

CHAPTER V.

THE PEOPLE.

AREA OF THE DISTRICT.

The present area of Hazaribagh district is 7,016 square miles. The population of the district in 1863 was reported by Captain Thomson, Revenue Surveyor as 7,16,065. The first census of the district was taken in 1872. There have been subsequent decennial censuses. The population in the different census years was reported as follows:—

Year.	Population.	Increase or decrease in the population.	Percentage Increase or Decrease
1881	11,04,742	..	..
1891	11,64,321	+ 59,579	+5.4
1901	11,77,961	+ 13,640	+1.17
1911	12,88,609	+1,10,648	+9.39
1921	12,76,946	- 11,663	-0.91
1931	15,17,357	+2,40,411	+18.83
1941	17,51,339	+2,33,982	+15.42
1951	19,37,210	+1,85,871	+10.6

Thus between 1881 and 1951, i.e., in 70 years the population of the district has recorded a net increase of 8,32,468 persons.

The methods of enumeration at the earlier stages were rather experimental and not very reliable. Even now it cannot be said that the methods of enumeration are infallible and the results absolutely reliable. Nevertheless, they give some data which could also be tested from other economic trends.

The incidence of growth or otherwise of the population of the district of Hazaribagh as shown by the figures quoted above is in conformity with the economic trends of the district. There was an enormous development in the coal mines of Giridih subdivision. This explains the increase in population between 1881 and 1891 chiefly in that subdivision. In the next decade there was a severe economic scarcity almost amounting to famine, which caused a great increase of emigration and a high death rate. The decrease in population was shared by Hazaribagh, Chatra, Barkagaon, Gumia,

Barbi and Bagodar police-stations. The rate of increase during 1901—1911 was high. Giridih subdivision gained 50 per cent increase in population owing to the development of the Giridih coal-fields and the growth of the new town which is the present subdivisional headquarters. The other thanas that gained a remarkable increase in population were Peterbar (49 per cent), Dumri (38 per cent), Gumia and Mandu (34 per cent each) and Ramgarh (31 per cent). It is significant that the comparative ease in the economic situation had cut down emigration during this decade. These thanas are all in the Damodar Valley and south-east in the district and have a very considerable aboriginal element. Apparently, the comparative absence of emigration had contributed to the great increase of population in these areas. The other thanas that gained in population in this decade were Bagodar (22 per cent), Gawan (20 per cent), Kodarma (19 per cent) and Huntergunj (19 per cent). The increase in Bagodar area could be associated with the opening of the Grand Chord Railway. The area of Kodarma had a great development of the mica mines and naturally this led to an increase in the population. It may also be mentioned that the landlords had always tried to keep landless serfs tied to them and not to allow them to leave the district.

Another remarkable trend of the population will be seen in an analysis of the elements in the population of the district that had been born outside it. In the Census of 1911 there were 41,631 persons residing in the district who had been born outside it. Out of this population as many as 34,000 had come from contiguous districts, 3,000 from other parts of the province and 4,000 from other provinces. The percentage of immigrants from Gaya has always been large. The peons, *barahils* and other employees of landlords and a fair element among the settlers in the district have been drawn from the neighbouring district of Gaya.

In the Census of 1911 it was found that 1,44,541 inhabitants of Hazaribagh district were residing outside it. Regarding the number of men of the Hazaribagh district residing outside it Sir J. D. Sifton in the *Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in the district of Hazaribagh (1908—1916)* observed as follows:—

“ Of this total 32,000 have gone to the adjoining districts of Gaya, Monghyr, Santhal Parganas, Ranchi, Palamau and Manbhum, probably for agriculture: 3,300 are working in the coal mines of Jharia and Burdwan: 1,500 are in tea gardens of Jalpaiguri and Chittagong. Besides this, there is considerable emigration to Assam

and the mills around Calcutta, and there is a large recruitment of Khalasis from Hazaribagh for Survey operations in Eastern Bengal and Burma, and for the Burma Forest Department.

In the Census of 1921 the population of the district had decreased by 11,663 or 0.91 per cent. The decrease in the population in the Census year of 1921 appears also to have been largely due to the terrible cholera epidemic which broke out in 1917 and which was followed by an equally severe influenza epidemic. There was also a general distress that resulted from the failure of rains. It has been said that before the end of 1918, as many as 82,000 men had perished of whom 68,000 died of fever only.

The distribution of population has been very uneven. In 1911 the population of the Giridih subdivision was 4,52,656 with a density of 226 per square mile, it was 6,12,544 for Sadar subdivision with a density of 181 per square mile. In Chatra subdivision the population was 2,33,409 with a density of only 145 per square mile. "It is a noteworthy fact that Chatra, the portion of the district which contained the gate of the 'Jharkhand' or the jungle states of Chotanagpur, and, as the highway between Bihar and Lohardaga, was the tract first penetrated and occupied by Biharis, is now by far the most sparsely populated part of the district." [*Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in the district of Hazaribagh (1908—1916)* by Sir J. D. Sifton, page 12.]

During the decade 1921—1931 an increase of 2,40,411 over the population figure of 1921 was recorded as disclosed in the Census Report of 1931. The percentage increase was 18.83. The rate of natural increase was 16.66 per cent—a rate more rapid than in any other district of the province excepting Angul (Bihar and Orissa then constituted a single province). The growth of population was most pronounced in the south and south-east of the district. These are colliery areas, and here the natural increase was supplemented by a great influx of labour from outside. The growth of Chatra subdivision in the extreme north-west of the district was not on anything like the same scale as the growth elsewhere. Chauparan was the only thana in this subdivision which held its own with the rest of the district due to climatic and other privileges which it enjoys like that of Sadar and Giridih subdivisions. The rest of Chatra subdivision is not so well equipped for the support of a rapidly increasing population. However, Huntergunj was the only thana which showed a decrease in population unlike other thanas or the Chotanagpur division none of which recorded an increase of less

than 5 per cent during the decade. In the Census of 1921 this thana actually added to the population of the district when there was a general fall of 0.91 per cent in the population of the district. In the Census of 1901 and 1911 it recorded a greater increase than any other part of the district. Therefore, the decrease is not easily accountable.

In the Census of 1941 an increase of 2,33,982 persons was recorded over the population figure of 1931 but the percentage increase was 15.42 only. Percentage increase was highest in the Sadar subdivision and lowest in Chatra subdivision, the percentages being 16.57 and 10.24 respectively. In Giridih subdivision the rate of increase was recorded at 16.14 per cent. It may be pointed out here that Chatra was the only subdivision in this district, which in this decade showed a greater rate of percentage increase than in the previous decade, although Chatra thana in this subdivision recorded a decrease of 25.75 per cent. This was the only thana in the whole of Chotanagpur division, which recorded such an alarming percentage decrease in population. However, it is to be noted that Huntergunj thana of this subdivision recorded an increase of 8.63 per cent as against a decrease of 0.18 per cent in the previous Census. It may also be pointed out here that Sadar and Giridih subdivisions actually recorded a decline in the rate of percentage increase as compared to the immediately preceding decade.

In the Census of 1951 also an increase of 1,85,871 (10.6 per cent) persons was recorded. As compared to the previous census figures, the percentage rate of increase recorded in this decade was less by 5.36. Decrease in the percentage rate was more pronounced in Giridih and Chatra subdivisions. Chatra actually showed a net decrease of 0.3 per cent. However, Chatra thana in this subdivision showed a percentage increase of 0.6 as against a percentage decrease of 25.75 recorded in the previous decade. Percentage increase in Sadar and Giridih subdivisions was recorded at 16.1 and 8.0 respectively as against 16.6 and 16.4 respectively recorded in the Census of 1941.

It would appear from the foregoing analysis that in course of time, while the population of the Sadar and Giridih subdivisions rapidly increased, that of the Chatra subdivision did not show any marked change. It appears useful to give subdivision-wise population and density here. In 1941 the population of the first two subdivisions was 8,39,551 and 6,48,447 with a density of 247 and 317 per square mile respectively. The population of the Chatra subdivision was only 2,63,241, density being 171 per square mile. In the Census of 1951 the population of the Sadar subdivision was 9,74,494

and the density was 286 per square mile. The population of the Giridih subdivision was 7,00,202 with a density of 342 per square mile. The Chatra subdivision, on the other hand, as stated above, had a decline of 0.3 per cent, the population and density being 2,62,514 and 170 respectively.

The people are organised according to the Census of 1951, in a total of 3,24,012 occupied houses, out of which 2,98,789 are in rural areas and 25,223 in urban areas. The rural areas are comprised in 6,129 villages and the urban areas in 8 towns. The towns with their population as recorded in 1951 Census Tables are given below :—

Hazaribagh—39,813.

Giridih—29,167.

Kargali—17,644.

Ramgarh Cantonment—14,775.

Chatra—9,911.

Bokaro—9,807.

Jhumri Tilaiya—9,090.

Bermo—8,920.

Among these Hazaribagh, Giridih, Kargali and Chatra have Municipalities and Jhumri Tilaiya a Notified Area Committee. The Ramgarh Cantonment has a Cantonment Board.

POPULATION ACCORDING TO CASTES.

The majority of the population in Hazaribagh are Hindus. Some of them, like the Bhuiyas and the Kharwars are aboriginal or semi-aboriginal in origin. The Hindus formed 83.96 per cent of the population in 1872. The percentage had been fairly maintained till 1911 when they numbered 10,66,067 or 82.7 per cent of the whole population. According to the Census of 1951, their number is 17,07,558 or 88.9 per cent of the total population of 19,37,210.

The castes of Brahmins, Bhumihaar Brahmins, Rajputs and Kayasthas are well represented. The most numerous functional castes are, however, Gowalas, Telis, Koiris, Chamars, Kahars, Hajjams, Burhees, Dusadhs, Kumhars, Turis, Suris, Sokiars and others. It should be mentioned here that enumeration by castes was adopted in the previous censuses but this basis of enumeration has been completely given up in the 1951 Census. However, for purposes of record some mention will be made of the population of some of these castes.

The Brahmins were 25,422 in 1881, 31,013 in 1891, 35,558 in 1911 and 36,804 in 1931. The Brahmins have taken largely to secular pursuits. The number of Rajputs was 37,404 in 1881, 34,183 in 1891, 29,100 in 1911 and 35,760 in 1931. The Rajputs are mostly either landholders or cultivators. Regarding Kayasthas Hunter in his "*Statistical Account of Bengal*" (page 76) had given their number in the district as 6,300. The number of Kayasthas was recorded as 10,595 in 1921 and 12,075 in 1931 Censuses. The Kayasthas are mostly in services of some kind.

The Gowalas are mostly found in the northern half of the district. Most of them are taken to have come to Hazaribagh from the neighbouring district of Gaya. A large number of them have given up pastoral pursuits and are now only cultivators. The Koiris who are essentially an agricultural and horticultural class numbered 41,495 in 1881, 44,700 in 1891, 52,817 in 1911 and 63,632 in 1931.

Telis, who are engaged as oil pressers and also as cultivators, numbered 42,319 in 1881, 44,372 in 1891, 33,347 in 1911 and 65,835 in 1931.

The Chamars and the Kahars, Hajjams, Burhees and Kumhars, who are the other common functional castes, are well distributed throughout the district and practically every village has got some of them. Their figures are as follows:—

	1881.	1891	1911.	1931.
Chamars	... 40,981	39,266	49,503	65,675
Kahars	... 36,849	31,977	31,747	31,501
Hajjams	... 23,659	25,635	27,533	33,141
Burhees	... 25,070	26,692	29,958	34,452
Kumhars	... 21,966	21,322	26,211,	33,826
Dusadhs	... 26,723	25,252	26,958	28,784
Turis	... 17,729	20,778	...	30,634
Suris	... 17,576	16,682	...	...
Sokhars	... ..	13,491	13,982	...

There are other functional castes well distributed all over the district like Dhobis (washermen), Lohars (ironsmiths), Mallahs (fishermen) and Sonars (goldsmiths), etc.

There are a number of aboriginal and quasi-aboriginal tribes in Hazaribagh district. They are Bedias, Bhogtax, Bhuiyas, Ghatwals,

Mundas, Oraons, Rajwars, Birhors, Santhals and Kurmees. Authorities like Messrs. J. D. Sifton and S. C. Roy have referred to these tribes as such in their *Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in the district of Hazaribagh* (1908—1915) and Roy's works respectively. These tribes have been found in the district of Hazaribagh from remote times although their origin or immigration is shrouded in legend and mystery. There is, however, no doubt that in the remote past some of these tribes were masters of certain portions of the district.

Some of the important tribals will be noticed at some length later owing to their importance as original residents in the district. They are Mundas, Birhors, Oraons, Santhals and Bhuiyas. The other tribes which are not so important numerically are Bedias, Bhogtas, Ghatwals, Kurmees, Kurmalis and Rajwars. A brief note on these tribes is given first.

Bedias.—The population of Bedias in 1891 was 10,886, in 1911 the population reached 12,668, while in 1941 their population was recorded as 18,063. The Bedias are practically confined to Ramgarh Thana and they are now essentially cultivators as distinct from professional snake charmers like their ancestors. According to the Santhal tradition they are the descendants of those Santhals who were feeble-minded and fled from the social outrages threatened by Madho Singh. Hunter treats them as pure Mundas. Their physical features and social customs with the Pahan and similarity of the names of their *killis* (exogamous sub-division) make them more akin to the Mundas.

Bhogtas.—Bhogtas numbered 37,519 in 1891, 36,984 in 1911, 31,703 in 1931 and 39,466 in 1941. They are confined mainly to the Sadar and Chatra subdivisions. The Bhogtas are mostly herdsmen and cultivators. They are now semi-Hinduised and are counted to be members of the Scheduled Castes.

Ghatwals.—It is generally believed that Ghatwals were originally Ghatwars of the Bhuiya tribe who used to guard the mountain passes. Now most of the Ghatwals claim to be Rajputs and Hindu by religion.

Kurmees.—In 1881, the number of Kurmees was 62,144, in 1891, 71,065, in 1911, 84,589 and in 1931, the number was 1,05,725. The Kurmees along with Koiris are the best agriculturists of the district.

Kurmalis.—The Kurmalis were 8,000 in 1911, 6,939 in 1931 and 9,836 in 1941. They are found mostly in Ramgarh, Golah and Peterbar thanas of the Sadar subdivision. Previously they were iron-smelters (blacksmiths) but now they have become agricultural labourer.

Rajwars.—The Rajwars are mostly confined to a narrow strip of the district bordering on Gaya and are now counted as a Scheduled Caste. In 1881 their number was 9,291, in 1891, 9,160 and in 1931 their number was counted as 9,480.

Mohamadans.—The population of Mohamadans has been as follows:—

1911—1,33,328.

1921—1,36,001.

1931—1,71,694.

1941—2,09,384.

1951—2,14,961.

They are found mostly in the Giridih and Sadar subdivisions. The numerically important sections among the Mohamadans are Ansaris, Sheikhs, Kalals and Patbans.

Ansaris are spread all over the district but the majority of them live in the Giridih subdivision. The Mohamadans are mostly cultivators and weavers. There are some Muslim landlords in Sadar subdivision and some Pathan tenure-holders in Hunterganj and Kodarma thanas.

Christians.—There are several Missions working in Hazaribagh district, namely, the Gossner Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Roman Catholic Mission, the Dublin University Mission and the United Free Church of Scotland Mission. They are working mostly among the aboriginal and backward classes. They are responsible for a number of medical and educational centres which will be noticed at their proper places. It is remarkable that in spite of the work of the Missions for over a century the number of Christians in the district is extremely small and very much in contrast to the neighbouring district of Ranchi where apparently the Missions have had more success in converting the inhabitants of the district. The number of Christians in Hazaribagh district in 1911 was 1,786 and after 40 years this number has risen to 6,928 only.

Other Religions.—According to the Census of 1951, there were 4,175 Sikhs, 1,689 Jains and 227 Buddhists in Hazaribagh district. Most of the Sikhs are new-comers as a result of the creation of Pakistan. The Sikhs have various types of professions and are not confined to any particular kind of occupation. There are now Sikh drivers, hotel keepers, timber-traders, carpenters, shop-keepers, mechanics, etc. They are now an organised community and have their own *gurudwara*.

They have taken to higher education. The Jains are the Marwaris, who, though a very small community, control various business in the district. There are occasional influx of Jains as pilgrims to the famous Parasnath temple and the other Jain shrines in this district. Buddhism has practically died out in the district.

LANGUAGE.

The opening of the Damodar Valley Project has drawn a considerable number of people from various parts of India and particularly from Southern India. This is responsible for a variety of languages and dialects being spoken. The principal languages which are spoken by a large population according to 1951 Census are given below :—

Hindi—16,90,422.

Santhali—1,93,460.

Bengali—27,352.

Oraon—5,240.

Mundari—4,981.

THE TRIBALS.

The tribals of the district offer a fascinating study and form an important part of the population.

Mundas.—Mr. B. C. Mazumdar, in an article published in the *Modern Review of Calcutta* in 1907, expressed the opinion that the Bhuiyas and the Chutias were the earliest inhabitants of Chotanagpur and that they were pushed towards the east and south by the Mundas. This view does not, however, find much support. Other writers and documents on the subject such as Col. Dalton, Col. Tickel, Hunter, Risley, Ball, Bell, S. C. Roy, Bradley Birt, Reid, the *Settlement Report of the Ranchi District*, the *Imperial Gazetteer of India and the District Gazetteer of Ranchi* (1917) are of the opinion that the Mundas were the earliest inhabitants of Chotanagpur, and none of them has a word to say about the Bhuiyas or the Chutias as prior to the Mundas. "The traditions of all the tribes and castes, including the Bhuiyas, of the Ranchi district or the central plateau of Chotanagpur agree in attributing to the present tribe of Mundas the foundation of its earliest villages after the extermination or absorption of the pre-historic Asuras." (*Chotanagpur Chutias and Bhuiyas*, by S. C. Roy in *Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research Society*, Vol. 18, page 68.)

According to the tradition of the Mundas, they came from the north. Being pushed eastward by the advancing tide of the Aryan conquest, they reached Ajahgarh (present district of Azimgarh in Uttar Pradesh)

and dwelt there unmolested for a long time. Azimgarh forms the starting point of their historical traditions. From there, so runs the Munda tradition, the Mundas migrated and settled successively in Kalanjargarh, Garh Chitr, Garh Nagawar, Garh Dsharwar, Garh Pali, Garh Piprah, Mandar Pahar, Bijnagarh, Hardinagar, Lakhnauragarh, Nandangarh, Rijgarh, and Ruidasgarh, until they reached Omedanda, a village not far from the meeting point of the Ranchi, Hazaribagh and Palamanu districts, where they founded their first settlement in Chotanagpur, and separated from the Santhals who crossed the Damodar river and passed on to Manbhum and the Santhal Parganas. Mr. S. C. Roy, the author of "*The Mundas and their Country*" has accepted this tradition of the Mundas and tried to identify these traditional places.

As mentioned before the route by which the Mundas entered the district of Ranchi was along the border of Hazaribagh and Palamanu. They were, it seems, sojourners in this area, and only a small number remained and made permanent settlements in this district. Traces of Mundari settlements are not uncommon over the west and south of the district. The numerous tribal village names such as Erabonga, Lowalong and Kasilong and the monolithic grave and memorial stones which are found in that area are reminiscent of the Mundari settlements there. In this district there is no *parha* or *patti* organisation. It is, however, gathered that not long ago there was a *manki-patti* round about Laranga to the south of Tandwa. Here there are some conspicuous *bid-diris* or erect memorial stones; and to the west there is a *tola* which is still called Mankidih. The *Settlement Report* (1908—1915) recorded the existence of a Mundari *khunt-katti* family at Korambe in thana Ramgarh. West of Giridih is a village Mahesmunda. In *pattas* given by the Zamindar of Mahesmunda the word *johar*, the Mundari term of salutation, is used.

The number of Mundas in this district was 13,554 in 1891, 15,022 in 1901, 16,568 in 1911, 17,056 in 1921, 18,695 in 1931 and 26,121 in 1941. They are found mostly in the Sadar and Giridih subdivisions, while they are negligible in the Chatra subdivision. In 1941 in the Ramgarh thana alone there were 9,915 Mundas. The number of the Mundas has increased due to the arrival in recent times of their fellowmen from Ranchi for employment or settlement but the vast majority of them are the descendants of those who had made early settlements. They have maintained very little contact with the Mundas at Ranchi and thus, under the predominant influence of the Hindus around them, they have lost most of the Munda culture, customs and practices. Many have lost their language and religion. They are as a class poor and illiterate.

The Mundas were the original reclaimers of the soil over the area in which they settled. Each family made in the virgin forests its clearances and established *khunt-katti hatus* or the villages of the family of the original settlers. The descendants in the male line of the original settlers are known as *khunt-kattidars*. The headman of each village was a Munda who exercised civil functions. The *pahanr* or *pahan* or priest was the religious head. Several villages of one *killi* or clan formed an association for common social and administrative matters. It was known as a *patti* or *parha* with a Manki or Raja as its head. The Mundas were originally republicans but later on kingship was instituted and they were gradually reduced to servitude. Their *khunt-katti* rights, largely due to their own ignorance and folly, were destroyed everywhere except in 156 villages (153.7 square miles) in the Ranchi district. Only a few fragments of the old *khunt-katti* lands of the original cleaners of the soil have been left to their descendants as privilege tenures, and these are called their *bhuihari* lands.

The Mundas call themselves *horoko* (men) and their race *horu* (man). The name Koi is often wrongly applied to them but this they strongly resent. They are divided into a number of separate clans or septs, called *killis*. They are totemistic, their names being taken from some animals or plants. They are exogamous. It is considered one of the greatest crimes for a Munda to take as wife a woman belonging to his own *killi*. Should any one be found guilty of that crime, a panchayat of the elders of that *killi* will order the offenders to separate. If they refuse, they are excommunicated and expelled from the village. Descent is counted through father, and the children belong to the paternal *killi*.

The main occupation of the Mundas is agriculture. Their dress is simple and scanty. Many of them are now abandoning the ancient dress. Men usually wear a loin cloth called *botoi*. They use a wrapper known as *pechchouri* or *barki* to cover the upper part of the body. Women wear a cloth called *panri*. Clothes are made of cotton. Young men and women are fond of jewellery, which is generally made of iron or brass. Leaves, flowers and barks are also used as ornaments. The staple food is boiled rice and *dal*. Meat is used during feasts and festivals. Their favourite drink is *illi* or rice-beer. It is prepared at home. They invariably carry bows and arrows or *lathis* when they visit markets or go out on long journeys. These weapons are a part of their daily life.

In a village there are separate dormitories (*giti ora* or sleeping houses) for young men and girls. When they meet after their evening

meals, riddles are recited and solved, folk-tales, traditions and fables are told and memorized, and songs are sung and learnt until bed time.

The Mundas are great lovers of music and dancing. Each village has an *akhra* or dancing ground generally in the middle and underneath a tree. Poverty is no hindrance to their participation in dances. They even participate in the festivals of others. Their main religious festivals are *muge*, *phagu*, *ba*, *kadleta*, *karam*, *ind* and *sahoraj* in different seasons of the year. In winter they have *jatras* or dance-fairs. Songs and dances are a part of their life.

The Munda women have a high position in the society. They do not inherit but they are not disregarded. They manage the household work at home and assist men in their work on the fields.

Formerly, the Mundas cremated their dead, and collected the bones which were ceremoniously interred in the family *sasan* on the annual *jang-topa* (bone-burying) day. Under the influence of Christianity cremation has now been replaced by burial, except when a person is killed or partly devoured by a tiger. The dead are buried in a *masnra* or graveyard, and bones are finally taken out, put into an earthen vessel, and ceremoniously deposited under the family burial stone at the village *sasan*, on the next *jang-topa* day. The *sasan* consists of a number of big stone slabs or *sasan-diris*, under which lie buried the bones of the deceased members of each family *khunt-kattidars* or Bhuihars of the village. No outsider, not even resident Mundas of the village, who do not belong to the original village family, is allowed to use the village *sasan*. The Mundas very properly regard these sepulchral stones or *sasan-diris* as the title deeds or record-of-rights in land, for any man who claims a share in the ancestral lands of the village must show that the stones of his ancestors were buried there.

The supreme God of the Mundas is *Sing-Bonga*. He is the creator and his abode is in heaven. The second class of gods are *Hatu-Bongako* or the village gods who are believed to aid them in their agricultural operations and hunting excursions and guide them in every concern of life. They are worshipped at stated times by the *pahan* in the *sarna* or sacred grove. The third class of gods are the *Ora-Bongako* or household gods, who are believed to be the spirits of the deceased ancestors. The head of the family worships them in the *adin* or sacred tabernacle of his house. The last two classes of *Bongas* are the *Manita Bongas* or gods to be worshipped. There are also *Banita Bongas* or gods who require to be appeased or propitiated. They are in fact no gods. They are believed to be the earth-bound spirits of persons who died a violent or unnatural death. Their

propitiation is the duty of the ghost-finders, the *malis* or *deonras*, who may also be non-Mundas by race. The Mundas have no temples or images. The *sarnas* or sacred groves, the remnants of the ancient forest, within village boundaries, often near a stream, are the only temples known to them. There the village gods reside and are periodically worshipped with sacrifices. The *sal* tree (*Shorea robusta*) cluster has a sacred appeal to them.

Those Mundas who have become Hindus or Christians no longer follow *sarna dharam* and many of the old customs. In the closing years of the last century, Birsa Munda of Chalkad in Ranchi district tried to establish a new religion which had traits of both Hinduism and Christianity. The central theme of this *birsa dharam* is that there is only one God, that Birsa is his incarnation on earth, and that purity of character and habits are the essential things demanded of man by God. The number of the Mundas following this faith is small.

The Mundas believe in evil spirits and witchcraft. The former bring diseases or hardships. They are propitiated with sacrifices and offerings. To detect a witch, the *sokha*, *mati* or *bhagat* is approached. Prior to the establishment of the British Government, the persons accused of witchcraft were cruelly treated or beaten to death. This practice has almost died out now.

The chief officers of a Munda village are the *mahato*, the *pahan* and the *munda*. The *mahato* has taken the first place. The ancient *parhas* are still in existence. The head of the *parha* in the *khunt-katti* area is still called *manki*. In the Bhuinhari area, he is called *raja* and is assisted by the *Dewan*, the *kuar*, the *lal*, the *thakur*, the *kotwar* and other officers. The titles have been adopted from the Hindus. Each *parha* has a separate flag. Attempts are being made to strengthen the organisation.

Birhors.—The number of Birhors in this district was 1,024 in 1911, 1,143 in 1931 and 1,623 in 1941. They are found mostly in the Sadar subdivision.

The Birhors or forest men are closely allied to the Mundas who often call them as Bir Mundas or forest Mundas. Their language is but a Mundari dialect, showing a strong Santhali influence. Their origin and advent in this district are not known. It is often said that Madho Singh, who drove out the Mundas and Santhals from Ruidasgarh, was a Birhor.

They still lead a very primitive life. They are divided into two groups, i.e., *uthlu* (migratory) and *jaghis* (settled). The *uthlu* Birhors are quite nomadic and live in groups of three to ten families camping

in the jungles, remaining only for a week or two on the same spot except during the rains, and moving from jungle to jungle, on a regular round, completed in about two years. They return to the original place and start once more on a similar move along the same route. The *jaghi* Birhors, on the other hand, are those families that, tired of toilsome wanderings, have settled down on some hill top or the outskirts of a jungle. Some of them produce maize or beans during the rainy season. Majority of them are landless. Slightest ill-treatment by the landlord or neighbours makes them migrate to some more suitable place, or fall back to their old *uthlu* life.

The settlement of the *jaghis* as well as the temporary encampments of the *uthlus* are both known as *tandas*. A *tanda* consists of about half a dozen or more huts. The *uthlu* huts have no walls; they are made of branches covered with leaves. Those of the *jaghis* are like wise leaf-covered, but are larger and have walls. The Birhors have scanty clothings. They live on deer, hares, monkeys, rats and other trapped animals, on edible roots and potherbs found in the jungles and on rice procured by the sale or barter of honey or of twine and carrying nets made with the fibre of *Bauhinia scandens*. They are very skilful in hunting, discovering wild honey and making ropes.

In each *tanda* or camp there is a *naya*, temporal and spiritual head, supposed to be supernaturally elected, but practically hereditary. He appoints his helper, the *kotwar*. There are one or more soothsayers called *mati*.

The Birhors, like the Mundas, are divided into exogamous clans mostly named after some animal or fruit. The dead are buried or cremated. They worship (a) the *Sing Bonga*, (b) the clan gods and (c) the family gods or the spirits of ancestors. They have no temples. The *jaghi* Birhors worship in a sacred grove called *jilu jayer*, marked by one or more trees and a few blocks of stone. The *uthlu* Birhors carry their gods, represented by stones and wooden pegs, in baskets and worship underneath a tree.

Oraons.—The Oraons or Kurukhs are Dravidians. Nothing definite is known about their origin and wanderings. Their own traditions point to the Deccan as their original home. Either owing to over population, or external pressure, or for some other reasons, which cannot be ascertained at this distance of time, they appear to have gone up the Narbada from the Deccan and then across the Vindhya to what is now the Shahabad district in Bihar. Here they settled down on the hills and valleys as agriculturists and landowners.

The centre of their settlement was Rohtasgarh, the legendary Ruidasgarh of the Mundas and Santhals. They were dislodged from

there by the *mlechchas* who were either Muslim or Hindu. The Oraons relate that they held the fort of Rohtasgarh till they were ousted by the Hindus. In the *District Gazetteer of Shahabad*, we read "The tradition that Rohtas was once the seat of their rule lingers among the Kharwars, Oraons and Cheros.....the Oraons assert that Rohtasgarh originally belonged to their chiefs and was finally wrested from them by the Hindus who surprised them at night during their great national festival, when the men had fallen senseless from intoxication, and only women were left to fight." (Page 175, *Gazetteer of Shahabad* by O'Malley, 1924.)

Being ousted from Rohtasgarh, they split up in two groups; one branch still known as *male* proceeded northward up the valleys of the Ganges or Ganga, and ultimately established themselves on the Rajmahal Hills, and the other branch, the ancestors of Kurukhs, went down the Son and up the north Koel southwards through Palamau into the Chotanagpur plateau where they found the Mundas already in occupation of the country.

The number of the Oraons in this district was 6,350 in 1901, 4,814 in 1911, 7,014 in 1931 and 9,207 in 1941. They are found mostly in the thanas of Barkagson, Ramgarh and Simaria which are connected to the Oraon country of Ranchi and Palamau. They maintain a very close relation with their kindred there.

The Oraons are divided into a number of clans or *gotras*. They are totemistic. The fauna and flora supply the bulk of the totem names. Marriage between the boys and girls of the same clan is strictly prohibited. But instances, though rare, have occurred of exogamous union and of such union being legalised on paying a fine and providing a feast to the *parha* brethren. The Oraon method of reckoning descent is patrilineal.

An adult male in the village ordinarily wears *karee* or loin-cloth, while old men and poorer people wear only a *bhagoo*. All use *pechchouri* or *barki* to cover the upper part of the body. Women wear *khanria* and *pudhna* or *sari*. The young men and women put on ornaments, mostly of iron or brass. They also make use of flowers, leaves, fruits and stones for ornaments. Their staple food is boiled rice and *dal*. Rice-beer or *haria* is their favourite drink. There are separate dormitories or *dhumkurias* for young boys and girls in a village. The boys' dormitory (*jonkh-erpa*) is under the supervision of the village *makato*. The girls' dormitory (*pol-erpa*) is generally under an elderly male or female Oraon. Adjoining the *dhumkuria* (boys) is the *akhara* or the dancing ground of the village. Like most of the aboriginal tribes, the Oraons are fond of music and dancing. The Oraon women do not

inherit but enjoy a high and respectable place in the society. The dead are cremated on the *masan* or cremation ground.

The supreme God of the Oraons is called *Dharmes*. They also worship the village gods and the ancestors' spirits. They have faith in *bhuts* or ghosts also. The village priest is known as *pahan*. If the man who originally cleared the jungle from the site which is now the village happened to be a Munda, the Oraons of the village will often have a Munda as their priest, as he will in their view be better able to deal with the village gods. The *matas* or *deonras*, or *sokhas* or *bhagatas* are approached to detect witches.

The principal festivals of the Oraons are *phagu*, *sarhul*, *sohorai*, *kadleta* and *karam* held at different seasons of the year.

The secular head of the Oraon village is called *mahato*. A number of villages make a *parha* or confederacy. It has a *raja*, a *dewan*, a *kotwar* and other officials. The *parhas* have now completely declined in power and influence.

Bhuiyas.—The name *Bhuiya* has been derived from the Sanskrit word *Bhumi* meaning land. Mr. B. C. Mazumdar, in an article published in the *Modern Review of Calcutta* in 1907 (Vol. 1, pages 148—153) explained the name by saying that the *Bhuiyas* were so called because they were owners or "masters of land" (*bhuai*).

In his book, "*An Account, Geographical, Statistical and Historical of Orissa Proper or Cuttack*," published in 1813 (pages 202-3), Mr. Stirling included the *Bhuiyas* among the Munda tribes. Mr. Dalton has called them *Dravidians*. Mr. McPherson in his *Settlement Report of the Santhal Parganas* (page 20) probably follows Dalton when he writes, "the *Bhuiyas* belong to the same *Dravidian Stock* as the hill *Males*". Dr. Hutton, in the *Indian Census Report of 1931*, classes the *Bhuiyas* in the Munda group. Mr. S. C. Roy examined the statements of several authors on the subject and also carefully studied the *Bhuiya* life specially in Orissa and eventually expressed the opinion that they are a section of the Munda group. This appears to be acceptable.

Nothing definite is known about the advent of the *Bhuiyas* in this district. Mr. B. C. Mazumdar thought that the *Bhuiyas* were the earliest settlers of Chotanagpur but other writers maintain that the *Mundas* were the earliest inhabitants. Whatever might have been the case, it is certain that the *Bhuiyas* were one of the earliest settlers of the district and for a long time they remained the master of the district. Lister observes "Nothing is known of their historical relations with the Munda-speaking tribes, whose supposed route from the north and

west interests that of the Bhuiyas from the south, more particularly in Hazaribagh " (*Hazaribagh District Gazetteer*, 1917, page 87).

The Bhuiyas had their tribal chiefs. Subsequently, these chiefs were reduced to the condition of tenure-holders by the ancestors of the present Rajas of Ramgarh (Padma) and Dhanwar. They were made Ghatwar or Ghatwal (guard of the hill passes). They did not remain loyal to their kinsmen for long. They assumed the title of Tikaita or Thakur, posed as Hindus, took the caste of Surajbansi Rajputs denying their Bhuiya origin, and installed Hindu *dewans*, generally Babhans, to manage their estates. Mr. McPherson, in his *Settlement Report of the Santhal Parganas* (1898—1907), (pages 20-21) writes thus of these Bhuiya Chiefs: " Their Chiefs make the usual Kshatriya pretensions and calling themselves Surajbansis disclaim connection with their Bhuiya kinsmen. But the physical characteristics are all alike Dravidian, and in Captain Brown's time (1772-78) the Chiefs never thought of claiming to be other than Bhuiya. The highest Chiefs of the Bhuiyas are called Tikaitas, and are supposed to have the mark of royalty. Inferior Chiefs are called Thakurs, and the younger members of noble Bhuiya families are called *babus*."

The Bhuiyas now form an element of landless labourers or petty cultivators throughout the entire district except in Kharagdiha Pargana, i.e., thanas Kodarma, Dhanwar, Kharagdiha, Gawan and Giridih where many of them have continued to retain their tenures, the so called Kharagdiha *gadis*, up to the present time. They are dense in the compact block of Huntergunj, Chatra, Chauparan, Simaria and Hazaribagh thanas, and numerous elsewhere, except in Ramgarh, Gomia and Peterbar.

The Bhuiyas who, according to the Census of 1881, stood at the head of the district list of castes, rapidly went on decreasing. This was due partly to the fact, as already stated that the Bhuiyas of wealth and influence became Hindu and ceased to call themselves Bhuiya. Another cause of the decline of their number was, however, their permanent emigration to the tea gardens of Assam, Cachar, Duars and Chittagong. They formed the principal labouring class and were exploited as the best emigrants for the tea districts. The number of emigrants registered in the office of the Deputy Commissioner between 1881-82 and 1891-92 was 35,329, and it can be safely asserted that at least three-fourths of that number belonged to the Bhuiya class. Migration continued till recent years.

The Bhuiyas as a whole are Hinduised at present. They were, as discussed above, aboriginals, but now they are counted as members of the Backward Classes. Their number is very large but their condition is rather poor and pitiable.

The Santhals.—There are 97,836 Santhals in Hazaribagh district according to the Census of 1951. The Santhals speak the Santhali language. Many Santhals also speak the Bengali language. They usually understand some form of *gawari Hindi* or colloquial Hindi as spoken in the district. The Santhali language has no script of its own. The foreign missionaries had introduced the Roman script and had published books, scriptures, collection of Santhali folk-songs, stories, etc., in Santhali language but in Roman script. There has been a recent innovation by the introduction of Devanagri script for publishing books in Santhali language. The Government of Bihar have been publishing a news-sheet "*The Hor-Sambad*" in Santhali language in Devanagri script.

The Santhali language has been described as a rich language. Bodding, who spent many years in the Santhal Parganas as a missionary has made researches into the grammatical aspects of the language besides other foreign missionaries. Their books still remain as the most authoritative literature on Santhali language.

It is note-worthy that although there was no written script for Santhali language human memory as in the case of other tribes like the Mundas and the Oraons had kept up a fund of stories, riddles, folk-songs, proverbs, idioms and sayings handed down from generation to generation. It is only within the last 40 or 50 years that either through the efforts of the missionaries, or the research workers on anthropology or the scholars that certain collections of folk-lore have been made and published. Their folk-songs are superb. As soon as they have a little leisure they will indulge in songs, dances and music. It appears that they snatch every opportunity of life for such festivities. Whether there are changes in the season, domestic occurrences such as marriage or birth or there are traditional offerings or sacrifices to different gods or there is homecoming of the new crops they will indulge in their songs and dances.

There have been collections of some of their songs for *bapla* (marriage); *lagade* (a particular kind of dance akin to *shumar* dance), *sarhul*, *sohrai* and *karma* festivals in different seasons of the year.

The Santhals have a superb sense of humour. Some of their sayings are typical of their vitality and sense of humour. When a child is born they will say "*Nawa pera ko hec' akana*" meaning "new guests have come" which is an expression for the message that a child is born in the family. To express an acute sense of hunger the Santhal will say "*Lobok' muc' ko geren' kana*" which really means "small ants are eating me up". A polite way of asking a man if he has taken his food will be "*Tala Koram bapla akadea*" the literal meaning of which is "have you married your middle son?" Riddles and problems

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are a very good pastime of the Santhals and for this they have got a very rich heritage.

Hazaribagh with its picturesque forests, rivers and hills has a strange fascination for the Santhals. The river Damodar which today lies chained up through the activities of the Damodar Valley Corporation has all along been the very heart-throbs of the life of the Santhals. The Parasnath Hills are their *marang baru* or the sacred hill.

The origin of the appearance of the Santhals in Hazaribagh district can only be guessed. Regarding their original home there has been a belief according to an accepted Santhal tradition that Hihiri, their earliest home, was the *pargana* Ahuri and from there they moved to Khej Kaman and from there to Hara and then to Sasag-Bera and then ultimately to Chai and Champa. Chai and Champa are recognised *parganas* in the district of Hazaribagh. Col. Dalton mentions that traditionally the old fort in Chai was occupied by one Jaura, a Santhal Raja, who destroyed himself and his family on hearing of the approach of a Mohamadan army under Syed Ibrahim Ali *alias* Malik Baya, a general of Mohammad Tuglak in 1353. The Santhal tradition in Hazaribagh is that from Chai and Champa a portion of their community migrated to the Santhal Parganas.

This theory of the movement of the Santhals cannot be said to be authoritative but there may be some truth in this migration. The river Damodar and the hills and forests of Hazaribagh find a very prominent place in Santhal stories, songs and traditions.

The Santhals are divided into several septs, namely, *hansda*, *murmu*, *kisku*, *hembrom*, *marandi*, *luddu*, *baska*, *besra*, *pauria*, *Chore*, *bedia*, etc. The first seven of these septs are said to have descended practically from the original father and mother of the Santhals, *Pilchu Horom* and *Pilchu Burhi*, while the remaining septs were added afterwards. The septs have certain pass-words by which they are recognised by one another. But the septs *pauria*, *chore* and *bedia* have no pass-words of their own. It is interesting to observe that one of the pass words of *hansda sept* is *tatijhari* which is an important village in Champa *pargana* in Hazaribagh district. This may also be a corroboration of the theory that the original home of the Santhals was in Hazaribagh district.

The Santhals are exogamous and no Santhal can marry within his sept or other sub-septs of his sept. He can marry in any other sept including that of his mother. Regarding the sept of the mother there is a proverb amongst the Santhals signifying that the mother's sept need not be held a taboo for marriage.

Marriage or *bupla* has various forms among the Santhals. Pre-marital sexual intimacy is not unknown and in cases of pregnancy the man concerned is expected to marry the girl or pay a very heavy fine to the village. Polygamy is discouraged. A second marriage is, however, permitted if the wife does not bear a child or the elder brother leaves a widow but even in such cases the second marriage must be done with the permission of the first wife. Here the supremacy of the first wife in the family is well established.

The usual marriage forms are (1) *bupla* or *kirin bahu*, (2) *ghardi jawae*, (3) *itut*, (4) *sanga*, (5) *kirin jawae* and (6) *nir-bolok*.

Bupla is the commonest form where marriages are performed with the consent of the parties as also their parents. The bride's price is very nominal, usually Rs. 3. But it is expected that there should be presents of cloth pieces to the girl's people. The price of a divorced woman or a widow is half of the standard rate as it is the tradition that the widow has to be united to the first husband in the next world and the second husband has only a sort of life interest in her.

At the time of actual marriage a thread is passed from the little toe of the bride's left foot to her left ear several times and it is then bound round her arm along with some chillies, rice and *dubgrass*. *Sindur-dan*, i.e., the putting of vermilion mark on the bride's forehead is an essential part of the marriage. It is difficult to say since when *sindur-dan* has become an integral part of the Santhal marriage but here the impact of Hindu tradition is clear.

Ghardi jawae is the form where the bridegroom becomes a part of the family of the bride at least for a period of five years. Usually when girls are difficult to be married off for some reason or other or a deserving homeless or poor boy is found or adopted in the family, this form of marriage is contracted by giving promises of plough, bullocks, rice, etc., to the bride groom. These presents are, however, given to the bridegroom only after five years if he wants to leave the father-in-law's place.

Itut is a form of marriage where a young man forcibly rubs *sindur* (vermilion) on a girl of his choice usually in the village market or at a gathering on some festive occasion. After doing this the young man runs away and waits for the visit of the girl's people to his village. *Sindur-dan* (putting the vermilion on the forehead of the girl) being an integral part of the marriage, the bride's people have got to make the best of the job and exact as much as possible from the bridegroom's people. The bride-price usually becomes double. If, however, the girl still refuses to live with the man, usually she has got to be divorced. *Itut* marriage was also used as an act of vendetta in the olden days. This form of marriage, however, has fallen into disuse.

In this connection it may be mentioned that in the *holi* festival of 1955 six Santhal girls were out for marketing in the bazar of Katibar town in Purnea district when a shopkeeper out of fun put some colour (*abir*) on their forehead. The result was a calamity for the shopkeeper as all the six Santhal girls demanded that he has got to marry them as he has put *abir* on their forehead and ultimately the police had to intervene.

Sanga marriage is meant for the divorced woman and the widow. The actual marriage rite is simple. The bridegroom puts in *sindur* on a *dimbur* flower with his left hand and then he lifts the flower with the same hand and sticks it in the bride's hair.

Kirin-jawae is a convenient form of marriage to meet an inconvenient situation when a girl becomes pregnant or is in love with a young man of her own sept. As inter-marriage within the same sept is a taboo, another young man is procured and given cows, bullocks, paddy, etc., by the young man responsible for the situation. The second young man takes upon himself the odium of the illicit act and the conference called by the village headman usually declares the marriage between the girl and the second man as binding. This social convention leads to the solidarity of the community.

Nir-bolok is a dangerous form of marriage. Here the love-lorn girl just steps into the house of the man she wants to marry and does not come away. Usually she takes a pot of *harra* or rice-beer and does not leave unless absolutely physically assaulted and expelled. Very often the women-folk of the man burns black pepper or chillies to make the woman go or even physically assault the woman. But if the woman stands all this and could stick to the house for one or two days she will have to be considered as the legal wife of the man.

Divorce is permissible but the party not at fault has to be compensated. Divorces are performed in the midst of village assemblies. The husband tears three *sal* leaves in token of separation and upsets a brass pot full of water. If the wife wants to divorce for no fault on her husband's part her people have to return the original bride price paid along with a heavy fine. If the husband wants the divorce, he will have to pay some fine and some customary dues to the woman.

Hindu traditions have a great influence on the customs of child-birth and disposal of the dead. The usual ceremony in Bihar performed on the sixth day of the birth of the child known as *chhathi* is also performed in a Santhal's home. Dead bodies are burnt except in cases of cholera and small-pox. For such deaths the bodies are buried.

Regarding their festivals much has been written before. Santhals have an abandon which is let loose during the festivals. Festivals are

their very life. Some of the festivals are intimately connected with their religious traditions. When the *sal* trees come into flowers during the month of Falgun (February-March) they have their great *baha pooja* which has its opposite number of *bah-parab* amongst the Mundas of Chotanagpur. Some of the festivals like *sohrai* and *sankranti pooja* are common for all the aboriginals of Chotanagpur. During all these festivals tribal or family sacrifices are held and dances and drinking accompanied with songs, flute-music and beating of the drum (*madal*) go on for days and nights, *Sohrai* in the month of Paush (November-December) is called *paush-parban* in Bengal. It is celebrated for the home-coming of paddy, the chief crop of the year. *Sankranti pooja* and *shicaratri* festivals followed by the Santhals are probably borrowed from the Hindu neighbours. The *sankranti* marks the close of the year. The *shicaratri* is marked by fasting and worship of Shiva, the universal God.

Their religion consists of worship of several gods. *Marang-buru* is at the head of the Santhal Pantheon while the other deities are *Thakur*, *Modoko* (Fire God) and *Jal-era*, the deity of the grove which has its counterpart amongst the Oraons and Mundas in the smaller God that presides over the sacred grove known as *sarna*. Each Santhal family has also two sets of Gods of its own, namely, *Ora-bonga*, i.e., household God and "*Abke-bonga*", i.e., great God. They have also now started worshipping Hindu deities like Shiva, Kalimai and Durga.

The Santhals of Hazaribagh district have not attracted as much attention as the Santhals in the Santhal Parganas. The stock is the same and the impact of the present socio-economic forces has brought about changes to the Santhals in the two different areas. It will be recalled that the district of Santhal Parganas was created after the widespread Santhal Insurrection of 1853-55. It was realised that the normal administration was rather unsuitable to the genius of the Santhals. A set of special rules and regulations was made to suit the Santhals. The district of Santhal Parganas was created as a non-regulation district with some special laws. In spite of various touches of modernisation the special rules and regulations of Santhals still remain to a great extent. They particularly refer to the transfer or acquisition of property, mortgage, rent suits, etc.

In Hazaribagh district also there was a big Santhal Insurrection in 1855-56 which had little connection with the rise of the Santhals in the Santhal Parganas. The old records show that the administrators in Chotanagpur Division were very alert that the Santhals in Hazaribagh district during 1855-56 Insurrections did not have any contact with the Santhals elsewhere.

The Santhal rebellion in Hazaribagh district was purely agrarian. The Santhals found themselves faced with an alien rule which little understood them. Their best lands were grabbed by the *mahajans* (money-lenders), or the speculators and they were in perpetual indebtedness. Their tribal laws and *panchayats* were not regarded as sacred. They thoroughly disliked the idea of going to the courts and be tossed about by the hardened court-birds who sucked them well before they could be taken to the lawyer. All these socio-economic causes led to distrust in the administration and this dissatisfaction slowly crystallised. It is really a wonder how the unlettered Santhal Manjhis organised themselves only through a whispering campaign and they rose almost to a man in 1855-56 throughout the district of Hazaribagh.

Their bows and arrows were no match for the guns of the British Army. The zamindars did not give them any help and sided with the ruler. The result was that although the Santhals had a few initial successes here and there the British guns mowed them down. They were hounded from jungle to jungle and were often sandwiched by the British forces. The Santhal villages were burnt mercilessly and their few belongings destroyed. A large number of the Santhal villagers were arrested and were given long term imprisonment. The old records in the Hazaribagh Record Room show that even some Santhal women were put in fetters, marched and put in the prison.

There was again a Santhal rise in 1857 when insurrections broke out throughout the district of Hazaribagh following the mutiny of the Ramgarh Battalion. In this case, of course, the Santhals wanted to recover their previous status, if possible, by utilising the disturbed times. The Santhals gave a lot of trouble to the British Administration in 1857, which practically fell back on Bagodar on the Grand Trunk Road and carried on the remnants of administration from there for some months. The old correspondence records show that the Santhals had come up against at least one detachment and had routed them. It is clear that many of the non-Santhal village headmen had helped the Santhals. The *digwars* and the *ghatwars* who occupied a key position at the hill passages gave considerable help to the Santhals. The movement was, however, put down and Hazaribagh was re-occupied within a short time.

It is a wrong theory that the early Christian Missions had anything to do with the up-rise of the Santhals. The first Christian Missionaries to come to Chotanagpur were the Germans who left Calcutta for Ranchi on February 25, 1845 and travelling by bullock carts *via* Bankura, Purulia and Silli, reached Ranchi on the 2nd November, 1845. They established mission station in Ranchi on the 1st December, 1845. It took them five years to obtain the first converts in 1850. On

9th June, 1850 four Oraon families and on 26th October, 1851, two Munda families were first baptised at Ranchi.

CHRISTIAN MISSIONS.

The first Christian Mission to come to Hazaribagh was the same German Mission described above. It came in 1853. Henry Batch was a pioneer Missionary and he had set up at Singhane within two miles of Hazaribagh after a short stay at Khirgson in Hazaribagh town. When the Insurrection broke out in 1857 he had to escape along with Captain Simpson, the Magistrate of Hazaribagh, Dr. Delpratt and Mr. Liebert, a German, who had started coffee plantation at Sitagarha, four miles from Hazaribagh. This was on the 31st July, 1857. Missionary Henry Batch came back to Hazaribagh in 1862 and since then missions have continued although there have been various changes in the set up.

The Santhal Mission of the United Free Church of Scotland had started working from Pachamba at Giridih since 1880. Their work at Pachamba and at Tisri was mainly among Santhals and their two fields of activities were medical and education. In those days the best hospitals were the Mission hospitals. The Mission hospitals still continue to be maintained at a high level of efficiency. The Dublin University men came later in 1890 and took up the work mainly at Hazaribagh town. St. Columba's College, St. Columba's Zenana Hospital and schools for boys and girls of various stages are standing monuments of their work.

The Catholic Mission started the work since about 1833 and they have now St. Stanislaus College at Sitagarha which is the oldest novitiate for young Jesuits of Bihar and Bengal. They also maintain hospitals, schools and colleges and an agricultural institute at Sitagarha. The St. Xavier's School in Hazaribagh town started in 1952 only has become one of the best schools in the State of Bihar. There is an excellent girls' school in Hazaribagh town known as Mount Carmel School started in 1956. At Mahesh-Munda in Giridih subdivision a branch has been started of the Roman Catholic Mission since 1953 and already they have taken up the starting of a hospital, a girls' school and a technical school. A large percentage of the Christian block in this district comes from the Santhals.

There is no doubt that the various Christian Missions that have been mentioned above have done a lot to improve the economic level of the Santhals in Hazaribagh district. As a matter of fact the British administration did not have any special department for ameliorating the condition of aboriginals in any of the districts of Bihar and practically left this work to the Christian Missions. As a result, it is only the Christian element amongst the Santhals or the other aboriginals that

received patronage in the shape of higher education, Government services, etc. The non-Christian Santhals or other aboriginals were more or less neglected. It is only very recently that some Hindu Missions, particularly the Aryasamaj have started doing some work amongst the Santhals. Other philanthropic non-Christian organisations such as Ramkrishna Mission, Bharat Shevashram, etc., did not much concern themselves with any sustained work among the aboriginals but in cases of distress they have always come forward. It is only after independence was achieved in 1947 that the State of Bihar set up a Welfare Department for the uplift of the aboriginals and there are District Welfare Officers for the aboriginals in all the districts of Bihar.

The figures of the population of the Santhals show a decline. This is probably due to the fact that many Christian Santhals are not being returned as such. Many Santhals may have been shown as Hindi-speaking or as Hindus. The figures are as follows:—

1915	...	...	...	93,059
1931	...	...	...	1,29,103
1941	...	...	...	1,45,762
1951	...	...	...	97,836

With all the onslaughts of modernism the set up of Santhal village life is still almost the same as it was centuries before although signs of disintegration are quite visible. The *manjhi* or the village headman is the social head of the villagers. He is the link between the zamindar and later their administrator. He is aided by an assistant known as the *yogmanjhi*. There is one *ojha* in every village, who is the religious head. The *ojha* gives his services for propitiating the evil spirits. The *manjhi*, the village secular head, and *ojha*, the religious head, have their counterparts in *mahto* and *pahan* of the Oraons and Mundas in Chotanagpur. The *manjhi* has naturally been more of a casualty due to the courts, abolition of zamindari, and introduction of *gram panchayats*, etc., and has no longer that influence on his folk.

The socio-economic condition of the Santhals was very poor excepting in the case of the Christian Santhals. The *mahajans* and the land grabbing speculators had taken full advantage of the simplicity and thriftlessness of the Santhals. Then came the earlier industrialists, mine-owners, forest-contractors and the like. The Santhals gave their life blood for all these groups throughout the 19th century and a part of the earlier 20th century without getting much benefit for their own. They perpetually remained in debt. It is only recently that serious steps have been taken to improve the condition of the Santhals. The Money Lenders Act has been amended, the Tenancy Laws have been changed and grain *golas* have been set up. Ceiling interests have been

curbed by the changes in the Money Lenders Act. A non-Santbal cannot now straightaway buy a Santbal's land. Grain *golas* loan out seed paddy on easy terms. Special schools, hostels, health measures, *gram panchayats* are some of the recent innovations since 1947, which are expected to do much good to the Santbals.

PASTORAL SONGS.

Pastoral songs are sung by men and women of practically all classes while working in the field at the time of transplantation of crops or at the time of harvesting the fields. The theme is generally relating to some love-affair or some famous battle of the past. They are sweet and melodious. Sometimes, they are in the form of question and answer. They are important for their musical value. These lyrics have been handed down to the present generation and are not recorded. They pass from the older generation to the younger one who memorise them by heart. Due to this many of these songs have been lost.

Different set up of songs depicting a particular background of nature in a particular season is common. With the advent of spring in the month of March, they begin to sing a type of song full of mirth, joy and rather suggestive description of women and their attire which is popularly known as *holi*. This is sung till the festival of *holi* at the end of the month of Falgun. This type of song is uncommon in any other season. With the *rabi* harvest ready in the field in the month of Chaitra, they begin another type known as *chaitra*. These songs weave a thread round the romantic love of the newly-wed couples or lovers. This goes on till the thrashing and storing of *rabi* crop. It marks the close of the cycle of harvests and a fresh start is made by sowing new crops which require water after a month or two. Songs sung during this season, i.e., before the rains set in in the month of Asarh and also during rainy season, i.e., Shraavan and Bhado, depict cloudy scenes, torrential rains and thunders of the cloud. This is known as *kajli*. It is also meant to please rain-gods to send rains. Women have their own set up of songs for this season. Some swing on *jhooles* (swings) and sing *kajli*. Sometimes when rains are delayed, they come out of the village in groups and sing songs said to please rain-gods.

Labourers both men and women are fond of singing while paddy-transplantation goes on in the field. They have a special type of songs for this occasion. Women sing songs full of humour and jokes while men sing romantic amorous songs inviting their sweethearts to come and join them in the pleasant weather. A special type of song known as *birha* is sung on these occasions. Generally the singers go on composing when they sing. There is no established version. These songs are not rhythmic and methodical.

SNAKE WORSHIP.

There is a mythological belief among the Hindus that there is a king of snakes which holds the earth on its head. They feel obliged to it for keeping the earth on its head and thus helping them in living. It is believed that this king of snakes called *Sheshanag* loves to take milk and fried paddy. This food is offered to the snake king in the month of Sravan and snakes are worshipped at that time.

TREE WORSHIP.

Certain trees as *pipal*, *banyan* and *aniola* are worshipped by the villagers. *Pipal* tree is considered to be sacred and nobody generally cuts it down or uses its wood for fuel. Spirits are believed to live on *pipal* trees and they are worshipped if they happen to lie in the village or outside it near a temple, etc. There are some people who regularly pour water at the root of *pipal* tree in belief that a particular deity called Hanumanjee would be pleased with them one day and bestow superhuman powers on them and help them in getting salvation. Other type of trees are significant for specific reasons. Generally they are worshipped because they are considered to be the abode of a particular god, deity or ghost. Women offer *paja* under such trees at the time of marriage and birth in the family. In this way they hope to win the support and help of the spirit living on the trees at the time of marriage or birth. Some trees are important for their own sake. Generally such trees are very old and big. Superstitious women appear to be overawed by the gigantic size and consider that the trees would do harm if they do not offer *paja* to it once or twice in a year.