netarhat and crossed the *Atanga Sarna* where a dangerous *Darha* spirit resides, which pounced upon the stranger and made him senseless and ultimately he died. So the *Atanga Sarna* is also avoided by the local people. If they cross it, they take special care and precautions. *Khunti Sarna* is the site where another evil spirit resides. This *Sarna* is located near the forest side, very near to the Palamu Dak Bungalow. There is a big granite stone of a mysterious shape which is considered to be the seat of a *Darha*. One elongated iron rod with piercing head has been fixed there. This is occasionally worshipped by the villagers. The villagers believe that if there is any chance of a calamity befalling the village, then this rod will automatically bend in a slanting position. These are examples of the prevailing notions about the attributes and activities of the spirits among the tribes of this locality. Belief in supernatural and preternatural spirits and associated practices with idioms of rituals are so intricately tinged with their ideas that they observe the taboos and hold the customary rituals to appease these spirits. These have been ultimately institutionalized and crystallised into their belief-system in so far as the supernaturals are concerned.

It has been recorded that the physical background of a locality plays the most important role in forming and reshaping the views and ideas of a particular group of people so far as the religiosity of such group is concerned.

Gradual interaction and close association of different groups, to some extent, impart flexibility into their religious beliefs and practices and, as such, these groups assimilate and imbibe each other's traits to some extent, which were found to have occurred in the villages under study.

Sacred Geography

There are a few sacred centres including *Sarnas* i.e. sacred groves in the four hamlets of Netarhat which have been surveyed. These *Sarnas* are nothing but some uncut trees of the forest. The early settlers used to believe that these are the places where different supernatural or preternatural spirits reside. The cluster of trees with their spreading branches provide thick leafy shade causing darkness, and during evening or night, these create an awe-inspiring environment. In one case, instead of the usual *Sal* trees, other trees were found, which were also very old trees. Besides these *Sarnas*, there is a bush of shrubs and smaller trees. In the midst of the bush, a stone-slab has been placed. This unusual stone-slab represents a certain deity being worshipped both by the Kisans and the Birjias. Besides these, there is a thatched mud-built cottage i.e. shrine where *Maria Devi*—the Goddess of epidemic disease is worshipped.

In summing up it can be said that the tribal people of Netarhat living in these four hamlets have three categories of sacred centres represented by :

1. Sarna	5
2. Sacred bush with stone slab	1
3. Tiled topped shrine	1

These five sarnas are named after the specific type of super-natural, propitiated by the people of this locality. The details of these *Sarnas* are as follows :

1. *Kara Sarna*

It is situated in the forest. It is located at the northern

side of the Agricultural Farm Staff Quarters. A road leads upto this distant village from Netarhat proper just crossing the forest. It is composed of many uncut sal trees. Seven uneven stone-slabs of different sizes have been placed here. These stone-slabs are the representations of the Daria of Darha spirit. Sometimes this *Sarna* is also called as *Daria* or *Darha Sarna*. Darha is generally considered a malevolent spirit, a dwarf in size with human form, having a large ugly head and looking like a demon, with small round burning eyes. His complexion is very dark and he has straight black hair all over the body.

2. *Sarhul Sarna*

This particular *Sarna* is situated behind the Agricultural Farm. Very recently a well has been dug near it. There are altogether five trees in this *Sarna* and these have grown in such a manner that they present a very picturesque view and thus isolate them from other trees around. In this sacred grove, three big trees are sal and the other two are of the *Jam* variety. Sal trees here are popularly known as Sakhus trees. All religious performances are done beneath the shade of big sal tree. This particular tree bears the symbol of many past religious performances observed here, having vermilion marks, and wearing encircling white threads. On all sides of this sacred grove, agricultural lands have been prepared by the villagers by cutting and falling the trees. This particular *Sarna* is regularly visited by the villagers and they maintain a sense of awe and respect to the supernatural spirit living in this particular *Sarna*.

3. *Kharwaij Sarna*

This particular *Sarna* is situated on the upland in the Jamtoli hamlet of the village. It is not far away from the settlement. One *Jaggu Bhagat* is living very near to this *Sarna*. Altogether eleven trees constitute the sacred grove here, of which 10 are *Sal* trees and only one *Kumbhi* tree.

The huts of the hamlet have been constructed very near to the Sarna and the agricultural fields have fanned out from its proximity.

4. *Attanga Sarna*

This particular sarna is situated near Sarnatoli. There is a natural reservoir of water, which indicates the depression of topography at this place. A tank has been excavated here by the Government. This clearly indicates the lowness of the surface. There are more than 70 sal trees, here, which have grown in such a fashion that it looks like a natural beauty spot. Worship is done in this grove occasionally. No particular tree is worshipped here. Any tree which draws the sentiment of the worshipper is washed during the worship.

There is a popular myth regarding this sarna. A man came here from the distant land of Nagpur to seize and carry off a child for offering as sacrifice to a deity. It was the month of June when all the paddy fields were without any plant. This man was very tired and weary due to long travel from such a distant place and it was almost noon. Considering the vastness and shade of this particular grove, he came near it for taking rest. A *Darha* spirit resided in this grove, who was the deity or the guardian spirit. He protuted the villagers from the mischievous motive of this unknown traveller in the following manner :

The man while taking rest was killed by the *Darha* spirits. The villagers gradually assembled there and found this unknown traveller lying dead. Somebody among them identified him and said that this man also came here a few years ago in the month of *Jaistha* (May-June) from a distant village in search of a man to be sacrificed to some spirit. Now the villagers became happy and they considered this event as a gracious act of the *Darha* who protected the village from the evil intention of this man. In an obliging mood they worshipped the *Attanga* by sacrificing goats and

cocks. Since then this worship has become a regular feature.

5. *Ghanti Sarna*

As Ghanti Sarna is situated in front of Nayatoli, an extending hamlet of Netarhat. The entire area was covered at earlier times with dense Sal trees, of which a few have been kept uncut. These have formed a conspicuous grove and is the sacred centre of the village.

There is a popular myth regarding this Ghanti Sarna. The spirit who is popularly known as Ghanti, sometimes appears in human form, but its entire body is densely covered with hair. From hoary past female folk of this locality avoided this Sarna, as this is *inhabited* by a horrible male spirit. There was a tragic incident at this place which reaffirmed the views so long nourished by the people of this locality. It was that once an European lady came to Netarhat and stayed for a long time. This lady used to visit the village, its forest side and other places. She did not attach any importance to the popular horror story about this Sarna and went to this grove one day. She was pregnant at that time. The spirit entered into her womb. She gave birth to a male child. Queerly enough the entire body of that child was covered with thick dark hairs. From this, however, the people realised what had happened.

The term Ghanti by which name this grove is called, means the ringing of a bell, i.e. ghanti. It is believed that when the spirit moves, the bell he holds produces a ringing sound.

It has been stated earlier that in this locality, there is a bush covered with shrubs and some dwarf trees of wild origin, which have imparted a very awe-inspiring look to the locality. This bush is situated near the forest side just at the southern tip of the Farm Staff Quarters. There is a road leading up to the orchard transplanted by the Agriculture Department. This sacred centre can be reached

through this road also. One irregular shaped stone-slab is lying in this bush. This particular stone is locally called as *Hargori*. The dwarf plants are also known as *Rajkaram*. The branch of this plant is considered sacred as these are used by the villagers during the *Rajkaram* festival. This slab is worshipped regularly by the villagers.

Shrine

The third category of the sacred centre is a rectangular cottage considered to be the shrine of the Goddess *Maria Devi*. This shrine is situated at the junction of Bartoli and Jamtoli, which are adjoining hamlets of this village. Two sides of this particular shrine are girdled by agricultural fields, while on one side a Kisan family reside.

The entire shrine is rectangular in shape. It has a wooden framework. There is no wall. Some wooden poles bear the weight of the frame of this hut. Four sloped roofs have been constructed by country made tiles popularly known as *khapra*. The floor of this particular shrine has been made by beaten-earth and it is considerably raised from the ground. This very clearly indicates the process of gradual evolution of shrines in the area from that of the natural grove or vegetation. The floor of the shrine is regularly washed by the village priest with a clay and cowdung solution. There is a mud-built altar in the middle of this shrine and on it there are four fixed wooden poles. Vermilion marks are put on these poles and on each pole there are three vermilion dot marks. These wooden poles together represent the Goddess *Maria Devi*—the goddess epidemic diseases. On the floor of the shrine there is another earthen mound popularly believed to be the temporary seat of Darha, a dangerous spirit-associate of Maria Davi. In another corner of this shrine a few red flags are hoisted during worship. The marks of sprinkling blood of the sacrificed animals are always noticed here. The representation of the deities have been made by stone-slab symbols

which are washed before their worship and vermilion marks put on these slabs.

It was reported to us that the stone replicas of the deities were stolen by some mischievous persons long ago and the present slabs have been installed by the village priest as replacements for which he got divine direction through a dream.

Sacred Specialist

The tribals believe that the 'spirit world' could only be communicated by some middlemen, who are either selected by supernatural means, or as an evidence of their being 'adepts', which they achieve by constant practice and training in this field. They are the proper persons who can tackle all these unearthly affairs. These specialists have been very clearly categorised as such in this tribal society. The first and important person is the Baige Pahan who in the truest sense is a priest. His wife also participates in many religious or ceremonial affairs. She is considered to be Baigain i.e. female priest. The next man in religious-ceremonial affairs is the *Deohar* or assistant priest. Sometimes his wife is also asked to participate in many ceremonies and, as such, she is known as *Deoharain*.

Besides these religious functionaries there are *Deonas* whose main duty is to tackle the problems of the supernatural and preternatural world related to ghosts and spirits causing harm to society. This group of people has a special status in society and in all crucial situations their services and assistance are eagerly sought. They drive the ghosts causing harm to society, exercise the evil spirits, bring them under control and order or dictate them to do their bidding. Naturally, their importance in society is well recognised. They have to undergo a special type of training under the guidance of an adept or *Guru*.

Thus all sacred specialists have profound impact on tribal society and through performances and observances of various

rituals they try to maintain a norm, a tradition with moral control i.e. to regulate the behaviour and action patterns of the people. Naturally their role in society is unquestionably accepted and respected.

In so far as village Netarhat with its four hamlets is concerned, it has been stated that the tribal groups, specially the Birjias, Kisans, Asurs, Oraons, and Mundas in them live side by side adjusting themselves with the common ecology and environment. Naturally their inter-action in socio-cultural affairs has brought about some adjustment and in circumstantial exigencies they are bound to accept some religious specialists belonging even to a different ethnic group. However, in this village, the present Baiga Pahan i.e. the priest is Birbal Birjia aged about 60 years. He lives in another village in the neighbourhood named Henar, but his son Garit Birjia lives in Jamtoli.

Birbal Birjia is very efficient in religious performances and, as such, his reputation has spread all over the area. His wife assists him in some religious ceremonies and she is popularly known as Baigain. But her actual name is Etwari. The father of Birbal Birjia was Mongro Birjia who was also the priest or Baiga Pahan of the locality. Thus the post of Baiga Pahan i.e. the village priest is almost hereditary because they have to be selected from the same lineage. But when there are more than one son, then all the sons could not act as Baiga Pahan or the village priest. In the case of Birbal Pahan, he has three brothers of whom he is the third and youngest. The selection of Baiga Pahan was made just after the death of his father. Traditionally, all the villagers including the three brothers assembled at the temple yard where the relatives of Baiga Pahan's family were also present.

The selection was done by supernatural method. An elderly person of the assembled participants collected five stone pieces, almost round or pebble-shaped. They assembled in the courtyard of the Baiga Pahan. This elderly person is

popularly known as Bhagat and usually happens to be a medicineman. By keeping these five pebbles, one after another in a place, he began to utter incantations in a melodious tone with his magical stick moving around all the stone pieces. Each of these pebbles symbolised one of the prospective candidates belonging to the lineage group of the *Baiga Pahan*. In course of chanting the incantation he began to move the stick vigorously round the stone piece. It took a long time and the assembled villagers became emotional as well as anxious. Ultimately, the magic stick stopped near a stone piece and it was found that this piece of stone symbolised Birjia. This indicated that the supernatural spirits have been pleased to nominate Birbal among all other prospective candidates.

It is believed that in course of doing this divination the Bhagat was possessed by a spirit and he was guided by the will of that spirit. Just after the declaration of Birbal as village priest, all villagers accepted him—as this was the desire of the invoked supernatural being. This decision and appointment remain valid as long as the selected person is alive and retains his physical fitness.

Regarding the training of the Baiga or village priest, it is the custom that all the members or the kin of the existing Baiga expected to get proper training from him. The prospective candidates, i.e. the sons and other kin members are expected to accompany the priest in all his ceremonial performances to learn the incantations and the rituals. Thus almost all the male members of the family of a priest are capable of chanting the incantations and becoming experienced in performing the ceremonies. This prolonged association give them the opportunity to learn the art of priest-craft which is not only changing of incantations or performing the associated rituals, but also to offering sacrifices at times.

The main function of the village priest is to propitiate at times deities of the locality and by doing this he has to seek their favour for the welfare of the village. He invokes all

the deities belonging to the tribal pantheon : all the spirits hovering over the vicinity, both benevolent and malevolent, and to counteract evil potentialities by propitiation and other performances. He has to offer sacrifices himself for the appeasement of a deity, when needed. During propitiation and after offering the requisite sacrifices and prayers, it is duty to solicit the favour of the deity for the welfare and protection of the village. He also promises on behalf of a villager who approaches him to do so, for future worship as well as for offering sacrifices provided the villagers enjoy peaceful and happy days throughout the year, as desired, without any trouble and mishap.

Another important function of the village priest is to fix up the dates of celebrations and worships as far as the village festivals are concerned. He has to finalise and make list of the articles that will be required during the celebration. For this he consults his assistant, i.e. the Deohar and other elderly members of the village. He suggests the types of sacrifices to be made to the respective deities.

In marriage ceremonies the priest has to attend. He has to worship goddess Dharti mai (mother earth). All the religious ceremonies are attended by the priest.

The priest enjoys a special status in the village due to his association with the deities and other supernatural potentialities. In the case of the Pahan or priest of the Oraons of the neighbouring areas, the Pahan i.e. the priest also holds some rent-free land for his maintenance, but, here the priest gets an annual royalty in the form of rice or other vegetable products from each family for whom he officiates as priest. During wedding ceremonies, he gets one piece of cloth along with a little gift of rice and sweets as catered for during the celebration. On other festival days specially during worship he receives rice, pulses, *gondli* and *marua* or *Handia* (rice-beer). These are collected by his wife i.e. Baigain from each family. At the time of offering sacrifice, he is entitled to get the head of the sacrificial animal as royalty. Now-a-days,

a small amount of money is also given to him for sacrificial performances. For sacrifice of a he-goat or ram, he gets Re. 1/- whereas in the case of a cock, he gets only 25 paise.

Annual gifts in the form of commodities are collected thrice in a year, once in the month of Kartik, at the time of the *Diwali* festival, when the villagers offer him maize varying from 4 *jholon* to 6 *jholon* (one *jholon* = 1 k.g.). In the month of *Aghan* (November-December) he is again given *Gondli* a cereal grown in the uplands, each family giving him $1\frac{1}{2}$ k.g. to 2 k.g. Again in the month of *Magh* (January-February) the village priest gets one winnowing fan-full of paddy containing approximately 5 k.g. These are considered to be his royalty for his service to the villagers. This is paid traditionally and ungrudgingly.

In respect of status and rank of the village priest, i.e. the *Baiga Pahan*, it has been already stated that his status is very high. He is esteemed by all the people due to his association with the supernatural world. It is a common custom for the villagers to wash his feet when he visits a house. He is provided with drinking water as token of honour. The members of the village panchayat show him respect in all affairs. He is carried on the shoulders of a man during the *Sarhul* festival. This is followed by a procession. His important duty is to distribute sanctified water to the villagers after any worship or celebration. During celebrations and worship the priest has to maintain cleanliness, wear a washed cloth and observe puritanic life on these days.

Deohar or Assistant priest

The village priest is always aided by an assistant priest who is known as *Deohar*, whose main duty is to assist the priest in all rituals of worship and celebrations of the villagers, but, his influence is naturally less some what than that of the priest. The present *Deohar* is *Tirtu Birjia*. He is about 45 years old. His wife is known as *Deoharin*.

The major duty of the *Deohar* is to assist the priest in all

religious ceremonial affairs relating to the village. On some occasions he also sacrifices the animals to the tutelary deities, as in this year he was found to sacrifice 5 cocks during the Sarhul festival, while the *Baiga* or the priest sacrificed 12 cocks. The *Deohar* or the assistant priest generally bring the sacrificial cocks, wash them and prepare them for the sacrifice. After their feet and head have been washed, the cocks are made to eat the sanctified sun-dried rice. If they take the rice, then it is considered that the deity would be pleased to accept them as sacrifice and so they are sacrificed in front of the deity.

The selection of the *Deohar* is also done by the supernatural method as in the case of *Baiga Pahan*. In this case, on the day when the *Deohar* is to be elected, all the villagers assemble in a public place, preferably near the dancing ground or *Akhra*. Those villagers who want to express their candidature for the post of *Deohar*, would have to communicate it to the *Baiga* who immediately informs the *Bhagat* after getting the names of all candidates and places a pebble in the name of each, on the ground. Then he begins to chant incantations and moves his magic-wand over all these pebbles. This continues till the *Bhagat* feels that a particular pebbled is attracted by his magic-wand. The *Bhagat* is seen frothing from his mouth while uttering the incantations in a melodious tone. He shakes his body from side to side and shows the signs of spirit possession. When his magic-wand does not move any more, then it indicates that the deity has been pleased with the particular man represented by the pebble which has been touched. Then the man is selected as *Deohar* and all villagers rejoice at it.

Tirtu Birjia is holding this post of *Deohar* for about three years. Before his election five persons from his community expressed their candidature for the post of *Deohar*. These were: *Tirtu Birjia*, *Peso Birjia*, *Chaltu Birjia*, *Dukhum Birjia* and *Ramchand Birjia*.

But ultimately, by the supernatural method, the selection

was done by a Bhagat or the diviner who selected Tirtu whom the deity had favoured.

Though Tirtu had very little expertise at the beginning, he has acquired it very quickly. From his very childhood days he used to observe all ceremonies very carefully and with little instructions from the Baiga and sometimes from the elderly persons, he has acquired his art quite efficiently.

Regarding the remuneration paid to the Deohar for his services to the community in general, it has been observed that the assistant priest also gets an annual gift of paddy, rice and gondli in the same manner as is done in the case of the Baiga. He gets these thrice a year, firstly in the month of Kartik (October-November), then in Aghan (November-December) and next in Magh (January-February). He collects the annual gifts from each family. This is done by his wife.

His social status is not the same as that of the priest. It is a step lower. No special welcoming ritual is held for the Deohar. The Deohar is expected to observe a puritanic life and wear a washed cloth on the day of worship or celebration like the priest. Both of them have to wear a pig tail or topkin on the top of their head as symbol of the puritanic life. During celebration, the priest spreads his turban on the ground and utters incantations while worshipping unlike the Deohar who wears no turban.

These two religious specialists have very important and major roles to play on all occasions. They have also to collect some sacred objects or articles needed at the time of worship. They advise the villager at a meeting before every communal worship or festival for purchases required by them for ritualistic purposes. Earthen vessels, sun-dried rice, incense, *dub* grass, some flowers, earthen lamps are the important articles for the rituals of worship or celebrations. Besides these, both the priest and the assistant priest carry with them one knife each for sacrificing animals,

specially chickens. But for the sacrifice of a he-goat or ram, an axe is kept in the use of the priest. He also keeps the chickens to be offered for sacrifice. These are given to him sometimes communally, sometimes by an individual of a family.

The next task is the selection of the days and time for the worship. These are spread out all over the year and are fixed and ultimately approved by the village council of elders. A few persons take the responsibility for collecting or purchasing the articles for a particular worship or celebration. For this, a subscription is raised from among the villagers, but the list of the articles is prepared by the priest and assistant priest.

The religious organisation of the Kisans and Birjias depicts the activities of the religious specialists during the celebrations and worship at the sacred centres on specific dates finalised by the villagers with sacred objects. In the way all the villagers get the opportunity of meeting together on the one hand, and getting the blessings of the supernatural beings on the other by worshipping the deities and thus their traditions are maintained. Thus a body of believers constituting religious group is organised to promote such beliefs to enhance the opportunity of social integration and to maintain traditional norms.

Sacred Performances

The sacred performances of the pat tribes consist of the worship of the supernatural powers and the spirits beings and to atone for one's sins, followed by sacrifice and offerings, made in the appropriate place and at the opportune hour. These also include the magical rites performed by the exorcist (*deoair* or *mati*) to expel evil spirits (*masans*) from the body of an ailing person. The sacred performances associated with religion combine in themselves the secular aspects as well as in the majority of cases these ritualistic performances, and are followed by the lighter aspects of

their life which consist of feasting and enjoyment, drink and dance that are essentially secular aspects of the festivals (Vidyarthi 1963 : 165).

It is observed that the pat tribes' ideas about the various supernaturals beings and spirits is rather vague and their propitiation or reconciliation is now-a-days, according to some young villagers, left in the hands of the *baiga* and a few elderly villagers, which is very much evident from the very thin gathering of people at the places where the sacred performances are held. The whole night orgies of dances and music, drinking and merriment totally eclipse the ritualistic side of these performances comprising tense worship, and sacrifices and to an outsider the fun, feasting, drinking, dancing and drums are more conspicuous than the really solemn and tense hours of worship of the spirits (Vidyarthi, 1963 : 166).

The sacred performances comprise of chanting of stereotyped verses in *sadri* in an attitude of subordination for the atonement of the host of supernatural beings, immediately followed by the sacrifice of a chicken or an egg, and also offerings of drinks. It has been observed that nothing larger than a chicken is sacrificed in any of these sacred rituals even those held at the village level and this may be attributed to the abject poverty of the people.

The sacred performances are held either at the family level or at village level. The mirth and merriment following the sacred performances may, however spread far beyond the village boundary so as to envelop people from neighbouring villages as well.

The sacred specialist (*baiga*) and the village elders fix the festival day according to particular season i.e. at the time of agricultural operations and when the forest trees bear flowers and fruits. The date of celebration of festivals also varies from one cluster of tribal villages to another. The festival day may be changed under certain circumstances

i.e. when an epidemic disturbs the villagers and during the mensuration period of the *pahan's* wife.

A number of festivals are common among the tribes of the Netarhat plateau. These similarities are due to common ecological conditions as well as participation in common economic activities. Environmental conditions help them to have common experiences. In the case of the Disease gods, we find celebration of certain types of worship, especially as cholera, smallpox and skin diseases are attributed to particular deities their appeasement is felt necessary to protect themselves from such diseases or to prevent these. The agriculture field has to be protected from wild animals and evil eyes. It involves propitiation of some specific deities in which the priest locally called *Baiya* has the main role to play. All communal festivals are performed by the Baiga with the assistance of the Deohar. Some rituals on a family level are performed by the head of the family.

All tribal groups participate in the communal festivals of this area. They include Oraon, Asur, Munda, Kisan, Birjia etc. These festivals are *Sarhul* (*Baisakh-Jaistha*) from mid-April to mid-June, *Burhia Karam* (*Asar*) June-July, *Bangari* in the month of (*Sravan*), July-August, *Rajkaram* in the month of (*Bhadra*), August-September, *Diwali* in the month of (*Kartik*) October-November, *Nawa Parab* which is also held in the same month. *Khaniari Puja* is held in the month of (*Paus*) December-January as well as the festival of *Kharwaj* at *Kharwaj Sarna*.

All these communal festivals are arranged by the villagers yearly. Some other communal festivals are also arranged by all the tribal groups of this area jointly which are not held yearly. These are sometimes held at an interval of 3 years and sometimes 12 years. These festivals are performed in the crisis periods of epidemic diseases and other natural calamities. That is why all sorts of spirits (*Darha*) are appeased on these occasions to avert such mishaps, including

depredation of wild animals, snake-bites and to avert cattle diseases. This is done when deaths of human beings or domesticated animals occur on a large scale.

Festivals relating to the foregoing are worship of the spirit of *Attanga Sarna* in the month of (*Kartik*) October-November. Usually in the month of (*Aghan*) November-December the spirits of *Ghanti Sarna*, *Kara*, *Sarna* are propitiated. *Khunti Bhut Puja* is held in any month for the welfare of the village.

Among the Kisans, some festivals are performed which are not celebrated by the Birjias. These are worship of ancestors which is held in the month of Asar, Aswin and Falgun, during marriage ceremonies in the months of *Magh* and *Falgun*. In the month of *Falgun* they also worship the Sun God and the Mother Earth along with the worship of ancestors, as well as the worship of *Banprhari* the Monkey God.

The worship of the sword is celebrated in the month of *Kartik* during the Diwali by them. But this is not performed by all Kisan families. In any month of the year or after 3 or 5 years, the worship of the *Nag* or Serpent totem is celebrated.

All the common communal festivals are performed by the Birjias. But they also perform some more festivals. These are worship of *Lakra* (tiger-totem), *Bijli* (lightning) and *Bhaluk* during *Dewali*. A few families worship *Suraj* (Sun) at the time of taking bath in the tank or river. They offer water by their palms to the sun. But the sun and the *Dharti* are worshipped in all communal festivals. In the name-giving ceremony (*Chatti*) of the child, they worship their ancestors.

The Kisans and Birjias sing a good many songs and dance with musical instruments like *Nagera*, *Mandar* etc. in the *Akhra* at night during festivals. On such occasions, everyone—males and females, participate together and drink a lot. These drinks are prepared from rice, maize and *Mahua*.

Sometimes they start their dancing and singing four months before a festival. At that time, on alternate days they assemble in the *Akhra* and enjoy dancing the whole night.

The songs and dancing patterns differ in different festivities i.e. during marriage ceremony, '*Domkach*' songs are sung by them. Different songs are associated with different festivals like *Sarhul*, *Kharwaj*, *Rajkaram*, *Burhia Karam* etc.

The Birjias and Kisans of these villages assemble in the *Akhra* at Jamtoli. The Oraons gather together in the *Akhra* at Paseripat. Many people of the Birjia and Kisan communities come from other villages like Henar, Taner etc. during festive occasions at night.

Common Festivals (Yearly)

Sarhul

Sarhul is the most important festival of all the tribes of Bihar. In the months from *Baisakh* to *Jaistha*, the *Sarhul* festival is celebrated on a selected day. This festival is connected with the worship of major deities to keep the village free from any sickness and witchcraft, to preserve the crops and the cattle. It is celebrated when the *Sal* (*Shorea robusta*) and *Mahua* (*Bassia latifolia*) trees begin to blossom.

Details of a *Sarhul* festival are given below which were observed at *Sarhul Sarna* at Jamtoli on 18th May, 1979.

On the day of the *Sarhul* festival the *Baiga* Birbal Birjia and his assistant *Deohar*, Titru Birjia, did not take any food except rice-beer (*handia*) or country liquor. They started to drink from the morning of the day. On that day nobody went into the forest for cutting wood. The *Baiga* wore an yellow *dhoti* with a red border. He also wore a white thread on the left hand.

At about 10 A.M. the *Baiga* became ready to go to the *Sarhul Sarna* where the ceremony was to be held. He made a *turban* by his white *dhoti* and took a big knife known as *baiga-chhuri*. The *Baigain* or wife of the *Baiga* was also

prepared to go to the *Sarhul Sarna*. The Bagain wore a sari and she wore three silver bangles on her left wrist and two necklaces of beads of orange colour. Her right hand did not have any bangles. She took with her a new earthen pitcher.

One Dukhura Nagesia came to the house of the *Baiga* which is situated at Jamtoli. He came from Mohnapat to invite the *Baiga* for going to the *Sarhul Sarna* there. They started from that place at about 10.15 P.M.

At the Sarhul Sarna

A number of elderly persons came to that place. Everyone brought a branch of a Sal tree and some paddy or *gondli* and *marua*. All of them had a turban on their heads. No adult females are allowed to come there except the Bagain, Etowari Birjia and Deorain, Mangri Birjia. All elderly persons were waiting for the *Baiga*. Some young men brought *Mandar* and *Nagera*. Plenty of rice-bear (*handia*) and country liquor were brought by the villagers for drinking. Ghurna Birjia, Chattu Birjia, Jhaharam Kisan, Bhambho Kisan, Birbal Oraon and Suleman Nagesia, Suila Birjia and other villagers came from Paseripat, Mohnapat, Bartoli, Samtoli, Jamtoli and Nayatoli.

There are five trees at *Sarhul Sarna*, among which two are Sal (*Shorea robusta*) trees, two are *Jamun* (*Suzygium cumini*) trees and one is a berry tree. They brought Mahulan leaves for making *dona* which were used as a pot at the time of drinking.

Birbal Birjia came with his wife at 12.30 P.M. First he cleaned the place of worship and then spread his turban under a Sal tree. Then he sat upon it. He kept the earthen pitcher in front of himself in the inverted position. The Deohar Titru Birjia cleaned another place and sat by the side of the *Baiga*. He also sat under another Sal tree. Both these trees are very near to each other. At the time of worship there were 32 elderly persons and 13 children. Besides them the Bagain and Deoharain were present. The *Baiga* took some *handia* served by some of the villagers.

He first took a chicken (*Chengna*) and washed its head and put vermilion mark on the head. Then he offered it a little sun-dried rice to eat. When the chicken had taken three or four grains, he cut the head of that chicken by a knife.

Then the *deohar* took another chicken. He washed the head and feet of that chicken and offered it some sun-dried rice to eat. When it had taken three or four grains, he cut its head by his knife which is smaller than the *Baiga's* knife. In that way the *Baiga* and *Deohar* sacrificed 10 chickens. Then the *Deohar* took another chicken and in the same way washed its head and feet and then offered it sun-dried rice. After that he killed it by throttling. Then he kept it aside. He took some rice-beer and put it in two pots by the side of that chicken. After that he again took some rice-beer and kept it near his left foot. Then he dropped a little *handia* twice on the ground and took that *handia*.

The *baiga* applied vermilion on the forehead of the fowls while sacrificing them. After cutting the head of the fowls he took them and encircled the new earthen pot thrice, so that the blood may drop on that new earthen pitcher. Then he threw them in front of the pitcher. But he kept all the heads on one side. He took once 2 white chickens once 3 black chickens and once one black and one white together. After sacrifice he threw the trunks of all these seven chickens in front of him keeping the heads on one side. While applying vermilion the *baiga* chanted some *mantras*. Once he washed the head and feet of a white chicken, then he applied vermilion by the middle finger of his right hand. Then he offered it arua rice (sun-dried). But that chicken did not eat the rice. He tried a number of times to persuade the chicken to take that rice, but he failed to do so. Then he did not sacrifice that chicken. When he was taking two chickens he was changing these chickens from his left hand to his right hand and right hand to left hand. The *baiga* at last took another black chicken. As usual he washed its head and feet first and applied vermilion on its head and then offered

it some sun-dried rice. When the chicken ate that sun dried rice, he threw it in the field in front instead of cutting its head. Many children were ready taking their catapults to hit and kill it. As soon as the baiga threw the chicken they killed it by their catapults and very quickly they tied its legs with a thin wooden split as rope and brought it to the baiga. Then the baiga began to chant mantras in the name of *Shikari Chandi*. He gave the chicken as sacrifice to appease the particular goddess, if they fail to do so they believe their animals will be attacked and killed by wild animals and they will have a troublesome journey in the forest, when going out for hunting. The Deohar gave his last chicken sacrifice in the name of the ancestral spirits. That is why he did not cut the head of that chicken. He killed it by throttling it. During the worship, both the Baiga and Deohar took rice-beer. But before drinking they dropped twice a little rice-beer in the name of their ancestors as oblation to them.

The baiga sacrificed altogether 2 and the deohar 5 chickens. Among the first five chickens, the white one was sacrificed in the name of the Suraj Bhagwan (Sun God), the black in the name of Dharti mai (mother earth) and the other three in the name of their ancestral spirits and the spirit of the Sarhul Sarna.

All the villagers who were present there drank (*handia*) and played *nagara* and *mander*. The *Baigain* and *Deoharin* sat by the side of the sal tree where the worship was held.

After the sacrifice of the chickens the baiga took all of them, and waved there twice over the earthen pot. The Deohar also did the same taking five chickens he had sacrificed. The black chicken which was offered in the name of *Sikari Chandi* was kept in between the deohar and the baiga. Then the deohar gave that chicken which was killed by throttling to the children who had killed it and they took that chicken and burnt it and taking their share on *mahulan* leaves, ate it.

Then the baiga took that earthen pitcher on his head and chanting mantras kept it under the sal tree. The mouth of the pitcher was kept facing west. Then the baiga saluted (*Johar*) all who were present. They also saluted her in return in the same way.

After that the baiga took a white thread and tied it around that Sal tree under which he sat. Then he gave a thread to the deohar. He did it thrice and each time the attending villagers, shouted in approbation and joy. Afterwards the deohar poured water on the head of the baiga. Instead of giving cloth they gave a white thread as token of a *savi* to the Sarhul sarna. While doing this they shouted aloud thrice together asking the sarna whether their village was free from evil spirits or not? If there was any evil spirit then they would hear a peculiar sound from this tree in reply. But they did not hear any sound at all and so they took it for granted that their village was free from evil spirits. They then poured water on the head of the baiga. By doing so, they believe, they will get heavy rain which will help to grow good crops.

Then the baiga tied the pieces of white thread to the wrists of all the villagers. This thread was rolled twice or thrice. He first tied it on the hand of Birbal Oraon being the eldest villager. Lastly Birbal Oraon of Mohnapat tied a white thread on the wrist of the baiga. After that the baiga dissolved the assembly.

The baiga again sat under the tree. He kept a handful of rice twice in front of himself while all the sacrificed chickens lay on his left side. Then he took some rice in folded hands and threw it on his back side. A man stood behind and took these rice in his cloth. The baiga threw rice this way three or four times to each one. Everybody took that sanctified rice. They believe that this rice has some magical power which helps to grow bumper crops when it is sown during broadcasting of seeds. When the baiga was passing over the rice, he was chanting some

mantras. Then the villagers were also saluting (*johar*) to *baiga*. Lastly the *baiga* Birbal Birjia took that rice himself from Birbal Oraon.

After that the *baiga* gave all the sacrificed chickens to the children. They immediately burnt and ate these. The *Baigin* and *Deoharin* opened all the packets of offerings brought by the villagers. These were divided into two equal halves and were taken by the *Baigin* and *Deoharin*. They got *wheat*, *rice*, *gondli* and *tusru*. The *Baiga* threw away all the leaf-pots. Bhotna Birjia collected all the heads of the sacrificed chickens and kept these in a separate 'dona'. He tied it with another *dona* containing rice with magical properties offered by the *Baiga*.

When the *Baiga* ended his worship, a villager, Bhambo Kisan took him on his shoulder. Then they all started to go around the village. First they went to the Agricultural Farm and did *johar* to the Manager. After that the *Baiga* went to his home and brought some sanctified water and distributed this among all the families. After this worship when Birbal went to the houses of the villagers, they washed his feet and offered him rice-beer to drink. Then by way of oblation, they gave him some money, each according to his means. Birbal got altogether Rs. 20/- and the *Deohar* Rs. 10/- during the *Sarhul* festival.

At night all the Birjias and Kisans came to the *Akhra* at Jamtoli where the dancing ground is situated, just by the side of the house of Ragho Birjia. They came not only from Jamtoli, Bartoli, Nayatoli, Sarnatoli, Paseripat and Mohnapat hamlets, but also from distant villages like Tahar, Henar and Batuatoli at the *akhra* that night. At first they came to the house of Ragho Birjia where they took rice-beer and *mahua* and then assembled at the *akhra*. They started dancing and singing joyfully. Some of the males played *mandar* and *nagera* while the others were dancing with the females. At first the dancing members were very few but, the number gradually increased at mid-night. Even

very young children began to dance and sing. The young boys and girls were imitating their parents who are more or less all trained in dancing. They continued dancing till morning. They were singing the songs of *Sarhul*. Everybody was fully drunk. During the *Sarhul*, parents give new clothes to their young children. Some of the young girls also got new jackets and *Saris*.

The next morning five men went out from their homes with sanctified and distributed it from house to house and each household gave them a few *paise* for meeting the festival expenses. At that time they also played *mandar* and *nagera* and sang *Sarhul* songs.

Bangari Puja

This worship is done at the time of transplantation in the paddy fields. After this worship, they start transplanting seedlings. The offerings of this worship are: one black cock and five pieces of *roti* (handmade bread prepared from rice). The *Sirni* is prepared by the wife of the person who arranges this worship. The *Baiga* after taking bath and wearing a washed cloth comes to the field first. Then he cleans the place of worship. After that he puts vermilion dot marks thrice on that place to consecrate it. Then he washes the head and feet of the cock and puts vermilion marks on its head. A black fowl is required for this worship. Then he offers some sun-dried rice to the cock to eat. He sacrifices the cock by his *baiga* knife in the name of *Dharti mai* (mother earth). Then the *Baiga* takes 5 paddy seedlings and transplants these ceremonially in the field.

After the worship the *baiga* takes the sacrificed fowl to his house and drinks rice-beer profusely. In all agricultural fields, it is believed, there are evil spirits which are thought, responsible for spoiling the growth of paddy and the destruction of the crops. So for getting good crops they appease these evil spirits with worship and sacrifice.

Burhia Karam

This festival is celebrated in the month of *Asarh* to have good rainfall. This worship is organised by the elderly women of the village. The eldest women fixes up the date of worship by approval of the other women. This worship is held between 9 A.M. to 11 A.M. at the village *akhra*. They bring a branch of the *karam* tree ceremonially and place it at the *akhra*. Then the Baiga comes to perform the worship. A fowl is sacrificed by him. He also uses incense and vermilion during the propitiation. Next morning all unmarried girls and boys of the village go out in a procession with the branch worshipped on the previous night and ceremonially immerse it into a spring or any other water reservoir. The participants dance at the *Akhra* and drink plenty of *mahua*.

Rajkaram

Unmarried young boys celebrate this festival and perform the rituals themselves in the month of *Bhadra*. Two to three boys take fire and incense and go to the place where a sacred stone is kept for the worship. They first tied a white cotton thread around the stone and put vermilion on it. Then a twig of *pial* plant with leaves is placed ceremonially on it. After that they move round the stone which is done thrice or five or seven times. This is known as *Hargari*. Then they go to the *Akhra* in a procession and fix-up the sanctified twig on the ground there. Then offering in the form of *sirni* is made to it and incense sticks are lighted there. Then the young men and women dance and sing throughout the night. This worship is done in the belief that their crops will be protected from wild animals by the deity concerned.

Worship of Khamari

This festival is held on the threshing ground, which is popularly known as *Kharian* where they store the harvested

grains. This worship is held early in the morning and the date is fixed by the head of the family. The *Baiga* officiates as priest. He offers one black fowl, *Sirni*, rice-beer and vermilion to the deity. Incense sticks are burnt during the worship. The place of worship is cleaned by his wife. After worship they express their gratitude to the deity and pray for a good harvest next year.

Narwa Khani

This festival is also performed at the *Khaniar* i.e. the threshing ground. The head of the family performs this worship. Among the *Kisans* various offerings made to the deity of which coconut, *Sirni*, vermilion, incense are important. After their worship they ceremonially consume the new crops.

Kharwaij

This communal festival is celebrated during the month of *Pous*. It is a leisure period since all crops are generally harvested by this time. Firstly the *baiga* fixes the date in consultation with other elderly persons of the village. Then one person is selected by him and given the charge of informing all villagers about the date and time of celebration. Last year *Bandhan Kisan* was given this job and he informed the villagers accordingly. Five cocks are necessary for this festival. One black cock is sacrificed in the name of the *dharti mai*, and a white cock in the name of the Sun God. The other three are offered in the name of the spirits of the groves. All these cocks are collected by *Jharia Kisan* who is the eldest man of the village and is entrusted for this job by the village priest. This worship was conducted during the day-time. This was held in front of a big earthen pot full of water brought by the *Baigin*. This was placed at the spot of the worship ceremonially. The *Deohar* earlier cleaned the spot. After that the *Baiga* lit some incense sticks. Then he took a fowl and washed its head and feet and put vermilion

mark on its forehead. Some sun-dried rice were given to the cock which it ate promptly. This indicated that the deity was pleased with the offering. Then the Baiga sacrificed this cock first and then some more offered by others. In all cases it was closely observed whether these cocks voluntarily took the rice or not before making the sacrifice. Last year Birbal, Birjia sacrificed 7 fowls and the Deohar, Titru Birjia 5 cocks. The trunks of these cocks were taken by the young boys and the heads by the Baiga. The Baiga and the Deohar took rice-beer and *khaini* (tobacco) leaf during the worship. Some villagers played the *nagera* and *mandar* during the worship. After the worship, a man took the *baiga* on his shoulder and carried him to his house. If this person would repeat this performance, he is given one *dhoti* by the Baiga as a reward. At night all the villagers assembled at the *Akhra* for rejoicing. All of them consumed plenty of rice-beer. Singing and dancing were continued by the elderly person throughout the night.

Based on the above observations and descriptions it can be said that the tribes of Netarhat try to appease the various deities and spirits for security in their economic and social life. By worshipping and sacrificing they believe that uncertainties are reduced, mischiefs can be averted and success can be achieved in various activities and missions of their day-to-day life. As a result, we find all these rituals are closely linked with their belief system and are still performed with great respect and reverence.

Diwali

Cattle are found in every house of the tribals. Young children and old men look after the grazing of the cattle. At about 8 A.M. they go to the forest with their cattle and return in the evening. The *Diwali* festival is connected with the cattle.

In the morning of *Amawas* or new moon day, in the month of *Kartik* worship of cattle is performed by the tribals in the

cattle shed which is known as *bathan*. But, the preparation for this festival starts either 9 days, 7 days, or 5 days earlier. They apply mustard oil on the body of their cattle. Just one day before the festival, an earthen lamp is lighted in the cattle-shed.

On the following morning, at about 10 A.M. the cattle are bathed in a tank situated at Bartoli. Then these are brought back into the family cowshed. Then the head of the family applies vermilion on the head of each cattle. In each house a special meal is prepared for the cattle by boiling together maize and *bodi* (*Vigna catiang*). Then the cattle are given that special food containing boiled maize and *bodi*. At that time incense is also burnt in the shed and their hoofs and horns are anointed with vermilion mixed with oil. At the time of worship, the head of the family prays to Goddess Lakshmi to keep their cattle safe, to protect them from wild animals in the forest and keep them free from all diseases.

Only among the Birjias sometimes a fowl is sacrificed in the name of tiger or bear or lightning for the safety of cattle and human beings. A black fowl is sacrificed in the name of bear, a multi-coloured fowl in the name of the tiger, and a white one in the name of lightning. The head of the family first washes its head and feet and then applies vermilion, oil in the head. Then the fowl is offered some sun dried rice. When this rice is taken by the fowl then he severs its head. If any of the fowls does not take the rice then another fowl is sacrificed, provided it takes the rice.

On this day the young boys and girls go from house to house playing the *Mandar* and *nagera* and begging gifts of rice and other grains, coins, and vegetables. After that they prepare food from the gifts food they receive in the forest and enjoy themselves very much. It is a sort of ritualistic picnic.

Chait Parab

The Goddess Maria Devi is appeased during the *Chait*

Parab. She is one of the chief deities of the Birjias and Kisans. She is appeased to get rid of different types of skin and epidemic diseases like cholera, small-pox etc. She is considered as a malevolent deity. When she becomes displeased with a particular locality, the roaring of wild animals may be frequently heard there, or human beings or domesticated cattle may be killed and eaten up by wild animals. By observing such a situation by divination, the village priest fixes a date for her worship on consultation with other elderly villagers. This worship is then performed in any month on any day of the year, but in general cases, the village people always try to appease her by worship on the day of the *Chait Parab*.

This puja is performed by the Baiga and the Deohar. They assemble at the permanent village *Marap* (shed) at about 8 A.M. This *marap* a small shed without any wall is situated at Bartoli. Subscriptions for the worship are collected by any old person. The offerings for this worship are one goat, a number of fowls, incense, oil, vermilion and sun-dried rice.

On the day before the worship, the village priest and Deohar remains on fast. The Baiga and Deohar come at about 12 O'clock with their wives. Then they first clean the shrine with a cowdung paste. After that they take their ritual bath. At this place there are two images. One is a wood and the other an earthen image. An elongated wooden piece with four curvatures represents the Goddess *Maria* and a small lamp of earth represents the spirit of that place.

A black (Kasia) goat is sacrificed in the name of *Maria Devi* and a fowl is sacrificed in the name of the spirit of that place.

At first the Baiga applies 3 vermilion marks mixing it with oil on each curvature of the wooden image and 3 vermilion marks on the earthen image. Then an incense

pot is lit up in front of *Maria Devi*. Then he washes the head and feet of the black goat and applies vermilion marks mixing it with oil on its head, hoofs and horns. Then he offers it some sun-dried rice to eat. After that he sacrifice the goat with the assistance of the *Deohar*. Then he pours the oozing blood around the top of the two images thrice and then keeps the goat aside. After he takes a black fowl and in the same way sacrifices it and drops the blood over the two images. Then the other fowls given by the villagers are sacrificed by the *Deohar* and the *Baiga* one by one.

Then he fixes up 4 very thin wooden splits at one side on the ground and burns incense there. Everyone attending takes *handia* while musical instrument *mandar* and *nagera* are played. The *Baiga* and the *Deohar* also take rice-beer. This worship is held on the ninth day of the month of *Chaitra*. The head of the goat is taken by the *Baiga* and the body is cooked for the communal feast in which the participants are served rice-beer. The worship of *Maria Devi* continued up to 2 P.M.

Worship of Attanga Sarna

This worship is held in the month of *Kartik* at an interval of 12 years in general cases. But in special cases when a village is affected by epidemic diseases of a family, then the spirit of *Attanga Sarna* is appeased in any year in any month and day according to the visitations of such calamities. This worship is done at the *Attanga Sarna* situated by the side of *Sarnatoli* near the water tank.

The worship is conducted by the *Baiga* with the assistance of *Deohar*. This spirit is considered as a malevolent one. To appease him they offer one pig, one goat, five fowls, sun-dried rice, vermilion, oil, incense and rice-beer. The *Baiga* sacrifices the pig and the goat in the name of the spirit of *Attanga Sarna*. One black fowl is sacrificed in the name

of the Sun God and three others in the name of three malevolent spirits. The method of sacrificing is the same as described above.

Worship of Ghanti Sarna

The spirit of *Ghanti Sarna* is considered as a malevolent one. This spirit is known as *Darha*. Its worship is held in the month of Aghan and the Baiga officiates as priest. The date is fixed after getting the bidding of the spirit through a dream. After having such a dream, the Baiga first consults the elderly villagers and then the date is fixed on their suggestion. This worship is held at an interval of four years. The offerings are one white ram, one goat, and five fowls which are sacrificed to appease the spirit. Beside these vermillion, incense, oil and arua rice are also offered. The Baiga does not eat anything except rice-beer and tobacco for 2 days before the actual worship. All sacrifices are performed by him. The worship starts at 6 a.m. and continues upto 10 a.m. All the villagers attend it and drink rice-beer. When the *Baiga* sacrifices the animals, the *Deohar* and other more experienced persons hold their feet and head. After the sacrifice the *Baiga* takes the heads of these animals. The *Deohar* and other villagers take the bodies and burn these for the communal feast.

Worship of Kara Sarna

The spirit of *Kara Sarna* is considered as malevolent in nature. He is regarded as being more powerful than other spirits. They believe that if he is annoyed, he would kill and consume human beings also. This worship is held from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. after every 12 years. When the spirit of *Sarna* feels hungry, the *Baiga* comes to know about this through a dream. Then he arranges for the worship to appease it in consultation with other elderly villagers. This *Sarna* is also called *Duria sarna*. The *Darha* is propitiated by the *Baiga* and the *Deohar*. They offer a goat, and a

number of fowls. Besides these, incense fire, vermilion, oil, and sun dried rice are also offered. This worship is performed to overcome attacks of wild beasts in the jungle, to protect the village from epidemic diseases, to protect the crops, and to protect the cattle from carnivorous animals. All sacrifices are done in the same way as described earlier. The last worship was held six years ago. The heads of the animals were taken by the *Pahan* and the trunks are buried into the ground in the name of the spirit. This spirit is very much dreaded and, as such, the offerings and sacrifices made to it are not served and eaten in the communal feast.

Worship of Khunti Spirit

The spirit of this place is also malevolent. This place is situated near the Palamu dakbungalow. In the forest there is a small rectangular stone. An iron rod has been placed over this stone diagonally. When the village incurs the displeasure of this spirit, the rod gives indication of that by changing its position and becoming parallel with the stone. Then immediately a date is fixed by the *Baiga* and other fellow villagers for its worship and appeasement. This worship is also done by the *Baiga* and the *Deohar*. It begins at 3 P. M. One goat and a number of fowls are sacrificed to appease this spirit. Vermilion, oil, incense and sundried rice are also offered, being essential items. It was reported to us that if the spirit is satisfied, then the rod again rises up and stands perpendicular on the stone. The *Baiga* takes the heads of the sacrificed animals.

Worship of Ancestors

The spirits of the ancestors are considered benevolent and are believed to look after the welfare of their own families. They consider their ancestral spirits as occupying the top of the hierarchy of the supernatural powers. They offer cooked food to them during the pollution period and

on the days of their worship. They offer cooked food everyday in the name of their ancestral spirits by dropping a few grains on the ground. Besides this, they propitiate their ancestral spirits thrice in a year first in the month of *Asarh*, then in *Aswin* on any day before *Diwali* and lastly in the month of *Falgun*.

The tribes of the *pat* also worship the monkey/god, snake, sun, moon, earth, bear and the lightning to avoid natural calamities and danger in life. These types of worship are conducted as family level as well as village level.

Chapter Four

THE CHANGING SCENE

Change is the law of Nature. The socio-cultural milieu of the tribes of Bihar has changed considerably. In society, some changes are brought about through nature while others are effected through various other factors. These factors are Christianity, industrialization, Government C.D. Blocks, schools, the impact of tourists and sports. These factors have produced changes in the tribal social system to a great extent.

The plateau is the mainland, so to speak, of Asurs and Birjias. Both theses tribes were traditionally simple artisans and smelt iron and at some stage practised slash and burn cultivation. The socio-cultural transformation has resulted in turning these simple artisans and shifting cultivators into settled agriculturists who have their traditional way of life, from the turn of the present century.

Adoption of settled agriculture by the Asurs and Birjias was followed by the Cadastral Survey and Settlement of Records of Rights under the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act of the Ranchi District in 1910, which was revised in 1935. The rights of the Asurs and Birjias were recorded over the lands actually found in their possession during the period of these survey.

Christianity

First of all on the 2nd November, 1845, four missionaries arrived at Ranchi and started their work of preaching. But for four long years their efforts did not meet with any success and in their disappointment they wrote to Father Gossner to change the field. Father Gossner was not a man to be discouraged too easily. He asked the Missionaries to have patience, replying that if the people do not receive the words

for their salvation 'then preach to them for their condemnation' (Lakra, 1952 : 51).

To fight against the exploitation and interference by the local *Zamindars* in various matters concerning their cultural life and land, the Chotanagpur tribes sought the protection of Missionaries. Sahay (1976 : 45) reports that it was observed that in court cases, the Christians were helped and sometimes even financed by the Missionaries. Their litigation was more successful than those of the pagans. Christianity also brought freedom from the dread of witchcraft and sorcery and exemption from the need of sacrificing fowls and animals to the spirits. Sahay has further observed that the Christians were being looked down upon by their non-Christian brethren and were regarded as social outcastes. However, these tensions had a favourable effect on the Christian community as they developed a greater sense of unity and solidarity among themselves.

The Christian Fathers did not help non-Christians (pagans). Whenever any non-Christian approached the missionaries they were rebuffed and told clearly that the latter helped only Christians. As a result, the pagans in many cases had to declare their willingness to join the Church and promise to stop any worship or sacrifice to spirits, to abstain from work on Sundays and to act according to the missionaries' advice.

The Roman Catholic missions opened their centre in the plateau area of Netarhat at Dumarpat, an Oraon village (Dumarpat R. C. mission centre lies on the Netarhat-Rajadera forest road between mile stones 10-11 from Bagesakhua to Rajadera). It is remarkable that first of all, in Chotanagpur, Oraons were converted to Christianity. Two such centres were already opened, and started functioning in Katkahi (1892) and Mahuadanr (1895). These missionaries converted a good number of Oraons, Asurs and Birjias into Christians. Along with these Mission stations, different schools, dispensaries, and other social centres were also opened.

The conversion to Christianity from the traditional *Sarna*

religion changed the economic, religious, social and political life of the tribals. The tribals who have adopted Christianity celebrate Christmas, Easter, *Swargarohan*, *Christ-deb-Parab*, *Mariam ka Uthan*, *Mirtak Atmaon ke Parab*, all having some biblical significance. Christmas, and Easter are observed with special pomp and grandeur; Church services, Holy communion, dance and song, and also drinks (among the Roman Catholic converts) are the chief traits of these festivals.

The Lutheran converts do not take rice-beer and hence bread of rice flour and tea are the special preparations during their festivals. As regards dance during the festival it varies from one area to another. However, the Lutheran converts perform *Baithki Bhajan*. On the other hand, the Catholic converts perform dances in all the festivals like the non-Christian tribals.

Besides the Christian festivals, the converts also observe some traditional festivals like *Nawakhani*, *Katni* and *Sohrai*. *Nawakhani* are observed by the converts twice a year once in August-September called *Gondli Nawakhani* and the other *Gora Nawakhani* is observed in October. The religious aspect of this festival has changed and in spite of offering the new crop or the first fruit of the season to a tribal deity like *Sarna Burhia*, Church services are held on the day and the converts take the new crop or the first fruits there to offer it first to God and seek His blessings.

Industrial impact

In the *pat* region a number of quarries of Bauxite opened around 1970. The villages like Jobhitoli and Sakhuapani have the Bauxite quarries on their outskirts. The vast tracts of lands of the villagers are utilized for extracting Bauxite (Aluminium ore). These lands are of course not agricultural but they are utilized for grazing purpose. Although the people are getting ready cash for their land, they will run short of grazing fields in future.

Large number of persons of the plateau region are engaged as labourers in the quarries. For their labour they receive

cash money weekly. They spend the major share of their wages on drinks, brought by the illegal brewers (*parchunias*) to their very door-step.

For the transportation of these Bauxite ores from plateau to the plain, a number of roads (metalled and unmetalled) have been constructed and some are in the process of construction. In the construction of these roads several tribals of both sexes are working as labourers. Some of them are working on the trucks also as *reja* (female labourer) and *kulie* (male labourers). These trucks have some regular handymen and workers hailing from other parts of the country with whom the Oraons, Asurs and other tribal mine-workers come into daily first-hand contact. Again for these works they get their cash money at the end of the week. By this money they purchase modern articles from Gumla, Lohardaga and sometimes from Ranchi also. These modern articles are mill woven clothes, slippers (made of plastic), combs, mirrors, transistors, bicycles, wristwatches, plastic bags, bright coloured tapes for the hair and other household items as well as some utensils of aluminium. These things have great impact on the way of life of their other co-villagers.

The other outside employees of the Bauxite quarries live in the village in the tribals' houses on payment of rent. They keep in their houses the local maid-servants (*dai*) for household work. These *dai* and neighbours copy the life style of the outsiders. The maidservants have to cook the food according to the taste of their employers and in this manner she knows the methods of preparation of so many eating materials. Morris (1977 : 238) opined that for the mine-workers the place of residence of the resident mine-managers is like a 'trading post'. They hang around this particular venue specially on pay-day and it is very much an 'economic centre of gravity'.

Community Development Projects

After the independence of India a large number of

Community Development Blocks were opened throughout the country for the economic upliftment of the people. During the Second Five Year Plan, a joint project under the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Community Development and Cooperatives was undertaken which was designed as the Special Multipurpose Tribal Development Project in the most undeveloped parts of tribal India. Eight such type of Projects were started in Chotanagpur in which one was Bishunpur (Gumla district) and the other Mahuadanr (Palamu district). These two blocks cover sufficiently the area of the Netarhat plateau. Through these projects many development schemes were implemented for the economic development of the people and the area. The Primary school and the two residential schools which were run by Adimjati Seva Mandal were taken over by the Government.

There is a Health sub-centre at Jobhipat which looks after the health of the *pat* people. Graingolas are functioning at Sakhuapani and Jobhipat which distribute seeds to the people for agricultural purposes. A number of diesel pump sets have also been distributed on loan in the different villages of the *pat* for irrigation. Other agricultural aids like fertilizers, insecticides, fruit plants etc. are given from time to time from the Block.

A number of wells for drinking purpose and big-diameter wells have been constructed for irrigation in different villages. The 90% personnel of the Block are from the outside of this area and most of them are non-tribals. These Block officials and the *pat* tribal people come into frequent contact with each other. The different aids given by the Block officials lays a great impact on the life style of the local people. Under the influence of the Block the people's traditional economy and way of life is changing very rapidly.

Schools

Education brings major changes in any society or culture.

After independence, large number of schools have sprung up. Netarhat Basic School was opened in 1947 as *Nimna Prathmik Vidyalaya* and students were taught up to class III. This school is situated in Paseripat. This school progressed further and classes were extended upto VII. After that the school was taken over by the Government in 1951. This school is imparting education to both tribal and non-tribal students.

There is another school at Bartoli on the Netarhat plateau. The name of the school is 'Namastey' and it imparts education upto the primary level only.

In an analysis of education of the six hamlets of Netarhat proper, namely Jamtola, Bartola, Nayatola, Sarnatola, Paseripat and Mohnapat we see that among the Oraon, Kisan and Birjia tribes, the total population, excluding of course the age group 1-12 month, 70 persons (51 males and 19 females) are literate. Their literacy includes the students of primary level also or those who know the alphabet of any language. Analysis shows that the education among the females is found upto class VI. Out of 19 literate females, 15 belong to Kisans and 4 to Birjias. There is no female Oraon literate. The highest rate of education is upto class III. Kisans are educationally advanced in comparison to the other two groups. 5 Kisans and 2 Birjias are reading in secondary schools, one Birjia and one Kisan have passed their intermediate and there are two graduates, one each in the Kisan and Birjia groups.

The *Adimjati Seva Mandal* with the support and financial assistance of the Government initiated the process of spreading education in the inaccessible and remote areas of the Netarhat *pat*. As far back as the 1950s the Mandal started with 10 primary schools in different places of this area.

The two residential schools, one at Jobhipat and the other at Sakhuapani, have had an effective impact on education. The residential school at Jobhipat is upto the matriculation

standard and it has 250 students and 15 teachers. The Sakhuapani residential school is only up to class VII and it has 80 students and 7 teachers.

Sharma (1982 : 76) observed that both the traditional and basic types have been accepted as the pattern of Elementary Education with an integrated syllabus, because it has been realized that all the schools at the Elementary levels cannot be transformed from traditional to basic pattern within a short time.

Besides bookish education, proper training in gardening, personal cleanliness, hygiene, religion and games are also imparted. The boys are taught to wash their own materials. Hair-cutting is also done by other fellow-boys. The students of both the residential schools belong to different ethnic groups drawn from the different areas of the plateau. Living together in the hostel of the school the students who belong to different tribal ethnic group cultivate inter-tribal harmony and after a short span of time become responsible members of their society.

After taking education from these schools the males become fit for white collar jobs in factories, mines, offices and other organisations outside their own territory. Some of them go to work as unskilled labourers in local mines or in the factories in the towns of the plains.

Most of the teachers are non-tribals from different parts of Bihar in these schools. The tribal boys imbibe a lot of alien cultural traits in their dress and behaviour patterns and eating habits. Some teachers are living in the village in the tribals' houses on rent because of scarcity of accommodation in the school. These teachers live in the village with their families. This provides an opportunity to the villagers to understand an outsider in his daily life.

Tourist impact

As we know, Natarhat is a hill resort and the only hill station in Bihar at the junction of the Gumla and Palamu

districts and within the jurisdiction of the Mahuadanr Police Station. It is known as the "Queen of Chotanagpur" because of its natural beauty. Therefore, it is an important place of tourist interest. The distance from Ranchi to Netarhat is 156 Km. Bihar State Road Transport Corporation is plying two buses regularly every day from Ranchi to Netarhat. Besides these, a number of tourist buses and other vehicles are frequently visiting this area. The tourists, who come from different parts of India, influence the way of life of the local people in many ways and are also an important factor for tribal socio-cultural transformation.

Previously, before the arrival of tourists the dress worn by the local people of Netarhat were indigenous. Small girls were wearing sarees and blouses from their early years. Even it was found that the 8 year old girls were wearing sarees but this concept has been changed due to impact of the tourists. Though some of the girls are still wearing sarees 'en masse', they have started wearing skirts, salwar-frocks etc. Generally, the women in the old days were wearing sarees without petticoats and blouses. They used to get themselves wrapped in single sarees but at present we have observed them wearing petticoat, blouse and brasseries along with their saree. Some women used to wear long blouses but these days they are wearing long as well as short blouses. Previously, they were using only cotton clothes whereas these days they have shifted to synthetic fibre material. Men used to cover their bodies with odd pieces of cloth but these days they have also changed over to full *dhoti*, *baniyan*, shirts and pants.

A few natives of Netarhat who are in contact with tourist residing in bungalows have got household utensils of the modern type. They have obtained cups and plates of clay, stainless steel glasses, small plates of stainless-steel, glass-tumblers etc.

Now the children from all the houses are being sent to the schools for their education. Due to the visit of tourists,

their ideas have changed and they are trying to get more and more educational facilities for their children, depending upon their family status.

Sports

The people of the tribal area in general and of the *pat* area in particular are very much interested in sports and specially in hockey. One may easily witness the tribal boys playing hockey on the level ground of the village and sometimes even in the *akhra* also. The boys make the hockey sticks themselves with a branch of a tree or of bamboo. It is amusing to note that sometimes the hockey sticks are heavier than those who wield them. The good players of hockey, however, who participate in matches and tournaments purchase hockeysticks from the markets of Gumla, Lohardaga or Ranchi.

In the schools some inter-school and inter-village tournaments are organized in which the villagers from within a radius of even 15-16 K.M. come to witness the game. Even if a village does not take part in the tournaments, villagers make it a point of honour to attend the tournament as spectators and supporters for their favourite team. These competitions which sometimes lead to acrimony amounting to some sort show-down or demonstration from time to time at the peak of excitement by the rattling of hockey-sticks, rarely however lead to violence. In all these matches which allow much intermingling between the people of neighbouring villages, the spirit of village solidarity is very much in evidence.

Appendix One

THE PAT MAN'S ATTITUDE TO THE SUPERNATURAL

Almost every known human society has a set-pattern of behaviour and belief-system linked with the non-empirical or supernatural world besides their own social norms. These grew up because of the fear of natural forces and certain predicaments in their day-to-day life, which they are unable to solve by themselves with their limited experience and earthly means. Perhaps, from this the concept of divinity and God has originated. In course of time these became inextricably woven with their religions and traditions. This mystic identification of oneself with the supernatural powers is done to avert the evil effects of circumstantial vicissitudes in day-to-day life and to lead a happy life, free from fear and diseases. Various incidents beyond one's imagination are seen to happen causing immense trouble and harm to an individual, for which he seeks divine means for relief and solution. From this seem to have originated taboos, rituals, worships, offerings of sacrifice, belief in dreams, taking vows in the name of a deity etc. which have received social sanction in course of time and thus a tradition has grown up and become institutionalised. This has ultimately taken the shape of different religions and religious beliefs. People are bound by such religious traditions everywhere and obey their own rites and rituals with unstinted faith and zest. The Birjias and Kisans of the Netarhat pat have also such types of beliefs and these are intrinsically and perceptively associated with their action-patterns and form a vital part of their culture.

An omen is any unexpected and inexplicable phenomenon of incident which, it is believed, predicts good or evil for

the future. It is a type of fore-warning or divine prediction for good or bad. In the tribal and backward societies these predictions play a very vital role in the selection of the place for dwelling, construction of kitchen, hearth action patterns, forms of worship, observance of rituals and leading one's daily life. Some omens are also connected with marriage, birth, death, pregnancy widowhood and sterility.

Some omens predict good happening in one's life and as such these are called good omens. Some bring misfortune and are called bad omens. They believe in these with heart and soul and have an implicit faith in their potency. Sometimes due to some omens they have to change their decisions. For instance, they stop a marriage with such and such family which is predicted to be under the influence of bad omens. They cancel a scheduled journey to the forest for collecting fruits, edible roots or cutting wood, because of bad omens. These beliefs in omens are very common among the Birjias and Kisans. Some beliefs are, however, common to both the tribes.

Below are given a list of favourable omens according our observations.

Some favourable omens

1. A women with a vessel full of water or with a basket of paddy on her head signifies good fortune.
2. Seeing a dead body on the way being carried for cremation.
3. Seeing a donkey on the road or a donkey with load passing on the road.
4. Seeing a cow or a buffalo on one's way also signifies good fortune.
5. Taking curd and fish are considered favourable before going to perform a good work.
6. If one sees a snake before going to any place, they believe that his particular mission will be successful on that particular day.

Unfavourable omens

1. Seeing a person carrying an empty vessel.
2. Seeing a person in the morning whose eyes are disproportionate.
3. Seeing a person of the Tili Caste (oil seller) they believe, brings misfortune.
4. To meet any deformed man.
5. Crossing of the road one is going through by a cat or a lizard is thought to be an unfavourable omen.
6. At the beginning of some work, at the time of starting, if a person happens to sneeze, he postpones his work or journey however important it may be.
7. Seeing the face of a widow first in the morning.
8. Seeing a particular bird called 'Nilkantha' in the village is an unfavourable omen.
9. On beginning a journey, if anybody sees a snake with spread out hood standing on the road, it is thought as a very bad omen. He postpones his journey at once. They believe that their totem (Snake-Nag) is blocking the road and giving pre-warning of the likely mishap.
10. While starting for a journey if anybody gets hurt or stumbles then they believe such a journey will be useless.
11. Death of a pregnant woman is considered a bad omen. They believe that the death of such women occurs due to the will of god and is a fore-boding for a mishap.
12. Seeing the face of a witch is also an unfavourable omen.

There are again some omens which are associated with dreams. Some dreams, it is believed, bring fortune or enjoyment and some cause misfortune and sorrow.

Some favourable dreams (Belief among the Kisans)

1. If a person dreams of a snake, then a guest is expected to visit his house.

2. If one dreams that he or she is eating a mango, then the person would get fish or meat to eat the next day.
3. If anybody dreams that he is catching fish, then he/she will get money.
4. If a person dreams about river, canal etc. he or she will get rice-bear (Handia) on the next day.
5. If a person dreams about deer, a guest would visit his house.
6. If anybody has lost a thing, sometimes he/she is able to know where it is through a dream.
7. Dreams about sewing or knitting are good omens.
8. Having dreams of an agriculture field is a good omen.

Some unfavourable dreams (Belief among the Kisans)

1. If a person dreams about flood, somebody will die, they believe. The water represents tears of a crying woman.
2. If anybody dreams about singing and dancing, he will meet a ferocious animal like bear, tiger.
3. Dreams about death foretells the death of any person in the hamlet.
4. Dreams of a new cloth foretells the death of one of his relatives.
5. If a person dreams that he is giving water to anybody, it causes death in his own family.
6. If a person dreams that she is playing with an unknown child. It brings illness in her family. (Because this child is a *Churail* ghost in disguise they believe).
7. If a person dreams about a ghost, he/she is expected to be ill.
8. Dream of a bear for say that one would meet a ferocious animal in the forest next day.
9. If anybody dreams about thees, it foretells that somebody will die in the hamlet.

10. If one dreams of a corpse, it brings a new mishap to ones' family.

Some favourable dreams (Belief among the Birjias)

Some dreams of the Birjias are the same as among the Kisans, but others which are different from the Kisans are stated below :

1. Dream of a water source or well predicts good crops.
2. If a person dreams that any insect has sat on his body, good crops are expected.
3. If a person dreams that he is eating a ripe mango, good journey is expected.

Some unfavourable dreams among the Birjias which are not found among the Kisans are stated below :

1. If anybody dreams that he is constructing a house, then a death in his family will occur.
2. Dream of a Churail or playing with a Churail (ghost) causes illness.
3. Dream of taking rice-beer is bad because the rice with which it is made is rotten.
4. If anybody dreams that he has gone for cutting trees or for roaming in the forest, it will cause mishap to him when he will go into the forest.

Some unfavourable dreams associated with diseases

1. Dream of a bear indicates fever.
2. Dream of taking Handia (rice-beer) causes illness.
3. Dream of riding a car or truck indicates stomach trouble.
4. Dream of an elephant indicates entering of Mai (disease Goddess) into the house, causing epidemics like smallpox, cholera.
5. Dream of a horse represents the entering of Khunti Darha (ghost) in the village.
6. Dream of a pig also symbolises of entering of Dhara (ghost) in the village.

7. If any person dreams about a fowl, then the Churail (female ghost) will enter into his house and cause harm.
8. If anybody dreams that his mother or aunt is coming to his house, it indicates occurrence of disease in that house.
9. Dream of rainfall indicates the death of a person in the village.

As they believe generally that dream brings misfortune rather than fortune, they think that dreaming is not good. Sometimes one's dreams may come to be true, sometimes not. At times dreams are symbolical in nature. They sometimes believe that they dream what they think. This is the case of a common person but sometimes somebody gets instructions as to what he should do, how he will overcome an impending danger. Sometimes they also come to know about hidden treasures through a dream. Sometimes the magic-man or Bhagat gets the training for his magical feats and rituals through dreams.

Special dreams : A Case Study

This particular case relates to Dhananjay Kisan of Bartoli at Netarhat. He is now 30 years old. His clan is Nagesia. His wife's name is Manju Debi. She is about 22 years old.

1. Seven or eight years ago, one ascetic came to him in his dream and told him that he would find a silver pitcher full of coins at Banari if he offered human blood as sacrifice for him. But he did not agree to do this but he believes that if he would have given human blood to the deity as he was bidden, then he would have got that treasure.

2. This case deals with the dream of a magic-man. His name is Kaharun Kisan of Bartoli. He is 45 years old. This case depicts how he got his magical training.

When he was 10 or 12 years old, he went to his 'Guru' for his training. But he dreamt of a person who looked like an ascetic, who came to him and taught him the performance

of magic through songs before he went to his 'Guru's place. He also learnt the procedure of worshipping of the gods and goddesses and occult incantations through which he could be able to cure spirit-possessed persons. Then he became inspired to go to his Guru's (*Adept*) place for completion of his training. At that time he used to dream such dreams very frequently. He used to dream not only at night but also in the day-time. After dreaming of such events he went to his Adept for proper training, though he had learnt how to appease the spirits and other occult incantations before through his dreams.

Once he dreamt that a ghost came to him and told him, "I have a lot of money. Please come with me and sacrifice human blood for the sake of relieving me from this painful life and take all this money". But Kaharun did not offer blood for the sake of money. He believed that if that money was taken by him, it would have brought misfortune in his home. The soul that required human blood could not be a good soul, according to him.

Symbolic dreams

3. In the hamlet of Jamtoli, Suila Birjia, aged 22 years, dreamt a symbolic dream which is as follows :

One day he dreamt about a snake. Next day his aunt came to his house from Banari. Dreaming of a snake indicates the coming of a guest to the house.

One day he dreamt that he was eating a mango which symbolises a good journey. It became fruitful in his case. Next day he went to the Court for knowing the decision in his case. On that day he was freed from a Police Case instituted against him by the previous Manager of the local Agriculture Farm.

Unfavourable Omen

One day Suila Birjia was going for some work, but he saw an empty vessel on his way. On that day the Manager of the

Agriculture Farm of Netarhat lodged a case against him with the police for creating disturbances in the Agriculture Farm. But he believed that if he had seen instead a vessel full of water, such a case would never have been brought against him.

Beliefs connected with household affairs

Many odd beliefs and taboos are connected with the facing of a house, selection of the place for construction, construction of the hearth, etc.

Selection of place for construction of the house

They believe that all places are not suitable for constructing a dwelling house. Some places are abode of bad spirits. These spirits do harm to the people who construct their house on that place. For this they first select a place which is not haunted by an evil spirit. This is done by performing certain magical rites. Generally, they are able to know what place is good or bad by performing the following ritual.

Firstly, they search for a level ground which is suitable for constructing a house. Secondly, the head of the family and his wife go to that place and take five grains and bury these at four places, in four different directions. Then they sleep at that place for the whole night. Next morning, they dig up the soil and check up whether all the grains are in their exact places or not. Even if one grain is found missing, they believe that the place is haunted by an evil spirit and they leave that place and search for another suitable one.

Direction of the House

The houses are built facing south or east. In exceptional cases the houses are built in the direction of north-south. They don't prefer to build their house in a northerly direction as the head of the dead body is placed that way. They prefer to build their house in an easterly direction because they believe that they will be able to get the blessings of the Sun God. In the four hamlets surveyed most of the houses have been built in an easterly direction. Some house have-

been constructed in the south-east direction, and very rarely in the north-south direction but not a single house was found facing north.

Hearth

In the house of both Birjias and Kisans they have two hearths. One hearth is made in a westerly direction and another in a northerly direction. The north-facing hearth is constructed in the most interior part of the room so that the shadow of no other person except the family members can fall on that hearth. Even the married daughter is not allowed to touch that hearth. The north-facing hearth is not used when a baby is born or until the Sradh Ceremony, in case of a death, is over.

Auspicious days

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday are considered as the most favourable days by them. Wednesday and Sunday are favourable too. Social festivals and religious festivals are performed on these days. It was the time of the Sarhul festival when we visited this place. It was observed that the Sarhul festival was held at four hamlets e.g. Batuatoli, Jamtoli, Tahir, Henar. At Henar this festival was held on the 25th April, 1979 which was a Friday. On the 10th of May 1979 which was also a Friday, the Sarhul Festival was held at Batuatoli. Similarly, this festival was also held at Jamtoli on the 18th May, 1979 which was a Friday and at Tahir on 22nd May, 1979 which was incidentally a Tuesday. So it clearly indicates that Friday is the most auspicious day for them. Besides Sarhul, other festivals are also held like-wise. *Kharwaj* festival is held on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday, *Fagua* festival on Tuesday, Wednesday, Sunday, Monday, the *Chait Parab* on Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, the *Raj Karma* festival on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and the *Dewali* on Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.

Saturday is considered as the most inauspicious day and no festival, either social or religious, is held on that day.

Auspicious months

Aghan (November-December), *Paush* (December-January), *Magh* (January-February), *Falgun* (February-March) are the most auspicious months and the month of *Bhadra* (June-July) is the most inauspicious according to their belief. Marriages are performed in the month of *Magh* (January-February) and *Falgun* (February-March).

The months of *Aghan* and *Paush* are spent in merry-making because this is the time of harvesting and they have no problems regarding food. So they enjoy themselves very much during this time along with their guests and friends.

Dress

White cloths are more preferred by the Birjias and Kisans but during the marriage celebration, white cloths are dyed with yellow colour.

Kitchen garden

Some magical rites are observed in the fields growing vegetables or other crops in the Jamtoli and Sarnatoli where they generally set an old earthen-pot painted with lime or place the skull of a cow to avert the evil eye of a sorcerer or a witch.

Totems

Nagesia or Nag is the only totem among the Kisans or Nagesia tribe, Lokra (tiger) and Suraj (the Sun) are two other totems which are found among the Birjia tribe at Netarhat proper. The Kisans worship their totem Nag once a year or every three years or five years. The Birjias who have the Lakra (tiger) totem, worship it during the

Dewali Festival and who have the Suraj (The Sun) totem offer everyday water to the Sun God, and in most of their festivals the Sun God is worshipped by them. During the worship of Lakra, they sacrifice a multi-coloured fowl (*Chitkabra*) to Lakra and a white fowl in the name of Suraj God, with milk, Lawa (*Khai-pop*), and coconut. They also sacrifice a fowl in the name of the Nag totem of Nagesia at the appropriate time.

Among the Nagesia, there are three groups on the basis of marriage rituals. These three groups are Sinduria Nagesia, Dhuria Nagesia and Telia Nagesia. Dhuria is the oldest group. Then gradually comes Telia and Sinduria. In Jamtoli, Bartoli, Sarnatoli and Nayatoli, most of the people are Telia Nagesia except one or two households. Dhaneshwar Nagesia of Bartoli and Mangru Kisan of Jamtoli claim that they were previously Sinduria, but now they are Telia. Dhuria Nagesia is not found in these four hamlets, i.e. Jamtoli, Bartoli, Nayatoli and Sarnatoli, but this group is found at Palkot which is situated to the south of Lohardaga.

In the case of a Dhuria marriage, the bridegroom applies dust (*Dhuri*) on the head of the bride, instead of oil and vermilion and the bride applies dust (*Dhuri*) on the chin of the bridegroom. In the case of a *Telia marriage*, the bridegroom applies mustard oil (the mustard are ground by the family of the bride) on the forehead, and when it flows down from the forehead to nose, then he checks the flow of the oil by using a mango-leaf, and pushes it back up to the head (*sinthi*) or the hair-parting of the bride. Then the bride takes that oil and applies it on the chin of the bridegroom by the little finger of her left hand. In the case of a *Sinduria marriage*, the bride first puts mustard oil on her head and then the bridegroom applies vermilion on her *Sinthe* (hair-parting) and then again the bride applies vermilion on the chin of the bridegroom by her little finger.

Legends connected with the Sinduria Nagesia

It is said that a particular person among Sinduria Nagesia was going to marry. He was accompanied by a lower caste person a chamar (skin-tanner) who was carrying a vermilion box in his pocket. In the way a rat somehow managed to take away that box. In spite of their utmost efforts to recover it, they could not find that box. So when they reached the bride's place, they requested the family members of the bride to grind mustard seeds. By applying that oil, marriage was performed. They promised that until the lost box was found, they would not use vermilion for marriage rituals. Still some Sinduria Nagesia are found at Palkot.

Belief in Fate

(a) There are so many beliefs connected with the concept of rich and poor and fatality. These are as follows :

- (1) Some believe that the blessing of a god makes one rich.
- (2) Others say that the past-deeds are responsible for the present condition of life.
- (3) According to some other beliefs, those men become rich who labour hard and those who remain idle are generally poor.

(b) Beliefs connected with harvest :

There are many beliefs connected with harvesting too. These are as follows :

- (1) One gets a good harvest due to the blessing of the gods.
- (2) Good harvest depends upon rainfall.
- (3) Some believe that application of good and plentiful manure produce good harvest.
- (4) Others believe that one who works hard in his field is rewarded by a good harvest.
- (5) Some believe that bad harvest is due to the casting of an evil eye by a witch.

(6) Some of them believe that sometimes something is buried in the field by a witch to destroy the crops.

(c) Beliefs connected with deformed children.

There are many beliefs connected with such concepts. These are as follows :

(1) Deformed babies are born according to the wish of the gods.

(2) Evil deeds of the present life result in deformity in the next birth.

(3) If any part of the body of a person is damaged by a person, then in the next life, the man who did the damage will be born with such type of deformity. For example ; one will be born blind if he had damaged the eyes of a person in his past life.

(4) Some of them believe that if the parents commit a sin then their baby will be born deformed.

(5) Others believe that if a pregnant woman sees either the eclipse of the sun or the eclipse of the moon, a deformed baby will be born to that woman.

(6) Some to them believe that due to the casting of the evil eye by a witch during the pregnancy of an expectant mother, a deformed baby is born.

(d) Beliefs connected with diseases.

There are many beliefs connected with this particular aspect too. These are as follows :

(1) Diseases occur due to the wrath of gods and goddesses, particularly of the goddess Maria according to their belief.

(2) Others believe that black magic practitioners induce diseases among men and women.

(3) According to their belief, if someone does any bad deed, then he/she must suffer from a disease.

(4) Some diseases are caused, they believe, due to pollution of blood when any insect enters into the baby.

(5) Some diseases, i.e. Smallpox, Chickenpox, Cholera, Measles occur due to very hot climatic conditions.

Taboos

In every aspect of their life, many taboos are observed, which play a vital role. These taboos are usually observed by the pregnant women, sterile women, during death pollution and birth pollution periods. Besides some taboos are connected with trees, hunting and agriculture.

*Taboos connected with the life-cycle**Pregnant women*

1. A pregnant woman is not allowed to do heavy work. She is permitted to do only light work like cooking, collection of firewood etc.
2. A pregnant woman is not allowed to see the oclipse of the sun or the moon.
3. A pregnant woman should not tread on unholy places like a cremation ground. There is a belief that ghosts or evil spirits generally reside in such places. So to avoid their evil eyes there is such a restriction.

Birth pollution

1. The umbilical cord is not thrown out or buried here and there it is buried carefully at a selected place to avoid the evil eyes.
2. The mother and the baby are not touched by anybody until the umbilical cord has dried up.
3. During this period i.e. 12 or 15 days the hearth is not touched by the mother.

Death pollution

1. Throughout the mourning period the members of the family do not touch oil, turmeric, salt or eat fish and meat.
2. They do not cut their nails.
3. No member of the deceased's family touch the north-facing hearth.

Taboos connected with economy

Forest economy : Besides agriculture, the cutting of wood is a very important economic pursuit among them. But there are certain taboos regarding this, as follows :

1. They don't go for collection of wood during the Dewali festival, the Fagua festival and also on the day before the Sarhul festival.
2. They do not cut wood during full moon. They believe if they do so, then insects will spoil the wood.
3. They never climb upon a tree at noon for fear of being molested or possessed by a ghost.

Other superstitions

1. No woman of a Netarhat village carries firewood on her shoulder ; she carries it on her head, because they believe that if she carries it on the shoulder, she will grow barren.
2. All members put a black mark on the forehead of their child or tie a black thread around a foot. There is a popular belief that in that way they can protect their children from the evil eyes of witches or evil spirits.
3. Tattooing is not found among the Birjias and Kisans, but cases of tattooing were found only on two individuals, of whom one was a Sinduri Nagesia of Bartoli and another was Lalita Debi, wife of Sridhar Nagesia of Bartoli.

In case of Sinduri Nagesia, the tattooing mark was found on her forehead. When she was 2 or 3 years old, she suffered from a serious disease. So her mother had given a mark of tattoo on her forehead so that she may not suffer again. In case of Lalita Debi the tattooing mark was on her head. It is the symbol of Hinduism according to her belief.

Thus we find that numerous beliefs are mysteriously connected with their day-to-day life. Sometimes they appear to control their destiny and indicates the possibilities of

gaining something or success and at other times help to dispel uncertainties and cure ailments. These have given a set-pattern to their lives. As these beliefs are linked up with the supernatural world, these have been institutionalised and are observed by everyone with an assured feeling of hope and belief. Nobody refuses to participate in the rituals or dare to violate the taboos. Thus they have created their own pantheon of gods and religion and live with profound confidence in them.

Appendix Two

DISEASES AND REMEDIES

The concept of health, disease, treatment, life and death among tribals is as varied as their culture. The Oraon and Munda of plateau area have a system of diagnosis and cure. The usual theory of disease in Oraon and Munda society is that it is caused by hostile spirits, the ghosts of the dead or the breach of some taboo. Therefore, what is spiritually caused has to be spiritually cured and this is perhaps the main reason why they prefer to go to their own indigenous medicine man for the cure. There are many natural remedies, ideas of forest herbs known to them. They however do not know the origin of these herbal medicines.

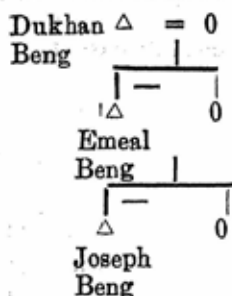
They first go for prevention and cure of their diseases to the medicine man and when the disease becomes chronic they go to the hospital for treatment. Some of the medicinal herbs, commonly used by the Oraon and Munda people are discussed here. The ailment and the manner in which these herbs are being used have also been discussed.

<i>Local names of the Herbal Medicines</i>	<i>Disease</i>	<i>Description</i>
1. Chitawar & Putri	Malaria	Roots are grounded and taken 3 times with water.
2. Bhawarmali	Influenza	-do-
3. Beri	Typhoid	-do-
4. Barkakachamar, Chorbas and Pathalkera	Pain in body	Body is massaged with this mixed with mustard oil or water.
5. Boir root found in tanr land	Stomach pain	Grounded and taken thrice a day.

- | | | | |
|----|---|------------------|---|
| 6. | <i>Lilkott, Suiabuti & Bhusri</i> | Snakebite | All the three are grounded and taken thrice a day. |
| 7. | Peppermint and mustard oil | Feeling weakness | This is applied just below the nose and on the fingers. |
| 8. | Both <i>Sindur</i> and broken glass are grounded and mixed with <i>Pakhalbanda</i> and the white excretory product of chicken | Eye Swelling | With mustard oil the mixture is applied on the eye. |

As the medicine man becomes old he imparts his knowledge to his son or nephew and thus it is passed on from one generation to another. Sometimes they call this medicine man as *Dawaidar*.

Joseph Beng is the medicine man of Dumberpat. After Dukhan and Emeal, Joseph became medicine man. Thus it is passing from one generation to another. Other tribal people comes to him from nearby villages.



A few case studies of curing diseases of some members by Josephs Beng are discussed.

Case I

Patient—a boy

Age—18 years

Village—Sakhuapani

Disease—Pain and Fever.

Joseph gave Bhawarmali grounded on a stone. As it is treated for two days he was cured.

Case II

Patient—a girl

Age—20 years

Village—Khairitoli

Disease—*Garmi Bukhar*

She was suffering from this fever for several years. And she became very weak. Then Joseph gave her *Atihawabon* (found in the *tanr* land) mixed with little Handia of *Gora* or *Karaini Dhan*. She recovered fully after six months.

Case III

Patient—Keswari Sahu

Age—20 years

Village—Hutab (6 miles west
from Dumberpat)

Disease—Snakebite.

Joseph gave him the herbal medicines and he took out all the poison by his mouth. And the boy thus recovered.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ahmed, E. 1965 Bihar, a physical, economic and regional geography, Ranchi University.
- Bates, Marston 1953 "Human Ecology", pp. 700-714 in Kroeber, A. L. (Chairman), Anthropology Today. An Encyclopedic Inventory, Chicago University of Chicago Press.
- Bennett, 1949 "Andeen Culture History" American
Wendell C. & Museum of Natural History Handbook
Junius B. Bird. Series No. 15.
- Bertocci, P.J. 1974 Rural Communities in Bangladesh. Hajipur, and Tinpara (ed. Clarence Maloney),
- Beverley, H. 1872 Report on the Census of Bengal, Calcutta, p. 96.
- Borbora, S. 1979 Cultural Ecology and the Nature of Transformations : A Study of the Asur of the Netarhat Plateaus, Ph.D. Thesis, Ranchi University, Ranchi.
- Cooper, 1942 Areal and Temporal Aspects of
John M. Aboriginal South American Culture, Primitive Man, Vol. XV, No. 3. 1 and 2, pp. 1-38.
- Creutzburg, 1933 Kuttur in Spiegel der Landschaft :
Nikolaus Das Bild der Erde in Seiner Gestaltury durch den Menschen Ein Bilderatlas Leipzig.
- Dalton, Col. 1872 Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal.
- Dash 1978 Physical Anthropological Studies on
Sharma, P. Mundas, Oraons and Dusadhs of Bihar, Field Research Projects, Miami : Florida.

Except from B. and O.D. Gaz. Ranchi 1917 : 253.

- Fels, Edwin 1935 *Der Mensch als Gestalter der Erde : Ein Beitrag Zur allgemeinen Wirtschafths and Verkehrsgeographies* Leipzig.
- Guha, B. S. 1944 *Racial Element in Indian Population, Oxford paper on Indian Affairs, No. 22, Bombay, Oxford University Press.*
- Harris, M. 1966 *The Cultural Ecology of India's sacred Cattle, C.A. Vol. 7, No. 1.*
- Kink, K. L. & 1963 *A genetical study of the Oraon of Chotanagpur Plateau, Journal of Social Vidyarthi et. al. Research, Vol. VI, No. 1-2, pp. 43-129.*
- Kroeber, A.L. 1939 *Cultural and Natural Areas of Native North America, University of California Publications, in American Archaeology and Ethnology XXXVIII, 1-242.*
- 1948 *Anthropology, New York Harcourt, Brace and Company.*
- Lakra, Joel 1952 *The Gossner Evengelical Lutheran Church 1845 in C. H. Swavelly (ed). The Lutheran Enterprise in India, Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India.*
- Lowenthal, David 1953 *George Perkins Marsh and the American Geographical Reviews, XLIII, No. 2, 207-13.*
- Mann, R.S. (ed.) 1981 *Nature-Man-Spirit Complex in Tribal India, Ranchi Anthropology Series-3, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi.*
- Marsh, G.P. 1964 *Man and Nature : or Physical Geography as Modified by Human Action, New York Scribners London : Sampson Low, 560pp. (Two Italian editors, published in Florences Italy, 1869 and 1872).*

- Murdock, G. P. 1951 "The South American Culture Areas", *South-western Journal of Anthropology*, VII, 415-36.
- Negri, Giovanni 1930 Caratteri generali dell'azione umana sulla vegetazione, *Atti dello XI Congresso Geografico, Italiano, Napoli*.
- Newbigin, M. I. 1912 *Man and His conquest of Nature*, London : Adam and Charles Black, 183 pp.
- Prasad, A. 1968 *Rural Settlement in Chotanagpur. Ph.D. Thesis, Ranchi University*.
- Roy, S. C. 1912 *The Mundas and their Country, Ranchi*.
1915. *The Oraon of Chotanagpur, Ranchi*.
- Sahay, K. N. 1976 *Under the Shadow of the Cross*, Institute of Social Research and Applied Anthropology. Calcutta-700019.
- Sandhwar, A. N. 1978 *The Korwa of Palamau : A study of their Society and Economy. Acta Ethnologica Et Linguistica : Wien*.
- Sarkar, S. S. 1957 *The Aboriginal Races of India, Bookland : Calcutta*
- Shaler, N. S. 1905 *Man and the Earth*, New York, Duffield and Co., 240 pp.
- Sharma, T. R. 1962 *Primary Education in a Ranchi Tribal Village*, *Bulletin of Bihar Tribal Research Institute, Ranchi*.
1982 *Tribal Festivals of Bihar, A Functional Analysis ; Ranchi Anthropology Series-V, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi*.

- Singh A. K. 1984 Tribal Development in India :
Classical Publishing Company,
New Delhi.
- Sinha, S. P. 1980 Birjia Tribe of Mahuadanr
Anchal: A Scientific study in
Cultural Ecology, Ph.D. Thesis,
Ranchi University, Ranchi.
- Steward, Julian H. 1936 "The Economic and Social Basis
of Primitive Bands", in Essays
in Honour of A. L. Kroeber.
Berkeley, California : University
of California Press.
- 1946-1948 The Handbook of South American
Indians Ed. Julian H. Steward,
Bureau of American Ethnology
Bulletin, 143 Vols.
- 1955 "Theory of Culture Change",
University of Illinois Press
Urbana.
- Stout, David 1938 "Culture types and Culture Areas
in South America", Papers of the
Michigan, Academy of Science
Arts, and Letters, XXIII, 73-86.
- Sunder, D. H. E. 1898 Final Report on the Survey and
Settlement of the Palamau Govern-
ment Estate, Palamau district,
Chotanagpur, Bengal, Appendix,
pp. CcXXXV, Calcutta 1898.
- Vidyarthi, L. P. 1958 Cultural Types in Tribal Bihar,
Journal of Social Research, Vol,
No. 1, pp. 75-85.
- 1961 The Sacred Complex in Hindu
Gaya, New York, Asia Publishing
House.
- 1963 The Maler : A Study in Nature-
Man-Spirit Complex of a Hill

- Tribe in Bihar, Bookland Pvt. Ltd., Calcutta.
- Wissler, Clark 1922 *The American Indians*, New York and London : Oxford University Press.
- 1923 *Man and Culture*, New York.
- Woeikof, A. P. 1949 *Voz deistivie Cheloveka na prirodu : Izbrannye Stat'i* (*Influence of Man upon Nature : Selected Articles*). Edited with an Introductory Article and Notes, by V. V. Pokshishevskii, Moscow.

INDEX

- Adar, 107
- Adoption, 31
- Adimjati, Seva Mandal, 169
- Agnatas, 24
- Agriculture, 83
 - Operation, 87
 - Tehnology, 36
- Age-group, 44, 45
- Aged persons, 72
- Ahmad, 6, 84
- Ahir, 12
- Akhra, 19, 34-35, 142, 153, 172
- Alluvial soil, 3
- Alluvium, 5
- Ancestors, 14
- Antiquity, 11
- Aristocratic, 15
- Arts and Crafts, 35
- Aryan, 11, 18
- Assistant priest, 141
- Asur, 9, 12, 24
- Atanga Sarna, 131
- Australoid, 11
- Azamgarh, 18

- Bahar Barwe, 4
- Baiga, 16, 126, 148
- Baigain, 140
- Bake, 14
- Bakhri, 92
- Bandar, 9

- Bangari Puja, 154
- Baniyas, 10
- Bari, 8, 13
- Bartoli, 41
- Bauxite 2
- Beonra 27
- Bhagwan 125
- Bhitar Barwe 4
- Bhuinhari 16
- Bihar 11-13, 24
- Birjia 9, 12, 27
- Birth rate 51
- Bishunpur 4, 24, 86, 168
- Blood 150
- Bonga 129
- Botoi 19
- Bride groom 32
 - price 14
- Buna 93
- Burhia 18
- Karam 155
- Burial 32

- Calamities 123
- Captain Deponee 3
- Carnivores 7
- Cash 122
- Cattle 105
- Chainpur 4
- Chait Parab 158
- Chandi 128
- Charkha 20

- Chatta* 37
Chchathi 29
Chotanagpur 2, 18, 22
Christians 10, 21
 mission 120
Christianity 164
Chukas 20
Churail 129, 176
Classes of land 85
Climate 5
Common festivals 148
Community Development 17
 Project 167
Corpse 32
Credit agencies 120
Cremation 26
Crow-bar 20
Custom 30, 38

Dalton 30
Darha 130, 136, 146
Dari 8
Dasgupta 129
Dash Sharma 11
Death Statistics 53
Decomposition 5
Deohar 126, 141
Deoharin 153
Demography 40
De novo 3
Deona 130
Deswali 18
Dewan 15
Dhangar 33, 79
Dharmes 14, 17
Dharti Mayee 126

Dhela 25
Dhuku 29
Dhumkuria 17, 33
Divorce 15
Diwali 157
Don 8, 13
Dolicocephalic 12
Domcach 148
Draught animal 106
Dravidian 11-13
 tribe 30
Dreams 175
Dry tropical 7
Dumarpat 165
Dung 107

Ecology 138
Ecological setting 9
Economy 83
Economic activities 80
Employment 110
Ethnic composition 68
Ex-communicated 14
Exogamous 14
Expulsion 26

Fauna 7
Festivals 140
Finger dermatoglyphic 58
Finger prints 65
Firewood 118
Fishing 116
Flora 7
Folk medicines 29
Folktales 36
Food 110

- Forest 111
 Forest Regulation Act 9
 Forestry 110

Gairahi khunt 18
Garha 85
Ghant Sarna 130, 135
Ghar Damad 24
Ghasi 12
Godnas 31
Gondli 13
Gora rice 88
 Government 10
 Grain gola 75
 Granite 5
 Guha 13
 Gumla 3, 12

Haluman 9
Handia 140
Hargori 136
 Harmonious 34
 Harris 106
 Harrowing 91
 Harvesting 98
Hat 1
 Herbivorous 7
 Hierarchy 16
 Hinduised 25
 Hinterland 11
 Hoffmann 25
 Hunting 116
 Hydrography 4
 Hyperolichocephalic 60
 Incest 16
 Infringement 15
 Impotent 15
 Incantation 139, 142
 Indebtedness 119
 Industrialization 21, 164
 Industrial impact 166
 Infant mortality 54, 55
 Inheritance 22
 Interfluves 3
 Iron smelting 9

Jamtoli 41
Jashpur 4
Jatra 16, 25
Jobhipat 4, 168
 Joking relation 23
Jori 4
Juru bark 72-73
 leaves 118
 Juxtaposition 1

Kali 32
Kal-wa-jom-ko 28
Kaman 26
Kara Sarna 132
Kardhani 19
Kartaha 15, 37
Kasa Sarna 130
Keyaris 86
Khalko 14
Khaniari 155
Kharwaij 156
 Sarna 133
Khese 14
Khunt 16, 17
Khunt Katti Hatu 19

- Kilis* 14, 22
Kirk 13
Koel 7
Kol 31
Kolarian tribe 22
Kolom 101
Korwa 12
Kotwar 32
Kulhu 20
Kurumgarh 4
Kutum Bhai 30

Lakra 14, 165
Land alienation 12
Langur 9
Laterite 2, 5
Laterization 84
Lattar 1
Law 37
Leprosy 14
Levirate 15, 26
Lewa 93
Lineage 16-17
Lithomargic 5
Livelihood 21
Loan 120
Lohar 12
Lohardaga 6
Lookma 28
Lotas 20
Lutheran 166

Madhya Pradesh 12
Magic Sup 16
Mahto 15, 17
Mahto khunt 16

Mahua 8, 28, 113
Mahuadanr 2, 165
Mahulain 1
Mandar 153
Maize 97, 99
Manki 19
Mantras 150
Manuring 92
Maria Devi 126, 136, 160
Marital Status 47, 48, 49, 77
Marriage 14
Marriageable age 46
Marua 13
Mati 29
Maximal lineage 16
Medicine man 139
Microscopic 40
Milk production 105
Minerals 5
Minz 14
Mongoloid 13
Monogamy 14
Monsoon 95
Morris 167
Mortality 53
Mua 128
Munda 11-12, 18-19
Mundari speaking 11
Minjhi 14
Mushroom 115

Nagera 153
Nagesia 30
Natural Calamities 146
Nawakhani 156, 166
Nayatoli 41

- Netar* 1
Netarganj 2
Netarhat 1, 12-13, 17-18, 24, 40
Newair 1
Newair tanr 2
Nilgai 8
Nisada 8, 11
Non workers 76
North Koel 4, 111

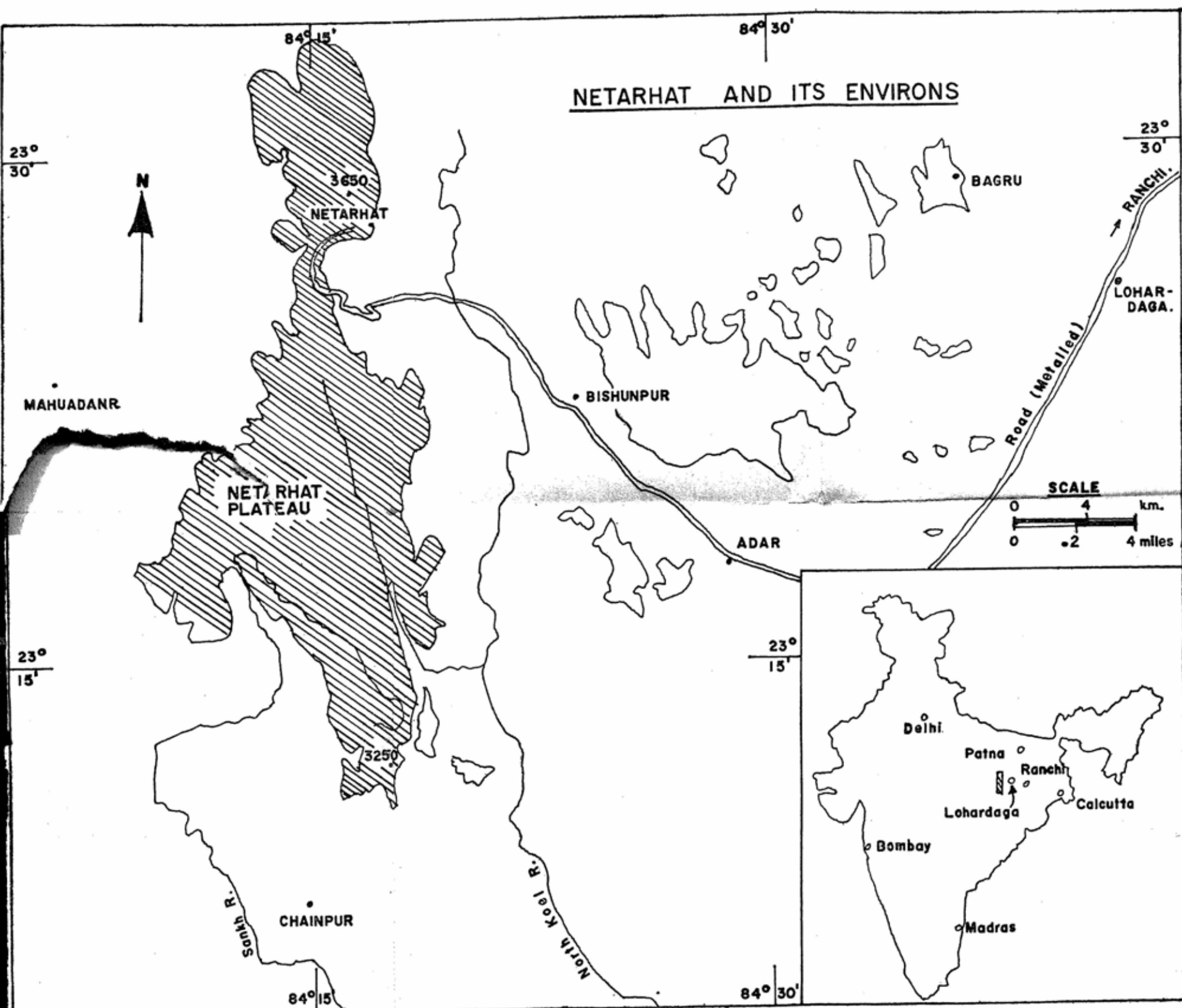
Oblation 153
Occupation 109
Offering 18
Ojha 29
Omens 174-75
Oraon 12-14, 15, 18
Orchreous 5
Orharia 38
Orissa 12
Ornamentation 20

Paila 20
Pahan 14-15, 17, 37.
Pahan khunt 18
Pala 5
Palamu 2, 4
Palta 87
Panch 24, 39
Pancha Bhai 38
Panchayat 19
Panch Kharcha 39
Panna 14
Parha 15
Parha Panchayat 15-16
Pasture 107

Pat 2, 4-6, 22, 30, 78
Patti 19
Patni 28
Patrairchal 15
Patrilineal 23
Pelos 33
People 11
Personality 33
Phutkal 33
Physical features 40
Pichowri 19
Pioneer 16
Pisolithic 5
Pithas 32
Plateau 1-2, 113
Plateaux 2
Platyrhine 12
Ploughing 88
Plough cultivation 13
Plums 8
Political Organisation 37
Polluted 26
Pradhan 38
Praja 15
Prakriti 1
Prasad 3, 6-7
Precipitation 6
Precipitous 3
Pre-Dravidian 11
Priest 140
Primitive 123
Property 24
Proto-Australoid 11, 13

Race 19
Raja 15

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Rajadera 4, 165 | Scythians 11 |
| Rainfall 6 | Secular head 16 |
| Rajkaram 99, 136, 155 | Selection of <i>Kartaha</i> 38 |
| Raji-skhusi 29 | Sharma 170 |
| Ramjharra 24 | Shelter 116 |
| Ranchi 21 | <i>Shikari Chandi</i> 127 |
| Ranu 26 | <i>Shradh</i> 32 |
| Raw materials 117 | Shrine 136 |
| Religion 123 | Sibling 34 |
| Rent-free land 140 | Singh 18, 30, 32 |
| Richang 8 | <i>Sirni</i> 156 |
| Risley Herbert 13 | Slash and burn 27 |
| R. C. Mission 165 | Social sanction 23 |
| Roy 13, 17-18, 24-25 | Social Stigma 26 |
| | Socialization 33, 34 |
| Sacred complex 124 | <i>Son</i> 6 |
| Sacred geography 132 | Sororate 26 |
| Sacred performance 144 | Sowing 93 |
| Sacred specialist 137 | Spirit 18 |
| Sacrifices 18 | Sports 172 |
| Sadni-fall 4 | Spring 4 |
| <i>Sadri</i> 145 | Structure 17 |
| <i>Sagai</i> 29 | Subarnarekha 6 |
| Sahay 165 | Submissive 34 |
| Sakhuapani 96, 69, 107, 169 | Suekling 34 |
| <i>Sal</i> 33, 111 | Sunder 28 |
| <i>Sankh</i> 4, 6 | Summits 4 |
| Santhal 12 | Supernatural 16, 98, 123, 128, 173 |
| <i>Sardar</i> 32 | <i>Sutri</i> 118 |
| <i>Sarhul</i> 88, 148 | System of distribution 103 |
| <i>Sarhul Sarna</i> 130, 133 | |
| <i>Sarna</i> 7, 18-19 | Taboo 16 |
| Sarnatoli 41 | <i>Tanr</i> 13, 85 |
| <i>Sasan</i> 19 | <i>Tar Sakom</i> 20 |
| Scarce 4 | Tattoo 20 |
| School 168 | |



- Tertiary period 3
Thania 25
Thapa 118
Thomson 40
Threshing 100
Timber 4
Totemic Clan 42
Traction 89, 90, 106
Trade 110
Traditional 9, 10, 15
Transplantation 94
Tribal economy 110
Tribe 15
Tribal pantheon 124
Toppo 14
Totem 14
Tourist impact 170
Turban 149
Turi 12
Uthlu 25
Veddid 11
Vidyarthi 13, 18, 145
Weathering 2
Weeding 98
West Bengal 12
Wild boar 8
Winnowing fan 35
Witch 15
Working force 76
Worship 140
Worship of ancestor 162
 of Attanga Sarna 160
 of *Khunti* spirit 162
Youth dormitory 17

Tribes \leftrightarrow Bihar (Patman)

CATALOGUE

Central Archaeological Library,
NEW DELHI 74294

Call No. 572.55416
Vid/Sin

Author—Vidyarthi, L.P.

Title—Bio-Cultural Profiles
of Tribal Bihar

"A book that is shut is but a block"

CENTRAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL LIBRARY
GOVT. OF INDIA
Department of Archaeology
NEW DELHI.

Please help us to keep the book
clean and moving.