

## PEOPLE.

### INTRODUCTORY.

The total area of Palamau district is 4,921 square miles according to the area figures of the constituent units, e.g., police stations. According to the report of Surveyor-General of India the area of the district is 4,896 square miles. The difference between the two figures is not

much and may be ignored. There are 3,202 villages and 3 towns and 1,78,775 occupied houses altogether, The urban population is 37,007 as against the rural population of 9,48,760 souls.

The population of the district according to 1872 census was 4,23,795 souls. The following statement will show the variation in the population of the district since 1901 as mentioned in the *District Census Hand-book for Palamau, 1951*<sup>1</sup> :-

Years.	Persons.	Variation.	Males.	Variation.	Females.	
Variation.						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1901	6,20,092	..	3,06,454	..	3,13,638	..
1911	6,87,710	+67,618	3,41,840	+35,386	3,45,870	
+32,232						
1921	7,33,394	+45,684	3,67,371	+25,531	3,66,023	
+20,153						
1931	8,18,736	+85,342	4,09,778	+42,407	4,08,958	
+42,935						
1941	9,12,734	+93,998	4,57,372	+47,594	4,55,362	
+46,404						
1951	9,85,767	+73,033	4,98,564	+41,192	4,87,203	
+31,841						

## **GROWTH OF POPULATION.**

The administrative history of the district has been indicated in the Chapter on General Administration. It may, however, be reiterated here that Palamau *pargana* had first formed a part of the district of Ramgarh. In 1834 this *pargana* was transferred to the district of Lohardaga and in 1853 Palamau was made a subdivision of Lohardaga. In 1863 Daltonganj was selected as the headquarters of the subdivision. In 1892 Palamau became a full-fledged district.

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1. The figures of the growth of population referred to later in older Gazetteers slightly differ from the figures of the District *Census Hand-Book*. Variations are slight and may be ignored.

Growth of populations naturally connected with the administrative changes. The first attempt for making an enumeration of the population of Palamau *pargana* was made by Captain Degree at the time of Topographical Survey of Chotanagpur in 1868. W.W. Hunter in his *Statistical Account of Lohardaga District*, published in 1877, refers to Captain Depree's enumeration. Captain Depree, however, did not base his enumeration on much of a scientific basis and it was not possible at that time to adopt much of a correct technique. Captain Depree at a random survey calculated the number of houses and arrived at the figure of 6.84 persons per house. According to *Depree's* technique the total population of the district of Lohardaga including the *parganas* of Tori and Palamau was 14,12,956 and the population of Palamau and Tori was 5,30,961. Very little reliance can be put on Capt. Depree's figures but the fact is mentioned as he was a pioneer.

In 1869, there was an experimental census by the Deputy Commissioner of Lohardaga. This census also was not based on much of the present-day technique. The population of the district of Lohardaga was calculated in 1869 to be 13,96,471 persons or 16,485 less than the estimate of Capt. Depree. This fact alone in a census taken within a year of Depree's enumeration would show that neither of the calculations was very correct, as the experimental census of 1869 was based on the calculation of the village watchmen who could neither read nor write.

A regular census was taken during the cold weather of 1871-72. This census was done with proper precautions and the results disclosed a total population in Lohardaga of 12,37,123 souls inhabiting 2,40,843 houses and the density of the district 103 souls to the square miles Palamau sub division consisting of the police -circles Bareswar, Chhattarpur,

Daltonganj, Garhwa, Munka, Majhiwan, Patan, Ramkunda gave the area of 4,260 square miles, 2,667 villages or townships, 68,719 houses, and a total population of 3,66,519 and the density of population was 86 persons per square mile. It is to be mentioned here that although

Japla and Belaunja areas had been transferred to Palamau in 1871 the census of these areas was not included in the figures for Palamau as mentioned by Hunter in his *Statistical Account of Lohardaga*. Taking the area of Japla and Belaunja, the population in 1872 was 4,23,795 souls for Palamau, the area in square mile was 4,910 and the density remained at 86 persons per square mile.

The next census in 1881, however, recorded the population at 5,51,075 which indicated a growth of not less than 30 per cent suggesting that the previous census had also loopholes. The census in 1891 recorded the population at 5,96,770 souls and the increase during the decade came to 8.3 per cent. The next census in 1901 disclosed a further increase of 22,803 persons the total population being recorded as 6,19,600. The census of 1911 gave the population of 6,87,710 souls. It may be said that the census techniques were being made more reliable.

The population figures quoted earlier Of the different censuses years elicited the following observations from P. C. Tallents, L.C.S., in the Revised Edition of *Palamau District Gazetteer* published in 1926:-

"Between 1891 and 1901 the rate of progress was retarded owing to two famines in 1897 and 1900, and a high death-rate in the latter year: an actual loss of population occurred in the east, of the district. The rate of increase was accelerated again in the following decade between 1901 and 1911, especially in the south of the district; in Hussainabad in the north there was a slight decrease. Between 1911 and 1921 there was a further increase, though at a reduced rate. No special circumstance affected the health of the population during these ten years until 1918. The rainfall of that year was above the normal, but its distribution was fatal. The monsoon broke late, and the time available for ploughing was so curtailed that the people in many cases sacrificed the *bhadai* for the *aghani* crops. In July floods occurred that completely upset all ideas then obtaining on the subject of high flood levels, and most of the maize and other *bhadai* crops that had been sowed were washed away. By the middle of August the rains had practically stopped and by the middle of September they had stopped altogether. On the unirrigated lands, which are for the most part in the possession of the smaller tenants, the rice crop was a failure, and the area sown with *rabi* crops as only of half its usual extent. The district was only saved from a disaster by the reserve of wealth that had been accumulated as the result of several years of good crops and the boom in the lac trade during the war, and thanks also to a good mahua crop. Meanwhile the suffering caused by the influenza epidemic of this year was greater than in any other district of the province: the death-rate from 'fever' rose to the unparalleled height of 59.2 per mille and the total number of deaths recorded in the year was 49,000 or 14,000 in excess of the number of births. The epidemic continued during the first months of the following year and the birth-rates of the next two years were naturally low. In spite of the disasters the increase of population during the decade was 45,684 or 6.64 per cent. The increase was greatest in Chhattarpur, Hussainabad and Garhwa, while losses occurred in Ranka, Mahuadanr, and Balumath. Generally speaking, the population increased in the north, where it was most, and decreased in the south, where it was least dense."

The census of 1931 recorded an increase of 11.64 per cent and the population growth appears to have been much more rapid in the Latehar subdivision, which had come into being in 1925.

The general incidence of health was also reported to be better than the previous decade. The 1941 census gave an increase of 11.5 per cent and the growth of population appears to be due mostly to natural accretion.

In the last decade 1941-50 the population of the district has increased by 8 per cent only. There was a flare-up of cholera in this period. The fall in the growth-rate appears to be due to the decrease in the birth-rate. This also was partially due to a virtual collapse of properly reporting vital statistics because of 1942 movement.

The following statement will show the percentage variation in the population of subdivisions and revenue thanas during the last two decades:-

Density Districts, subdivision and revenue thans.	Population.		Percentage variation.	
	1951.	1941-51.	1931-41.	1951.
Palamau .. ..	9,85,767	8.0	11.5	200
Sadar subdivision .. ..	7,84,207	9.0	..	241
Daltonganj .. ..	1,88,216	14.1	10.1	332
Garhwa .. ..	1,53,505	9.2	7.9	273
Ranka .. ..	54,222	1.6	12.9	88
Chhattarpur .. ..	74,722	7.5	10.7	220
Patna .. ..	1,45,961	18.0	15.1	248
Hussainabad .. ..	1,67,581	0.4	16.4	290
Latehar subdivision .. ..	2,01,560	4.1	9.0	121
Balumath .. ..	77,984	-10.7	8.0	123
Latehar .. ..	86,727	23.2	10.4	149
Mahuadanr .. ..	36,849	2.8	8.8	81

It will be seen that the above figures show that the increase in population was fairly well distributed among the two subdivisions as also among revenue thanas. In the last decade, however, there has been much greater increase in population in the sadar subdivision than in

Latehar, and generally speaking the population of the densely populated thanas has grown faster than that of sparsely populated thanas. There has been a substantial decrease in the population of Balumath thana, and low increase in Ranka and Mahuadanr. Hussainabad which has comparatively speaking, a moderately dense population has remained stationary. Out of 21 thanas now only Daltonganj and Garhwa are densely populated. Some of the thanas like Ranka, Mahuadanr, Garu and Bhandaria are very

thinly populated. One could go miles and miles by the main road connecting the thana headquarters without seeing a hamlet. Although a subdivisional headquarters for 35 years Latehar is still a township.

## MIGRATION.

The availability of virgin land in Palamau district had been one of the causes of the earlier incidence of immigration. The flow of immigrants to the district has never been very marked since 1901 but there has been a slow incidence through all the decades.

Immigrants

are mostly from the neighbouring districts of Gaya and Shahabad. In the recent years the various resources have attracted immigrants. A moiety of the immigrants consists of *mahajans* and business people. The recorded number of immigrants in some of the census years may be discussed. In 1901 the number was 38,838 representing 6.26 per cent of the population. Apparently this was due to the undeveloped state of the district and the large area awaiting reclamation which invited a large number of immigrants from the neighbouring districts. The total number of immigrants in 1911 was 35,758 while in 1921 the figure

came down to 24,246. As an abbreviated census was done in 1941 immigration figures for this census are not available. In 1951 census the total number of immigrants was recorded as 35,425.

There used to be a regular recruitment of imported labour to the tea districts of Assam and Duars from Palamau district in the past. Emigration to the tea districts of Duars was not regulated but emigration to Assam was regulated under the Inland Emigration Act and was controlled by the Assam Labour Board. For decades there was an Agent for the Tea Districts Labour Association in Daltonganj who used to control the operation of the recruiting *Sirdars* for the district. The system of recruitment through *Sirdars* was substituted in place of a wholesale recruitment through any possible agency and even giving a false allurements. The Daltonganj depot of the Tea Districts Labour Association has been abolished since 1956 and the flow of emigration to the tea districts has considerably decreased. Some recruitment of the men of Palamau is now done through Ranchi depot. It is reported that the figures were 142 in 1956, one in 1957 and 154 in 1958. There was in the past also a small flow of emigration to the neighbouring area of Mirzapur and Surguja. It is not possible to collect the figures.

The number of emigrants, i.e., persons born in Palamau but enumerated elsewhere in 1901, was 32,210 or 5.19 per cent of the population. O'Malley thought that the figure was not correct as many people born in Palamau might have given out that they were born in Lohardaga, the name of the old district of Ranchi and had been returned as such.

The incidence of emigration in 1911 and 1921 was near about 5.5 and 4.81 respectively of the actual population. After 1921 the figure of emigration of individual district to other States of India was not compiled and emigration figures are available

only for those who have been enumerated within the State. The incidence of emigration from 1931 is not very marked. In 1951 census 23,327 persons born in Palamau district were enumerated in other districts of Bihar.

### **RURAL-URBAN POPULATION.**

As mentioned before the district is primarily rural. In 1951 census the rural population was recorded at 9,48,760 as against the urban population of 37,007. The urban-rural ratio is 1 :26 according to 1951 census. There were only three towns, namely, Daltonganj, Garhwa and Hussainabad.\* The index of urbanisation has been extremely slow as the following figures of population of the towns from 1901 onwards will show:-

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Census year.	Daltonganj.	Garhwa.	Hussainabad.
1901 .. ..	5,837	3,610	..
1911 .. ..	7,179	4,198	..
1921 .. ..	9,817	9,626	..
1931 .. ..	12,040	11,985	..
1941 .. ..	13,943	8,712	..
1951 .. ..	19,223	9,467	8,317

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The 3,202 villages have 1,73,048 houses. The growth of rural population is not very marked. The villages are generally very small and scattered. For postal purposes Palamau district is an extremely difficult one owing to the very scattered nature and the small population of the villages.

### **DISPLACED PERSONS.**

Displaced persons from West Punjab and the North-West Frontier Province which are now included in Pakistan began to arrive in Bihar from July, 1947. The influx was rapid and a considerable number of displaced persons began to pour in the different parts of Bihar from the West Pakistan, but large-scale movement did not begin until the second quarter of 1950 when there were fresh communal disturbances in East Pakistan. According to the census of 1951 the total number of displaced persons in Palamau was 726. Out of it 370 were males and 356 females. The break-up figures were as follows:-

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Displaced persons from West Pakistan.

1946.	1947.		1948.		1949.	1950.	1951.
	M	F	M	F			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
..	136	177	17	26	..	..	..

Displaced persons from East Pakistan.

1946.		1947.		1948.		1949.		1950.		1951.	
M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
..	..	90	88	108	48	..	5	19	12	..	..

**LANGUAGE**

The observations made by P. C. Tallents in the last *Revised* Distric Gazetteer of *Palamau* (1926) still hold good:-

“The great majority of the people speak the dialect of Bihari Hindi Known as Bhojpuri, but in the north-east the Magahi dialect is used. The purer of Bhojpuri, known as Standard Bhojpuri, is spoken in the strip of country along the bank of the Son, but the dialect here spoken has several divergences from the language spoken in Shahabad. In the remainder of the district the people speak a corrupt form of Bhojpuri which has undergone modifications, partly by the influence of the Magahi dialect, which surrounds it on three sides, and of the Chhattisgarhi spoken to its vocabulary which belong to the languages of the non-Aryan population. It is generally known as Nagpuria or the languages of Chotanagpur proper; but it is also known as 'Sadri', and is called by the non-Aryan Mundas 'Dikku Kaji' or the language of the Dikkus or foreigners. The word Sadri in this part of the country is applied to the language of the settled as apart from the unsettled population; thus the corrupt form of Chhattisgarhi, which is spoken by the semi-Aryanised Korwas who have abandoned their original Munda language, is known as Sadri Korwa, as compared with the true Korwa language belonging to the Munda family which is still spoken by their wilder brethren.<sup>1</sup>

“Magahi, i.e., the dialect of Magadha or South Bihar, is current in the north-east of Palamau, and does not differ in any material respect from the language spoken in the adjoining district or Gaya.

"Oraon or Kurukh is spoken mainly in the south or the district; and Munda dialects by various tribes of aboriginal descent."

According to the languages spoken the figures in 1951 census are as follows :-

Indo-Aryan languages-

<i>Languages.</i>				<i>Persons.</i>
Hindi	...	...	...	9,10,193
Bengali	...	...	...	2,630
Marwari	...	...	...	468
Punjabi	...	...	...	416
Gujrati	...	...	...	226
Oriya	...	...	...	176
Nepali	...	...	...	46
Other Indo-Aryan languages	...	...	...	116

Munda Languages-

<i>Languages.</i>				
Korwa	...	...	...	10,701
Mundari	...	...	...	3,819
Other Munda language	...	...	...	1,191
Santali	...	...	...	384
Ho	...	...	...	377
Kharia	...	...	...	318

Dravidian languages-

<i>Languages.</i>				<i>Persons.</i>
Oraon	...	...	...	54,659
Telugu	...	...	...	8
Other Dravidian languages	...	...	...	6
Tamil	...	...	...	4

Other languages of India-

<i>Languages.</i>				
Pushtu	...	...	...	3
Miscellaneous languages of India	...	...	...	3
Malar	...	...	...	1
Asiatic languages	...	...	...	5
European languages	...	...	...	17



## RELIGION AND CASTE.

The population broadly consist of Hindus, Mohammedans, Christians and Adibasis. The break-up figures are as follows :-

Hindu	...	...	...	8,71,261
Mohammedan	...	...	...	97,403
Christian	...	...	...	3,666
Aclibasis	...	...	...	2,741

These figures are according to 1951 census. The population of Christians clearly appears to be an under-estimate for in Mahuadanr thana alone there are said to be more than 20,000 Christians. The Assistant Commissioner of Tribal Welfare puts this figure at near about 21,000 for Mahuadanr thana only. The number of Adibasis will include most of the persons returned as Christians. The average enumerator may not have always correctly recorded some of the Adibasis who definitely follow a higher standard of life as Adibasis. It is also a notorious fact that the nomenclature of Hindu is applied in a loose manner.

The figures of the division of the population according to religion as indicated before quoted from the *District Census Hand-Book of Palamau* based on 1951 census figures are apparently not very acceptable. The figure of Christians and Adibasis are clearly incorrect. Apparently the figures for Hindus comprise the bulk of the Adibasis. Apart from these sections, there are Sikhs and Jains who form a very small but influential section of the population. Members of these communities are mostly businessmen and in quest of business they have gone into the very interior of the district. The figures for the Sikhs and Jains were 483 and 197 respectively in the census of 1951. Unfortunately, these figure are also peculiar. Among the Jains there are 87 males and 10 females. Among the Sikhs there are 168 males and 315 females.

Out of the total population of 9,85,767 the number of the Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes is 4,89,802. The break-up figures are as follows:-

Scheduled Castes	...	...	...	
2,19,615				
Scheduled Tribes	...	...	...	
1,72,027				
Backward Classes	...	...	...	98,160

Some of the classes of Hindus belong to the so-called higher castes like Brahmins, Rajputs and Bhumihars. It has to be stated that some of the Brahmin families were originally imported as priests. Long contact with the indigenous population has brought about some changes in their complex. It is only in this district that even in Brahmin families only a few decades back the bridegroom stooped and touched the toe of the bride and swore to be faithful to her. This is what is usual with the Cheros. Some of the Bhumihars are big cultivators but they do not plough themselves. Quite a number of Bhumihar families have made their mark as timber contractors or as other businessmen.

The other class of Hindus that is very influential in the district is the Ahirs. They are the great pastoral people and in Palamau they trace their origin to Lord Krishna. The Ahirs of Palamau have a number of sections like Kishunaut, Majhraut, Kanaujia, Goria and others. The ancestors of the Kanaujia Ahirs are supposed to have migrated from Kanauj. It is peculiar that in Ahir families there are two kinds of marriages in vogue. Well-to-do Ahirs give *tilak* to the bridegroom and after the offering of *tilak* or presents when the betrothal is done the marriage is performed in the bride's house. But the other system of taking a bride price from the bridegroom party is also in vogue. Ahirs have window marriage in vogue which is known as *sagai*. *Sindurdan* is an important part of an Ahir's marriage.

It is a very common feature in Palamau district that Ahirs take out hundreds of cattle for grazing for months together at one stretch during the dry period and bring the cattle safe and even with calves. This is being mentioned to show that the pastoral economy of the district still lingers.

There are a few other numerically small classes of people but are distinct. One such class is the Athiths. Athiths wear the head gear of ochre colour and necklace of *rudraksh* and *kanthis*. Athiths are divided into two classes, *Sanyasi* and *Grihast*. *Grihast* Athiths follow Hindu law of inheritance. They are mostly cultivators and they carry on trade in buffalo and money-lender's profession. A somewhat detailed description of some of the important elements of the population is given below:-

This district, however, has an interesting cross-section of the population and there are a number of tribals that make a good percentage of it. It is, however, unfortunate that while the tribals of the neighbouring districts of Ranchi and Singhbhum have been studied, there has not been a proper investigation of the tribals and semi-tribals of Palamau. Some of the tribals of Palamau district like Oraons, Mundas and Kharias are found in great number in other districts as well. Shri S. C. Roy's studies of the Oraons, Mundas, and Kharias, etc., will be found interesting and generally applicable to these tribals in this district as well. There are, however, local variations in the culture complex of even these tribals within Palamau district. There has not been adequate researches into the Birjias, Nagesias, Korwahs etc. A future researcher might usefully investigate the social changes and differences of the tribals in Palamau district from their counterpart in other districts of Chotanagpur or beyond and trace the reasons. This should be an extremely important study as this district continued to be in possession of the Oraone, Mundas, Cheros and other Adibasis for a very long period continuously.

It is interesting to observe that the Oraons, Mundas, Raksels, Cheros and Kharwars claim to be the rulers of the district by turn. Some of them have been treated separately. The Adibasis appear to have been pushed out from the position of the rulers by the Raksel Rajputs. The succession of different ruling families has been discussed in the text on Chapter History. The Raksel Rajputs in their turn had to make way for the Chero chiefs. While the Raksels ruled, they brought families of Brahmins from much beyond the district to play the part of the priests. In the 15th and 16th centuries of Christian era, it appears that the Rajputs and Brahmins had their sway in the district. With the coming of the Chera chiefs and

Kharwars there was a somewhat change and orthodoxy spread into the interior. The Cheros were very religious minded. The ancestors of Chainpur, Ranka and some other well known Rajput families of the district had founded temples and encouraged Hindu orthodoxy and had contacts with advanced families beyond the district. The security that the Chero chiefs and Kharwars offered brought about development of home crafts and the growth of a number of service classes. This is the reason why even in an inaccessible village in the very interior of the district we find a solitary family of a barber, *dhobi*, carpenter or blacksmith which is not the case in the inaccessible or remote villages of Singhbhum or Ranchi district. From the pastoral stage the villagers had passed on to the agricultural stage quickly and there grew up the classes of cultivators and agricultural labourers, landed or landless. There also grew up a service class of bonded labour (*kamia*) for the field and for the household (*launri*) as well. In this district till only three decades back every affluent family had one, two or more families of hereditary servants attached to the household. Where a girl of such a family was married, a few of the servants, usually young in age would be sent to the bride's new home to be permanently attached there. This was in vogue in Palamau even three or four decades back.

## TRIDALE."

### *Tribal Welfare.*

The main tribals in this district are the Oraons, Kharwars, Cheros, Kisans (Nagesia), Bhogtas (Ganjhus), Birhors, Paraiyahs and Mundas. The economic incidence of the tribals has been extremely low and their habits of living in some sort of seclusion have kept them considerably away from the currents of progress. Some of the missionaries and particularly the Roman Catholic missionaries had settled down decades before in Adibasi pockets such as Mahuadanr and Bhandaria and had tried to propagate education and some sort of social upgrading among them. No doubt these missionaries had also the other object of converting as many Adibasis as possible into Christianity. The Mahuadanr Revenue Thana has got a population of 36,849 souls out of which even according to a modest estimate 25,000 persons are Christians. Latehar subdivision has got most of the tribals.

The break-up figures of the main tribals supplied by the Deputy Commissioner's office are given below. These figures should be taken as approximate in 1960:-

Oraons	...	...	...	61,454
Kharwars	...	...	...	60,393
Cheros	...	...	...	17,618
Risans (Nagesia)	...	...	...	6,629
Bhogtas (Ganjhus)	...	...	...	11,638
Birjias	...	...	...	1,594

Parhaiyas	...	...	...	7,107
Mundas	...	...	...	5,217
Korwahs	...	...	...	11,203

There are smaller groups like Lohras, Birhors, Karas, Gonds, Asurs.

With the advent of Independence and the change-over of the State Government from a Police State to a Welfare State the uplift of the tribals and other backward sections was actively pursued. A special department known as the welfare Department was created at the Seeretary level. The district administration of the Welfare Department is in the hands of the District Welfare Officers who are also under the administrative control of the Deputy Commissioner. Under the District Welfare Officer there are a number of Thana Welfare Officers whose, duties are to have closer contact with the aboriginals, to know their difficulties and to try to redress them through the District Welfare Officer.

Each Thana Welfare Officer has a mission to fulfil and it is a question of how far he has been able to do the work. His work is of diversified nature, one of which is to start a small library and provide some recreational amenities to the aboriginals. It is contemplated to pursue the scheme on a large scale so that small clubs at important centres may be evolved where the Adibasis would be encouraged to meet every evening and be acquainted with the current affairs. The Thana Welfare Officer has also to look after the economic independence of the tribals as far as possible. If the tribal needs loan to tide over some difficulties or to purchase seeds for his fields or wants to put his children into a school, the idea is that the Thana Welfare Officer should be the immediate agent for getting him these facilities. He has to be the friend, philosopher and guide of the Adibasis.

One of the main items of the Welfare Section of the district administration is to improve the educational facilities provided for the Adibasis. The number of aboriginal students in all types of schools in 1950 was only 2,627 as against 11,074 in 1958-59. Stipends are granted to the aboriginals for their study. Hostel facilities are also provided for the Adibasi students. One such hostel run by the Adimjati Seva Mandal at Latehar has provision for 50 students. There is another aboriginal hostel at Latehar and one at Daltonganj.

### **Ghain Golas.**

The Adibasis are rather improvident and their low economic incidence also stands in the way of building up a reserve or grains for seeds. More frequently the Adibasi cultivator usually finds himself in difficulties for providing seeds at sowing time as he has already eaten up all his grains. In order to tide over such difficulties grain *golas* have provided at different places from where a quantity of seed strictly limited to the requirement is issued to the Adibasi cultivator with the stipulation that the quantity will be returned when his grains are collected. There are grain *golas* at Ramgarh, Bhandaria,

Ranka, Nagar, Padam, Latehar, Chandwa, Nindra, Balumath, Saryu, Chhipadohar and Mahfiadanr.

There are 15 Thana Welfare Officers working in the district.

### **Oraons.**

Sunder in his *Palamau Settlement Report*'(1898) mentioned that there were 48,546 Oraons (23,799 males and 24,747 females). He found that the Oraons held 9,808.56 acres of land, the rent of which was Rs. 7,054-2-0. The food of the Oraons he found was pig, beef, goat's flesh, eggs, fowls, tiger, leopard, bear, all birds except vultures, fish, field-rats and large bull-frogs. He observed that roots of all edible kinds were relished.

He found that young Oraon children between the ages of seven to nine years were being married and thought they were following the example of the caste-Hindus. Ordinarily the children were named after the day on which they were born. Sometimes the name of some relative or ancestor was fixed. Many of the common names were Somra, Mangra, Budhua, Bifaiya., Sukra, Sanichara, Etwari after the particular day of birth.

Regarding funerals Sunder observed that the dead bodies were burnt after the body had been consumed, five bits of bone from the hands, ribs, and thighs were collected and put in an earthen vessel and kept at the place where the body was burnt. After twelve days, when the *bhoj* ceremony was to be performed the ashes were swept by the people who burnt the body and thrown into the river. After a bath the earthen vessel containing the bones of the deceased was carried to his hut. All along the way parched rice was scattered. The earthen vessel was hung on the wall outside the hut. After this when food for the *bhoj* was ready a little of everything was to be taken and place in the earthen vessel to satisfy the spirit of the deceased. Then the feast was to be held. The earthen vessel would then be carried to the river and thrown. Before the vessel was to be carried pice had to be put into the vessel. After throwing the vessel in the water of the river the men will go to the nearest outstill shop and drink.

Regarding festivals Sunder observed that they were *Karma, Jitia, Amawas, Dashara, Soharai, Chat* and *Deothan*. Regarding religion he observed that the Oraon deities were (1) Darha-who was supposed to reside in Ranchi but came to Palamau annually to visit the Oraons. If he was not propitiated, he cause sickness and other troubles and so offerings of pig, cock and goat and once in three years a sheep had to be made to him; (2) *Purbia-who* also caused sickness and had to get a male kid; (3) *Chigur-She* had to be propitiated with offerings of fowl, *roti*, and drink; and (4) *Goisali*, who was the god of cattle. If he was not propitiated with sacrifice of a pig he would cause sickness and death among cattle.

Regarding clothing Sunder observed that men wore *dhoti* and a *chudder* and some of them wore coats or jackets and a head cover. Women wore a *sari*, which covered their body from waist to feet, and were also used for covering their bosoms. Children were allowed to go about naked until the age of six years.

Before a detailed description of the present day Oraons in Palamau district is given, mention may be made of the fact that remarkable social changes have taken place among the Oraons. This is only expected as the Oraon areas have been well opened up and means of communications that have been provided for, brought them in touch with the outside world. There is not so much change in the food habit excepting that they are now more of rice-eaters as the fauna are getting rare in Palamau district. Early marriages which had attracted Sunder's attention are not so much in vogue. The customs that followed birth or death and the festivals have not changed but some of the Oraon deities which Sunder mentioned are not much heard of now. Regarding clothing the Orson men wear more of *kurtas* or jackets and the women a separate *jhula* or blouse.

As the largest of the aboriginal tribes in Palamau district Oraons need some more mention. The Oraons are found in large number in the thanas of Mahuadanr, Latehar and Balumath. Quite a large number of them and particularly at Mahuadanr have been converted into Christianity. The Roman Catholic Mission at Mahuadanr is a very flourishing institution and has now worked for about eight decades. The Mission has a string of *Prochars* or local missionaries throughout the area. They run schools for boys and girls.

The most important feature in the present day Palamau Oraons is that they have almost forgotten their own language. The Oraons have a spoken language with no written script although the Roman Catholic Mission has introduced the Roman script and recently Nagri script is being used. The Oraons today Speak a little of Oraon with a large admixture of Hindi words.

In the villages where there are more of Hindus the Oraons have lost many of their tribal traits. Left to themselves they have maintained their *Dhamkuria* system where the young unmarried boys and girls live separately and get ample opportunities of mixing with each other. The *akhara* is a spot where the young Oraons, boys and girls sing, dance and play upon musical instruments.

Marriage ceremony is negotiated in a manner which is essentially tribal. The girl has an assured position in the family and the girl's family has to be approached from the bridegroom's side and not *vice versa*. Omens are observed. When the matchmaker (*agua*) starts for the house of the prospective bride, if he comes across a jackal passing by his path or hears a crow crowing on a tree he will go back as they are considered to be bad omens. After the visit of bridegroom's party, the father of the bride in the company of match makers goes to the house of the bridegroom and usually the completion of marriage negotiation is followed by feast and drink.

On the day of the marriage from the bridegroom's house starts a party consisting of men and women, young and old. A dancing section dressed in flowers accompanies the groom's party and the bride's village has also to provide another dancing party. Both the dancing parties provide great music, dance and mirth. After marriage the bride goes to her husband's place where she is to be visited by her father and other relations. Women play a very prominent part and the tribals have refused to imbibe the *parda* system from women of other sections.

Among festivals *Sarhul*, when the *sal* trees blossom heralding the New Year, is the most important one which is celebrated with abundance of music, feast, dance and drinking. *Sarhul* is the expression of joy of the Oraons for the home coming of the new harvest. The other festivals like *Karma*, *Jitia*, *Jatras*, *Fagun* are all agricultural festivities and they show the pastoral and agricultural complex of the tribals. Anyone who has observed any of these festivals will mark the *spirit* of abandon, humour and the keenness to enjoy themselves even if that verges on vulgarity.

The Oraons are very hardworking people. They are essentially a community-minded body and the whole village will turn out to cultivate another man's land, if necessary. Hunting was a great pastime before and supplemented their meagre food. An annual hunt is a great event with the Oraons and the women folk dressed in male costumes go out hunting with men-folk.

The women take a great part in the agricultural operations including heavy manual work and probably this has led the Oraons to use cows to plough fields as well. This idea of using cows for cultivation is a taboo to the Hindus.

The Oraons believe in the existence of one powerful spirit as the supreme God or Spirit and a regular graded hierarchy of spirits according to importance. They have a *Pahan* for invoking the aid of spirits and to propitiate them. The *Pahan* is the chief guest in all the community feasts.

The economic condition of the Oraons is extremely low. The incidence of literacy and education is negligible. With difficulty they eke out an existence and have been freely exploited by the zamindars, the *mahajans* and the big cultivators. It is only the Christian Oraons that have a little higher standard of life and they use more clothing, have a better house and some furniture. Otherwise the Oraon huts are wretched, thatched with straw and their furniture consist of a few mats, one or two *charpais* and probably split bamboos fixed higher for seating purposes.

They are broken up into a number of totemistic septs. Each sept bears the name of an animal, a tree, a plant or some material object, natural or artificial. The members of the sept are prohibited from killing, eating, or injuring the totem. *Tirki* sept, for an instance, has the totem of young mice; *Ekka* sept that of tortoise, etc.\*

D. H. E. Surder in his *Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations* has given a detailed description of the Korwas. There has not been much of later investigation about the Korwas exclusive and Sunder's observations have to be quoted *in extenso* for the future researchers. It may be mentioned here that the Korwas claim to be the original inhabitants of Palamau, Surguja and Jaspur. It is a peculiar fact that in the villages inhabited by the Adibasis the Korwa priests are more in demand to propitiate local spirits. A large number of Korwas are found in Ranka and Untari thanas.

Their physique is somewhat different from that of the other tribals. They are stodgy with narrow forehead and unattractive features. The women are extremely hardworking and practically carry out all the household chores. Some of the septs of the Korwas are well worth investigation. Agaria Korwas are said to be the offspring of Korwa and Agaria marriages. Korwas who live in the villages are known *Dih Korwas* while those on the hills are known as *Paharia Korwas*. The influence of totem is strong and a set of taboos follow the totems. Some of the totems are tiger, snake, parrot, wild goose, fish, mango, etc. They are extremely good hunters and bowmen. Their arrows have split heads, and they often use poison at the arrow heads. The Korwas still have the nomadic habit and change their homesteads frequently. They have no language of their own and speak a mixture of several dialects. They are extremely backward in all possible ways and literacy has made practical no headway among them.

Sunder's observations on the Korwas are as follows:-

"A Dravidian tribe of Palamau. As to their origin, the tradition is that Korwas originally came from Lanka (Ceylon); but how or when or under what circumstances, is not known. They are well built, strong, and hardworking. In appearance, both in features and dress, as well as in the ornaments they wear, they rather resemble Kherwars. In height they are just about 5 feet 6 inches, the women seldom being higher than 5 feet. The complexion of both is a dark brown, but I have seen some of a much lighter colour. They wear beard and moustache, and keep long hair, which is shaved only a little way just over the forehead. Both ears are bored by the *Sonar*. The hair is combed with a wooden *kanki*, which is made in Palamau. Korwas whom I have questioned allege that they are divided into seven clans or sub-castes, viz., Rajkorwa, Manraji, Samat, Edgi, Murung, Birjia, and Birhor. Each sub-caste is obliged to marry among themselves. They do not eat or drink with those outside their sept.

"Homesteads.-Houses are generally built facing northwards. Walls of huts are of *sal posts* plastered with earth. The frame of the roof is made of bamboo, and is thatched with straw (*phus*). Before occupying a new house the owner performs *puja* by making offerings to Debi, Raksel, Muchukrani and Duarpar, the deities of Korwas. The floor of the hut is plastered with cowdung, after which a lamp is lit, and kept in the centre. Five plates of new earth are made and placed round the lamp. The plates are marked with *sindur*, and some cooked *arwa* rice as also milk and *ghi* together with a *puri* made of wheat and rice flour mixed with *ghi*, are placed on each plate. After this the following lines are repeated by the owner of the house:-



'Dekho Maharaj, pait parwani, Loge Lachmi paral lotal rabi, Je mange ei waste tohara ke manat hae, Rahin bane jhare kusal mangal rahe, Tub jane Maharaj asaldeo.'

(Oh King, should any member of my family be in the forest or my cattle be grazing there, keep them safe. To obtain this I make these offerings to you, and if all be quiet and happy, then I will know that you are the real King.)

After this a kid is killed. Muchakrain must always have a black one. Water is poured over the kid's head, and the following lines are repeated:

'Dekho Maharaj, baen dhar, Tab, jane asal deo, ghar ke pujari. '

(Oh King, let me feel you holding my hand, then I will know that you are the real deity who should be worshipped in this house.)

If the head of the dead kid quivers, it is considered that the offerings are accepted, and that the prayer is answered. The kid is then skinned, and the flesh is cooked and eaten by the family. No work in the field is done on that day. It is considered a day of rest.

"Marriage.-There are two marriage systems: (1) The runaway or love marriage. Two young people take a fancy to each other, and run off and live together in the boy's hut at his father's homestead without further ceremony. This is called *dahura patura bia* and is generally adopted.

The second system is as follows: The father of the boy sends two men of his own caste to the girl's father, and asks for his daughter. If agreeable, as is generally the case, consent is given, and the marriage is arranged. The *dali* or purchase money has to be paid, and a day is fixed for this. It is usually within 8 or 10 days of the first interview. On the appointed day relatives and friends come, each family bringing with them a gift of rice and *dal*. In their presence the *dali*, consisting of Rs. 5, as also a *mai-sari* are given by the boy's father to the girl's parents. The money is taken by the father, the *mai-sari* by the mother. This binds them as far as giving the girl is concerned. After this there is feasting and drinking and the night passes in revelry. Early next morning the girl is conveyed in a dooly to the boy's house. Her parents do not accompany her; but follow later in the same day. After this the young couple are made to sit together in the *angina* or courtyard and are anointed with *haldi* (turmeric) by the boy's sister. She then gives them a bath and new garments are worn by them. After this the *pahan* or *baiga* takes some rice flour and makes four lines with it on the ground under a *marwa* (canopy) which had been previously erected in the *angina*. This is the *chowka*. Two *pathals* or leaf plates are made and placed within the *chowka*. The boy's brother-in-law who is called *lokanda* then acts the part of the *napit*. He takes some *arua* rice and causes it to be scattered on the ground in front of the young couple by the boy's sister who is called *lokandi*. After this they enter the *chowka* and sit on the *pathal* side by side in front of the altar of two *kalsis* (earthen vessels) which are placed in the centre of the *marwa*. They sit with their faces looking eastwards. Their hands are joined and kept *open* in front of them with the palms upwards. The boy sits to the left of the girl. The *lokanda* then ties the boy's *chudder* to the girl's *sari* by a knot and after these places *arua* rice in each of their hands. Some of this rice is

then scattered by him over the pair and on the ground in front of them. This is the *chumaon* ceremony. After this the remaining rice is placed by the boy and girl, respectively, on their leaf plates and they then stand one behind the other, the girl being in front of the boy. She holds a *soupli* in her right hand and the boy holds, her, wrist, while still behind her. The *lokanda* then places *lawa* (fried rice) on the *soupli* while the boy shakes her hand and causes the *lawa* to scatter on the ground. The two then do *bhanwar*, by walking round the *chowka* five times. After each turn the boy bends and with his right hand touches the small toe of the girl's right foot and thus salutes her.\* This completes the *bhanwar* ceremony. After this the couple sit together as before on the leaf plates within the *chowka*. The *lokandi* then brings some *sindur* in a vessel called *sindhora* and while the girl is covered with a piece of cloth the boy marks her on her forehead five times with *sindur*. This is called the *sindur-bandhan* and is the binding part of the ceremony. After this the couple stand and, on the two baskets being placed on the ground in front of them, they step into one basket and then into another and so on until they reach the door of the hut. Here they are stopped by the boy's sister, the *lokandi*, who refuses to allow them to enter the hut until a present is given to her. This amounts to two annas, which are paid or promised by the boy's father, after which the *lokandi* moves away and the young couple go into the hut. Here eating *jhuta bhat* ceremony is performed. The boy eats some rice and milk and after him the girl does so out of the same plate. The knot binding their clothes together is untied by the boy, who then moves out of the hut leaving the girl behind. She is unable to come out from there during the whole of that day; but is visited by her friends and relatives and congratulations follow. In the evening the boy returns to the hut, and the marriage is consummated the same night. The girl's age at the time of marriage is between 12 and 14 years. Puberty is said to begin at 12 years. On the following morning the pair come one after the other, the bride being behind the bridegroom. The *lokandi* then again ties their clothes together as on the previous day, and a party of four, comprising the *lokandi* first, then the bridegroom, behind him the bride, and lastly the *lokandi*, walk in line. The *lokandi* and the bridegroom salute each of the people seated in the *angina* by touching the right foot of every person and also bowing to them. Each person who is thus saluted has to give a *dahej* (present) of money, according to circumstances, which is placed in the bag (*khoincha*) formed by the bride in front of her by her *sari*. This ceremony which is called *gor-lagan*, being completed, the young couple return to their hut and the friends leave after feasting and drinking.

A Korwa may marry three wives, but not more. Polygamy is, however, practised only when the first wife is childless. A man may marry two sisters, provided the elder one becomes his wife first. He may marry his elder brother widow, but not his younger brother's widow. Marriages of this sort take place by the *sagai* form and are not compulsory.

*"Births.*-In childbirth a Korwa woman is attended by an elderly female of her own caste, or if one is not available, by another Korwa woman who takes the place of the *chamain*. She is removed from the hut here meals are cooked (*rasoi ghur*) to the adjoining one and has to remain there 12 days. Six days after birth of the child the *chatti* takes place. The woman's clothes are washed and the father and other male members of the house have to shave their heads. On the lapse of twelve days *the Barhi* takes place. This

consists of the father killing a fowl or kid and offering it to the deity. In doing this he repeats the following lines:-

He Maharaj, e barhi ke bakra puja tohara ke det bae Kusal mangal rahe.'

(Oh king, this kid is offered to you for this Barhi; grant that all joy and happiness may continue here.)

The kid's head is then chopped off. After this the relatives and friends who may be present are feasted and the woman is then permitted to leave the hut. During the 12 days that she is there she is unclean and is not permitted to come out; but she does so privately and only in presence of women by a small back door which exists in every Korwa's hut. This door is also used for the purpose of escaping in case of danger of any kind. On the expiration of six months the *an-prasan* ceremony takes place. This is feeding of the child with rice. Its feet are washed in unboiled milk. Some *arua* rice, *gur* and milk are cooked together and brought out in a *chipi* (plate). The child's mother's elder brother (*mama*) then feeds it and also names it. For this he is presented with a piece of cloth or some money, according to circumstances. A woman is known to have given birth to 12 children, but, this is exceptional. A woman is said to generally have about seven children.

The mode of addressing parents and others is mentioned below:-

Father- Appa.  
Mother- Inga.  
Elder sister- Didi.  
Younger sister- By her name.  
Elder brother- Dada.  
Younger brother- Babu.  
Father's elder brother- Nunu.  
Mother's elder brother- Mama.  
Wife's brother- Babu.  
Grandfather- Aja.  
Grandmother- Nani.

"*Clothing.*-Among Korwas, men wear a *dhoti* round the loins. It is supported on the waist by a string called *danda*. In lieu of *dhoti* some men simply wear a *bhagwa*, which is a piece of cloth supported the *danda* and tied between the legs. It covers the front and back. A piece of cloth measuring about three yards in length is worn on the head as a *pugree*. Some also occasionally wear an *angna* (coat) over the body. Two *dhoties* are worn annually and cost Re. 1. Women wear in a *sari*, which goes round them and also covers the body above the waist. The length of the *sari* is five yards. It is purchased from the Jolaha at one rupee per piece. Sometimes thread twisted by women is given to the Jolaha for weaving the *sari*. Each seer of thread gives four yards of cloth. The Jolaha charges two Gorukhpuri pice per yard for weaving the cloth.

"*Personal ornaments.*-Of ornaments Korwas wear *kanousi* of brass or silver on both ears. The coat is about 4 annas. They wear *bera* (bracelet) of silver on the

right hand and occasionally on both hands. The cost is Rs. 4. *Bijait* (armlet) of silver is rarely worn. A string with two metal tokens is worn on the neck and is called *sirjaner*. Iron finger-rings called *anguti* are worn on third finger of left hand.

The ornaments worn by Korwa women are-

English.	Vernacular.	Value.
		Rs. a. p.
Brass finger-ring worn on left hand ...	Armnguti .. ..	0 4 0
Anklets of kasa(bell-metal) .. ..	Pairi .. ..	1 8 0
Armlets of brass .. ..	Tar .. ..	1 4 0
Ditto of glass .. ..	Churla .. ..	0 6 0
Bracelet of brass .. ..	Lasunia .. ..	0 12 0
Ditto of <i>Kasa</i> .. ..	Bera .. ..	0 4 0
Ditto of glass .. ..	Churi .. ..	0 6 0
Ear-rings of brass .. ..	Tor .. ..	0 4 0
Nose-ring of silver or brass .. ..	Nathia (silver) .. ..	1 0 0
Ditto ditto .. ..	Ditto (brass) .. ..	0 4 0
Necklace of beads .. ..	Harsa .. ..	0 4 0
Great toe-ring of <i>kasa</i> .. ..	Angta .. ..	0 2 0
Second toe-ring of bras .. ..	Boturi .. ..	0 1 0

“*Customs at death.*-The dead are burnt and also buried. Those who have no relatives and people who die of colera are always buried, as this disease is feared by all castes throughout Palamau. *Nisakia* are people who have no relatives. When burnt the corpse, called *matti*, is placed between a pile of wood after which the nearest male relative of the deceased takes five bundles of *kher* (straw) and after lighting them, applies the fire to the head of the corpse. Each time he does this he walks round the pyre and sets fire thereto. When the pyre is well ablaze, the party go off to the bank of the river. Here they sit too deep and pass handfuls of sand from one to another over each shoulder on to the ground behind. This is done five times and is called the *kandkati* ceremony. After this they return to the pyre and collect the bones, etc., of the deceased that may remain unburnt and cover them up with ashes and earth. Having done so they have a bath and return home. Here a *katauth* (wooden basin) is filled with water and a *tangi* (iron are) is placed alongside it together with some *barni* grass with its roots. The grass is dipped in the water and is applied to the right foot while it is on the *tangi*, and then over the left shoulder. This is done five times and is supposed to purify the people who had attended the funeral. After this, food consisting of rice and milk is cooked and eaten by them. On the expiration of 10 days the *daso* ceremony takes place. The relatives have to shave their heads and wash their clothes. On the following day the *bhoj* follows and relatives and friends are fed according to circumstances. They

assemble under a *jhala* (shed made of leaves) and a *tahalu*, being a member of the caste and a resident of the village, then washes the feet and legs of each person present. There are two *tahalus*, one of whom does the washing while the other pours water. After this all sit under the *jhala*. Another person called *barik* places tobacco on a leaf before each person. On food being ready, the *barik* stands on one leg before them and holds out his hands palm upwards and performs the *angia* ceremony. He says to all present take *angia* of a handful of food in the name of (name of the deceased is here mentioned). We agree is the reply of the guest. This completes the ceremony and the feasting with drinking then begins.

*Religion.*~The deities of Korwas are (1) Debi, (2) Raksel, (3) Duarpar, and (4) Manusdeva or Nunku. All these have to be appeased at different seasons of the year by the killing of kids and offering of *roti* made of flour, else they are supposed to be offended and to cause sickness and trouble in the house, if not in the entire village. All deceased relatives are worshipped.

"Food.-Almost anything is eaten by Korwas. Beef, goat's flesh, venison, sheep, fowls, turtles, fish, cattle that die a natural death, hare, tiger, leopards, hanuman monkeys, milk, butter, *ghi*, buttermilk and all edible roots. Birds of all kinds, except kites and vultures, are eaten. Blood of any animal is also drunk after being cooked. At the beginning of the day before going to work the first meal called *lookma*, which consists of *mahua*, is eaten. The meal is a light one and the quantity taken is expressed as *pao-bhar* (1/2 seer). The next meal *kalewa* is taken at about noon in the field, where it is brought by the wife or some other member of the house. It consists of *mahua* and buttermilk (*matta*), as also vegetables and boiled roots and *bhat* of *sawan*, *gandli*, *kodo* or any other cereal. It is a hot meal and a full one. Rice is not eaten as a rule. If obtainable, it is eaten, but is not depended on. The last meal, called *biari*, is taken at nightfall, and consists of *rnahua*, vegetables and *bhat* made from some cereal or *makai*, or whatever may be cooked. *Dori* (seed of the *mahua* fruit) oil, *til*, mustard and *keoti* oil are used for cooking food. When oil is not available food is simply boiled in water. Oil is expressed by the *Teli*, who charges for doing so at the rate of two Gorukhpuri pice per *ghani* (mill); or more frequently oil is expressed by enclosing the seed in a small bamboo basket called *putla*. The *putla*, is placed between two blocks of wood called *patri*. The operation of pressing the upper *patri* over the lower one is called *sunnum*. The outturn of oil is a quarter seer from a seer of seed. The oil-cake is called *khari*. *keoti* and *dori* oil-cake are used as fuel. *Til* and mustard oil-cake are eaten by Korwas. Sugar and *gur* are eaten, but chiefly as medicine. Salt is purchased from the market and eaten daily, except on Sundays, when neither salt nor buttermilk is eaten.

Meals are common to a household. If there be old parents or friends in the house, they are attended to first, after which the husband, wife, and children eat

together in the same room; but the wife has to sit a short distance away from her husband. Meals are eaten on *donas* (plates) made of leaves of the *sal*, *korea*, *chirchiri* or *mahulan* tree. Drinks are obtained from the outstill shop. Water is procured for all purposes from the nearest river."

### **Chero.**

Chero is a land-holding and cultivating class of people in this district. Cheros at one time ruled over Gangetic provinces and were the rulers of Palamau for a long time. They claim to be Rajputs. Palamau Cheros are divided into two *sections*-*Barah hazar* and *Terah hazar*. The former is higher in rank and includes most of the descendants of former ruling families who assume the title of Babuan. The Babus of Nawa Jaipore or ex-Deogan State, those of Bistrampur belong to this group. The *Terah hazar* are of lower rank and they are scattered over the district. Colonel Dalton makes the following observations on the physical characteristics of Cheros:-

The Cheros vary in colour, but are usually of a light brown colour. They have high cheek, bones, small eyes, obliquely set, low broad noses and large mouths with protuberant lips. According to Buchanan, the old Cheros claimed to be Nagbansis. Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh was for sometime under the sway of the old Cheros. In Shahabad also many ancient monuments are ascribed to them. An inscription at Buddha Gaya mentions one Phulichandra who is said to have been a Chero. In Palamau they retained their dominant position till the accession of the British Government. They had expelled the Raksel chief sometime in the reign of Jahangir. They had invaded Palamau from Rohtas with the aid of Rajput chiefs, the ancestors of the Thakurais of Ranka and Chainpur and had driven out a Rajput Raja of the Raksel family. The latter retreated into Sirguja and established himself there as a Raja. It is said that Palamau population then consisted of Kharwars, Gonds, Mars, Korwas, Parahiyas and kisans. Of these tribes the Kharwars were only conciliated by the Charos and were allowed to remain in peaceful possession of the hill tracts bordering on Sirguja. It is popularly asserted that at the commencement of the Chero rule in the district, they numbered 12 thousand families and the Kharwars 18 thousand families, If an individual of one or the other is asked to what tribe he belongs, he will say not that he is a Chero or a Kharwar but that he belongs to the 12 thousand or to the 18 thousand, as the case may be.

The Charos of the district live strictly as Rajputs and wear sacred thread (*janau*). They do not, however, intermarry with really good Rajput families. The Babuans of Bistrampur and Deogan ex-States have intermarried with Rajput families. If the economic condition of other Cheros was similar there would have been no hitch in their case also for such kind of intermarriage between the Cheros and Rajputs. Intermarriages between the Chero and Kharwar families have taken place. A relation of Palamau Raja

married a sister of Maninath Sinha, Raja of Ramgarh Cheros claim to be the descendants of *Ghyavan Muni*, one of the great Hindu *Rishis*. The Cheros have a tradition that they came from Morang.

The marriage service of Cheros conforms to the orthodox Hindu pattern. At the close of *bhanwar* ceremony the couple march round an earthen vessel set up under the bridal canopy of boughs, the bridegroom stooping touches the toe of the bride and swears to be faithful to her through life. Polygamy is permitted but is not very common. The Cheros have Brahman Gurus and priests. They worship Hindu gods but worship such spirits as Baghaut, Cheori, Darha, Dwarfal and others to which goats, fowls and sweets are offered. In these sacrifices Brahmans do not take part. A Baiga belonging to one of the aboriginal races performs the Puja of these spirits. They have also a priest like some of the Kols, called *Pahan* (priest) who is either a Bhuiya or Parahiya. The deity honoured is the tutelary spirit of the village.\*

The social status of the Cheros was very high even, in the Moghal period of Indian history. They were given the rank of Mansabdars in Akbar's Court. Their children are invested with sacred thread by a Brahman priest at the time of marriage. Agriculture is their original occupation but nowadays they keep shops, do cartaging, work on roads or in coal mines and collect tasar, lac and catechu. In the forcible words of Mr. Ferber the Cheros are a proud race and exceedingly jealous of their national honour. They have never forgotten that they were once a great people and that their descent was a honourable one. Only the very poorest will hold the plough."

This picture of the Cheros may be supplemented by the observations of Sunder on the Cheros in the *Survey and Settlement Report* to show what have been the changes and how they were about six decades back. It may also be mentioned here that unfortunately no sociological investigation appears to have been made on the present day Cheros. The Cheros form an excellent subject of investigation as there has been a tremendous change in their socio-economic structure owing to acculturation.

Sunder observes as follows:-

"The Cheros of Palamau are divided into two sub-castes. Barahazar or Barahajaria and Terehazar or Birbandhia, and are found chiefly in the hilly cultivated northern tappa of Kote, Pundag and Imli. They are rare in the southern part of the district. The number of holdings in possession of these people in the villages to which this settlement relates is 455, and the area covered by them is 3,203.42 acres. The rent payable for this land is Rs. 2,428. The two sub-castes are sub-divided into seven clans, having the distinguishing titles of (1) Mowar, (2) Kuanr, (3) Sanwat, (4) Rautia, (5) Manjhi, (6) Sohanait and (7) Mahto. Among the Mowars and Kuanrs there is (1) a Barko, Mowar and a Chotka Mowar and (2) a Barka Kuanr and It Chotka Kuanr. The Chotka Kuanr is alleged to have come to Palamau from Buxar in Shahabad with the ancestors of the late Kuanr Bhikari Singh of Manka. The legend regarding the creation of the Birbandhia Cheros is this: A wealthy Chero who had resided in Birbandhia had invited his friends, who were all Cheros, to a feast. They came and found him with *kharams* (wooden sandals) on his feet, while he was pouring *ghi* into *dal* that was intended for them. This so irritated them that they not only abused him and left his house, but also out

casted him. Since then there have been two castes, the followers of the outcasted Chero being the present Birbandhia Cheros."

Of the history of the Cheros, Colonel Dalton in his *Ethnology of Bengal*, writes as follows:-

"The Cheros were expelled from Shahabad some say by the Savars or Suars; some say by a tribe called Hariha. The date of their expulsion is conjectured to have been between the fifth and sixth centuries of the Christian era. Both Cheros and Savars were considered by the Brahmans of Shahabad as impure, or Malechhas; but the Harihas are reported good Kshatriyas.

"The overthrow of the Cheros in Mithila and Magadha seems to have been complete. Once lords of the Gangetic provinces, they are now found in Shahabad and other Bihar districts, only holding the meanest offices or concealing themselves in the woods skirting the hills occupied by their cousins, the Kharwar; but in Palamau they retained, till a recent period, the position they had lost elsewhere. A Chero's family maintained almost an independent role in that *pargana* till the accession of the British Government; they even attempted to hold their castles and strong places against that power, but were speedily subjugated, forced to pay revenue, and submit to the laws. They were, however, allowed to retain their estates; and though the rights of the last Raja of the race were purchased by the Government in 1813, in consequence of his falling into arrears, the collateral branches of the family have extensive estates in Palamau still. According to their own traditions (they have no trustworthy annals) they have not been many generations in Palamau. They invaded that country from Rohtas, and with the aid of Rajput Chiefs, the ancestors of the Thakurais of Ranka and Chainpur, drove out and supplanted a Rajput Raja of the Raksel family, who retreated into Surguja, and established himself there. It is said that the Palamau population then consisted of Kharwars, Gonds, Mars, Korwas, Parhaiyas, and Kissans. Of these, the Kharwars were the people of, most consideration; the Cheros conciliated them and allowed them to remain in peaceful possession of the hill tracts bordering on Surguja. All the Cheros of note who assisted in the expedition obtained military service grants of land, which they still retain. It is popularly asserted that at the commencement of the Chero rule in Palamau they numbered twelve thousand families and the Kharwar eighteen thousand, and if an individual of one or the other is asked to what tribe he belongs, he will say, not that he is a Chero or a Kharwar, but that he belongs to the twelve thousand or to the eighteen thousand, as the case may be."

Colonel Dalton says: "The Palamau Cheros now live strictly as Rajputs, and wear the *paita* or caste thread." This, however, is not correct. Some Cheros wear *jineo* or the sacred thread; but many do not do so, in fact, there are said to be more Cheros in Palamau without the thread than with it. Many of those who do not wear it eat fowls, pork, eggs and drink liquor; this, however, is not done openly, the reason being, as some of the leading Cheros explained to me, that if they made it public, Brahmanas who now eat *pakki* and drink water that is given by them, would cease to do so. The Tere-hazar Cheros



will eat both *pakki* and drink water from the hands of the former, but will not eat rice cooked by them.

Again Colonel Dalton says that "intermarriages between Chero and Kharwar families have taken place: but from enquiry in the district, I find that such marriages have never taken place in Palamau. The present direct descendant of the Raja of the Cheros is Rai Kissen Bux, Rai Bahadur of Nawa Jaipur, who has married into Rajput families, owing to which, it is said, that Cheros who wear the sacred thread do not eat with him, unless food is cooked separately for them by a Brahman. Of the Chero headmen whom I questioned, some said that their ancestors came from Morang, while others alleged that they came from Kumaon. The written story regarding his family given to me by Rai Kissen Bux, Rai Bahadur, is as follows:-

"The origin of the family is traced from Raja Keso Narain Singh, a Boondya Rajput, who was Raja of Ghurgoomti in Bundelkund. His daughter was married to one Chawan Muni, after whom they are called the Chawanbansi, or children of the Moon. Their descendants reigned at Kumaon for five generations. Foolchand Rai, one of the family, conquered Bhojpur, where they continued for the next four generations, until Raja Shahbul Rai conquered the Raja of Champaran and settled there. But the latter, with the aid of the Emperor of Delhi, took Shahbul Rai prisoner and regained his territory. Shahbul Rai's son, Bhagwant Rai, fled from Champaran and found shelter with Raja Deo Sahi of Dhawadand. From here Bhagwant Rai came to Palamau, accompanied by Puran Mul, a younger son of Raja Deo Sahi, and obtained service under Manu Singh the then Rakseyl Raja of Palamau, to whom he had brought letters of introduction from Raja Deo Sahi. In the following year during the absence of Raja Manu Singh at Surguja. Bhagwant Rai treacherously murdered his family and seizing the *guddee*, proclaimed himself as the first Chero Raja of Palamau. The family has been in the district for over 200 years."

"*Marriage.*-Among Charos the Kuanr, Sanwais, and Mowar, may marry among themselves; but they should not marry these having the titles of Mahto, Sohanait, Manjhi and Rautia, nor can these, owing to the fewness of their number, marry among themselves. Infant marriages are not in vogue. The girl and boy are usually of the age of 10 or 12 years. Puberty begins at 12 years. The marriage ceremony is in the usual Hindu form. The couple do *bhanwar*, by walking around the altar, which is set up in the centre of the *marwa* or marriage canopy, built of bamboos in the courtyard. The altar consists of two *kalsas* (earthen vessels) that are placed, there in the name of the bride and bridegroom. They are filled with water and have some *dubh* (grass), *kaseli* (betel nut) and a pice placed in each of them. Over the *kalsas* there are two covers (*dhaknas*) in which, cottan seed (*banour*) and *und dal* are kept with some mustard oil. There are two wicks in each cover and the four ends of the wicks are lit while the marriage ceremony is proceeding. In doing *bhanwar* the bride and Bridegroom (the latter being behind the former, with his left hand on her left shoulder and his right hand holding her right wrist) walk round the altar five times scattering parched rice (*lawar*) before themselves all the while. After each turn the bridegroom stoops and touches the right toe of the bride. After this they return to their

seats and are there surrounded by a sheet of new cloth. The *sindur bandan* ceremony is, then performed by the bridegroom, who marks the bride's forehead five times with *sindur*." This is followed by the *gaona* ceremony. The *napit* makes a slight gash below the nail of the right hand little fingers of the couple and the blood that is drawn is wiped by him with two pieces of *mahawar* (cotton dyed with lac). The bride and bridegroom are then made to stand and their seats of leaf plates are changed, the bride taking the bridegroom's and he her's. The *napit* then puts the *mahawar* containing the bridegroom's blood in the bride's right hand and her *mahawar* with her blood in it in the bridegroom's right hand. Each then touches the other's throat (*kant*) with the *mahawar*. This is the binding part of the ceremony and is called *sine-jora*. After this the *napit* takes two mango leaves from the bride's *patmaur* (crown), rolls them and with a cord ties one on the left wrist of the bride and the other on the left wrist of the bridegroom, this is called *kakna bandan*. The bridegroom's elder brother then receives some silver ornaments together with a *sari* from his father and after touching the altar where a lump of earth and one of cowdung, representing *Gour* and *Ganesh*, are kept, places them in the hands of the bride and thereafter takes off her *patmaur* of mango leaves. He and other relatives and friends then throw *achat* (*arua* rice) over the couple and the proceedings end by their retiring to their own quarters. Here the bridegroom promises to give his bride some present after which she takes the *maur* off his head. The *maur* is placed by the bridegroom's brother or father during *assar* on the nearest bamboo bush, the belief being that the bridegroom's *bans* (children) will increase and multiply as the bamboo does. On the fourth day of the marriage called *chautai*, the bride and bridegroom and the latter's mother and other relatives go to the nearest river for a bath. The *kalsa* of the bridegroom is taken there and the water in it is poured by the bride over her mother-in-law's head; all then have a bath in the river and return home. Here the bride and bridegroom are seated within a *chawka* which the *napit* makes. The bride then takes off the bridegroom's *kakna* and he removes off her *kakna*. This closes the ceremony. The two *kalsas* are carefully stored for one year and then forgotten. The marriage is consummated on the wedding day. A Chero may re-marry (1) on the decease of his wife or (2) if his wife be childless. If she has children, he cannot re-marry. Widows are allowed to re-marry. A widow may marry her deceased husband's younger brother. Such marriages take place by the *sagai* form, in order to preserve the honour of the family. Cheros say that a young widow may be persuaded into joining a lower caste, hence marriage with her husband's brother is desirable. They are, however, not forced in the matter, but may do as they like. A man may marry two sisters, provided the elder one is married first. A widow having children, has not been known to re-marry. If a woman be found having committed adultery she is turned out of the house without any ceremony, and thus divorced by her husband. The man with whom she goes wrong, marries her by the *sagai* form. Neither of them is outcasted. No other form of divorce is recognised.

*"Birth.*-At childbirth a woman is attended by her mother-in-law if she be available, and also by the *chamain*. She takes a bath on the sixth day, and on the twentieth day, or sooner, if able, again bathes and wears clean clothes. She draws water from the village well after marking it five times with *sindur*, and after this she is considered to be dead, and may attend to the duties in the house. Barrenness is not common in Chero women. When a woman is barren, she is looked down on. The saying

is she is *bani* (barren), and not worth looking at'. Nevertheless, she is well treated by her husband. Twins occasionally occur and considered to be a sign of good fortune among Cheros. Births sometime occur out of wedlock. If the woman in presence of a *panchayat* declares that the father of the child is so and so, the man named is obliged to marry her by the *sagai* form, and both are permitted to remain in the caste. If the woman fails to mention the father's name, she is outcasted, and nobody will eat with her. Children are named as soon as means are available for paying the Brahman. He is told the date and hour of birth, and he gives the name. If the Brahman is not called, the child, if a boy, is named by the father, and a girl is named by the mother.

"*Funerals.*-The dead are burnt in the usual manner. The ashes are generally covered over and allowed to remain. Some Charas however, take five bones. viz., two from the feet, two from the hands, and one from the ribs from the ashes of the pile, and place them in a new earthen pot, which is buried in the ground near a *pipul* tree. The nearest male relative of deceased pours water on the ground over the pot for ten days, and after this the usual ceremony of feeding Brahmans and others is performed.

"Tattooing.-All Chero women are *tattooed*. Tattooing is confined to women, and is made by the *malarin*, who is paid from two to four annas. The operation being exceedingly painful, the tattooing is not completed the first year, but is done gradually. Tattooing is done with needles, the pigment employed being *kajal* (antimony) mixed with woman's milk. Tattooing commences inside the forearms, and then goes on to the neck and chest, the design being according to fancy of the *malarin* doing it. The marks on the chest are in imitation of necklaces, and those on the ankles and arms resemble anklets and armlets."

### **Parhaiyas.**

Parhaiyas at one time formed a very important section of Palamau population. Some of their songs are evidently old war songs of the tribe and one particular song refers to the invasion of Palamau which is "Fly, Fly, Deo Shahi is coming and we cannot resist him". Deo Shabi was the father of Puran Mal, one of the leaders of the invading force. Parhaiyas are still found residing in jungle villages, although some of them have started living in plains also. They are fairly good cultivators and they supplement their slender resources by collecting honey, lac and other jungle produce and barter them with grains, salt, tobacco and cloth.

Sunder had made a detailed study of the Parhaiyas which is quoted *in-extenso*. It may be mentioned that as there has been no recent sociological research on the Parhaiyas some of the observations of Sunder may have become obsolete now. Sunder observes as follows:-

"Parhaiyas are a Dravidian tribe found, I believe, only in Palamau. According to their own tradition, they have all along been in Palamau and they allege that originally they were the *duar pujaris* or priests of the

Maharajas of the district. They are found chiefly in the southern tappas, seldom towards the north of Daltonganj. They are a simple people, hardworking and laborious, and are good cultivators. In height they are generally about 5 feet 3 inches. They have broad, fiat faces with slightly oblique eyes and their colour is dark copper. In my dealings with them, I found them honest and truthful and they are frank to a degree.

“Food.-All edible jungle products are eaten and no one knows better than the Parhaiya and Brijia where to obtain them. Fish of all kinds, young pig and castrated pig called *meda*, fowl, goat's meat, deer, hare, doves, partridge, peacock, and quails are eaten. They abstain from eating beef and mutton. Marrow is much relished, also curd and butter-milk. Cow's milk is drunk. Food is cooked by the wife. If there be a daughter, she helps the mother. Meals are eaten on plates made of leaves of the *palas*, *sakua*, *mahulan*, *korca* or *dorang* tree. The wife helps the food. If there be aged parents in the homestead they have their meals before the rest of the family. The aged are much respected. The husband takes his food next and, if there be children, they eat with him in the *dhawa* or verandah of the house. The wife eats last of all in the room where she had cooked the food. Two good meals are taken daily. In the morning, after ploughing is finished, men take some refreshment in the shape of about quarter seer of *mahua*. This is called *lukma*. At noon *kalewa* consisting of about a seer of *sathu*, together with boiled vegetable and chilly, are eaten. If rice be available, it is eaten, but is not depended on. Cereals together with roots, vegetables, sags or meat are preferred and much relished. The principal meal is taken at noon. The next meal, *biari*, is eaten after sunset and is never a heavy one. If mustard oil be in the house food is cooked in it, otherwise oil of *mahua* seed is used.

Fire is made by rubbing a piece of dry bamboo smartly against another. The sparks caused by the friction are directed to a piece of cloth which burns soon and is used for lighting fuel in the oven.

"*Marriage ceremonies.*-Two of the headmen of the village called *aguan* are sent to the father of the girl to negotiate for her. If her parents be agreeable, Rs. 5 or Rs. 7 are paid to them as *dali* by the *aguan*, who are relatives of the young man. This binds the girl's parents from disposing of her elsewhere. About eight days after this the girl's father together with a few male relatives visits the young man. If he be approved, the dali money is retained, if not, the arrangements are broken off. If no objection is made, the Brahman is consulted and he fixes an auspicious day for the marriage. He receives a rupee for doing this. On the day fixed the *aguan* and a few of the bridegroom's friends go with a dooly to the bride's house. Here they present her mother with a *sari* and sweetmeats. They also make over to the bride a new *san* for herself. On the following morning she wears this and is conveyed in the dooly to the bridegroom's house. Her parents follow in the evening. A *marwa* (wedding shed) is erected in the courtyard of the house and is covered with bamboo twigs and leaves. A plough, yoke with pole, etc., complete is fixed in the ground in the centre of the space occupied by the *marwa* and two *kalsis* (earthen jars) filled with water are placed opposite it in the names of the bride and

bridegroom. A post made from a branch of the *sida* tree, covered over with small pieces of rag coloured yellow with turmeric, is fixed in the ground in front of the bridegroom's hut. This is called *kaliani*. The fathers of the couple then sit together in front of the *kaliani* and the Brahman pours *ghi* into an earthen vessel which is kept in front of the *kaliani* and in which a lighted wick is burning. This completes the *ghiu-dhari* ceremony. While the *ghi* is ablaze the parents salute each other. After this the *napit* takes some flour of *arua* rice called *aipan* and makes a square on the ground to the east of the *marwa*. Two leaf plates called *pathal*, are placed within the square and the bride and bridegroom are seated thereon/, opposite each other, and in front of the *kalsis*, the bride looking to the west and the bridegroom to the east. Here they hold up their hands palm upwards and the *napit* puts rice called *achat* therein. This is done five times and each time the rice is thrown on the ground over two lumps of earth representing Gour and Ganesh which are kept by the Brahman in front of the couple. Some *dahi* together with a little *aipan* *this* are also kept there as an offering to the deity. After this the fathers of the bride and bridegroom take some turmeric and with it mark the young couple in places from feet to head. A *lohra* (pestle) is then held by five headmen (being relatives of the parties) together, turmeric is applied to it and after this the head, shoulders, body, and feet of the bridegroom and bride, respectively, are touched with it. Some women then dig a hole in the ground in the courtyard. A yoke of a plough is placed over the hole and the bridegroom is seated thereon. Women being his near relatives, then take the *kalsi* which had been kept in the *marwa* in his name and pour some of the water in it over him. After this bath he is wiped and re-seated in the *marwa*. A similar operation is performed on the bride. The fathers of the parties then exchange cloths with each other. Each puts his cloth over the other's shoulder. They then take two peacock feathers from *maur* or crown of the bridegroom, put them into *dahi* and mark each other five times on the forehead and chest with them. After this they salute each other. This is done to establish *samdi* or friendship that should never be broken. The bride's father then takes her on his right thigh and while she is seated there opposite the bridegroom, the Brahman with some *kuss* grass in his hands sits to the right of the bride and repeats prayers. A cup made from leaves of the *sal* tree is placed in the right hand of the bride's father. The Brahman fills it with water. The bride's *kalsi* is then touched with the cup in the right hand of bridegroom, who hands it over to his father. The water in the cup is poured by him into the *kalsi* of the bridegroom. This is done five times and is called *karmat*. After this the bridegroom's father takes *sindur* and marks his son's *kalsi* five times. The *napit* then takes some parched rice and walks round the bride and bridegroom five times, scattering it in front of them all the while. After each round the bridegroom has to salute the bride by touching her foot over the right big toe with his right hand. After this a few of the elder male members of the family hold a sheet round the young couple and the bridegroom then marks the bride on her forehead with *sindur* (vermilion). This is the binding part of the ceremony. The nearest female relative of the bride thereafter marks her nose and head with *sindur* to indicate that she is a married woman. And while this is being done the Brahman and *napit* receive their *neg* (fees or presents) according to the circumstances of the parties. The *napit* scatters rice over the bride and bridegroom. He also performs the *gaona* ceremony by coloring the nails of the bride's fingers with *mahawar* (cotton dyed with lac). This entitles her to return home. After this the bride and bridegroom rise and two baskets are placed on the ground by the *napit*. The young couple walks on this, one

behind the other, with an end of the bride's *sari* knotted to an end of the bridegroom's *dhoti*. This is called the *gat-bandhan*. They proceed to their hut stepping on the baskets, but are stopped at the door by the bridegroom's sister, who demands a present. This being promised, she allows them to enter the hut, the door of which is then closed by some relative. Here the couple unties the knot of their garments and also eat some *dahi* together out of the same plate. The bride also takes off the bridegroom's *maur* (crown) and he removes her *patnwur* (head-dress). The marriage is consummated the same day. Two days after this the *maur* and *patmaur* are made over to the *baiga* (village priest) who places them at the *gaonhel* (sylvan shrine). He is paid two annas for doing this. The bride and bridegroom accompany the *baiga* and salute the *gaonhel* by bowing before it. After tills they have a bath and put on clean garments and then salute the household gods, viz., Chandi, Duarpar and Baghout. Chandi, if offended, is supposed to cause sickness and death. Duarpar, if displeased, causes sickness; but kills nobody. Baghout is believed to cause death from attack of a tiger when he is dissatisfied. Chandi is supposed to remain at the entrance to every hut but Duarpar is said to reside within the hut and Baghout is said to also move about there. After this the bride returns to her parents and continues with them for a year during which she is not visited by her husband. In *Dashara* or *Fagua* she returns again to her husband and stays with him.

Marriage takes place between the 8 age of 12 and 14 years. Puberty is said to begin at 14 years and the first child is said to be generally born within two years. A man may marry two or more wives if he is able to support them; but polygamy is permitted only when the first wife is childless. A man may marry two sisters provided the elder one becomes his wife first. The first wife is called *barki*, the second is called *chotki*.

*“Divorce.-If* the husband and wife fail to agree, they may separate by mutual consent. In such cases both parties may re-marry. If the woman re-marries, it is by the *sagai* form and the man who takes her pays Re. 1-4-0 to her parents. Such a woman is precluded from residing in the apartment in which the *deota* (deity) is believed to remain. She is provided with separate quarters; and owing to this, divorces are uncommon. Widows remarry by the *sagai* form The price of a widow is Re. 1-4-0 and is paid to her parents.

*“Births.-At* childbirth a *chamain* attends the woman. The *chamain* remains with the patient for ten days. Women are said to rarely give birth to twins. A woman is unclean for six days. On the lapse of this period, the *chatti* is performed. The *napit* paints the woman's nails; he also colors the nails of her feet red with *mahawal* (cotton dyed with lac). The *chamain* bathes the woman and she is clothed with new garments; but for 15 days no food cooked by her is eaten by her husband. The child is named by the Brahman who is paid for this from five paid to Re. 1-4-0.

*“Habitations.-The* Brahman is consulted and an auspicious day is fixed by him for building the hut. If there be only one hut, the door should always face to the east. The hut should not be less than 6 cubits broad and 12 cubits long. The roof is thatched with straw.

*"Medicines.*-In sickness, medicines are found in the jungles. In fever, a root called *satour* is crushed, and mixed with water which is then drunk. The bark of the karam (*Adina cordifolia*) tree is also crushed and mixed with water, which is strained and drunk. In high fever the root of the *mowan* tree is crushed and mixed with water which is strained and drunk. The fruit of the *morwun* tree is crushed and mixed with water. This produces froth, which is rubbed over the body, and is said to reduce the temperature. In colic, the old stem of a cob of maize is burnt, pounded and mixed with black salt and rock salt. A pill is made of this and swallowed. 'When the stomach is heated' the bark of the *baher* tree is crushed and mixed with water, which is strained and drunk. Barley, turmeric and *gur* are ground and mixed with water and drunk for the same complaint. In cough, the juice of the *sale* tree is drunk. In sorethroat the *harre* (*Terminalia chebula*) fruit is burnt, ground, and eaten. In diarrhoea the gum of the *sale* tree is powdered, mixed with fresh *dahi*, and drunk. In cholera the seed of an old cucumber is ground and given to the patients. In headache the fruit of the *bhela* (*Semecarpus Anacardium*) tree is cut, and the juice is applied to the forehead. The blisters caused thereby, are said to remove the pain. The juice from leaves of the *chilbil* tree is also used for blistering the head in the same manner. Garlic is sometimes rubbed over the temples to relieve pain. When half the head aches or in neuralgia, the fruit of the *panrer* tree called *ad-kapali* is used. It is worn at the end of the lobe of the ear on the affected side of the head, like an ear-ring. In cold, chilly is ground, mixed with water and drunk. For goitre, the root of the *Keinar* tree are *chitaor* root are ground, and rubbed over the affected part in small-pox, cowdung is burnt, and *ghi* is poured over it. The ashes as soon as cool are put over the affected part.

*"Funerals.*-The dead are burnt, except in cases of cholera, when they are buried. The funeral pyre is set ablaze by the son or nearest male relative of the deceased. The ashes are collected and covered over with sand, and a mound is made at the place. The bones of the deceased are left there. The funeral party returns home and purify themselves by touching water in which five blades of *dubh* (grass) and a piece of iron are placed. In the evening some rice is cooked in milk. This is called *dudh mui* and all the party have to eat of it. On the tenth day after the funeral the *napit* shaves the male members of the family of the deceased. This is called the *dasua*. On the 12<sup>th</sup> day the Brahman is fed and is also given some money, according to the circumstances of the people. The *napit* and the *dhoby* are also paid. The relatives and friends of the deceased are fed.

*"Tattooing.*- All Parhaiya women are tattooed (*khodna*), which is done by the *ghasin* or *malarin*. Her charge is from two annas to four annas, according to the patterns that she may be required to make. Tattooing is done after the age of ten years, and before marriage takes place. Antimony and woman's milk are used, and the pricking is done with three needles. The ornamentation is according to the fancy of the woman who performs the operation, but the patterns are generally necklace, bracelet, and anklet. The figures are made on the arms, neck, chest, and ankles of women. Men are not tattooed.

*"Ornament.*- Women wear *pairi* (anklets); *anguta* (ring on great toe), *anguri* (ring on small toe); *churi* (bracelet) of lac; *churla* (glass armlet); *guria* (necklet of beads)

*hasuli* (neckles of silver); *tarka* (ear-ring); *tikli* (round wafer on forehead), and *nathia* and *bolak* (nose-rings).

Men wear *kanousi* (ear-ring); *bera* (bangle of silver), and occasionally *udhras* (necklace of beads).

"*Religion.*-The deities are Dharti or Muchukrani, who is believed to remain within the village under a large tree. She is appeased by the offering of a kid. Raksel is believed to keep off sickness provided an offering or a he goat is made to him annually. Duar Pahar is said to be a Dhosad who remains in the village. He is appeased with a male pig. During the Dashara festival a buffalo is killed as an offering to him. Debi Mai is the deity or goodness. A black she-kid is killed as an offering to her."

### **Birjias.**

Sunder has left an extremely interesting note on the Brijias who are the same as the Birjias. His observation are quoted in *extenso*. It may be mentioned here that the Birjias are more found in Mahuadanr police-station and are fast declining. They are nomadic in habits and a very small percentage has taken to settled cultivation. The bulk of them live in a group of two or three families on the spur of the high hills. They still do a little cultivation by burning the underwood and by throwing some seeds on the ashes. Usually they move out from their homestead in about a year.

Birjias speak a dialect called Birjia which is a mixture of Mundari and other tribal dialects. Their manners, customs and other ways of life areal in to those of Korwas, Kharias and other tribes.

It has to be mentioned before Sunder's observations are quoted that there has not been any detailed investigation into the present day Birjias and many of the Sunder's observations may have become outdated or may be wrong. Nevertheless, as a pioneer investigator his observations are of great value.

Sunder observes as follows:-

"These people know nothing of their history and only say that they have been in Palamau for many generations with few exceptions, they are found chiefly in jungle tracts in the southern part of the district where the cultivation done by them is entirely on the beonra or juming system. They are well-built, strong and able to bear any amount of hardship. In height, the men seldom exceed 5 feet 3 inches, while the women are about 5 feet. They are dark-skinned and have broad noses with flat faces and small black eyes. In spite of the hardships they have to endure in a part of the district which is extremely unhealthy during most of the year, and where the weather is intensely cold during the winter months, the average age to which they live is 30 years, and I have a few acquaintances among them who have passed the age of 60 years.

"Food.-Brijias eat beef, pork, deer, goat, buffalo, sheep, gaur, dhamin snakes (*Ptyas mucosus*),goi (a lizard), rats, bull, frogs, tiger, leopard, bear, peacock and all birds, except vultures. They drink milk and buttermilk, and also eat curd. Blood, called *tumba*, of all animals that are eatable is boiled and drunk.



It is not taken raw nor is uncooked meat eaten. Food is cooked in mustard, *mahua* or *jatingi* oil, whenever this is obtainable; otherwise it is cooked in water only. Oil is expressed by themselves between two logs of wood. All food eaten by men may be eaten by women also. Marrow is called *tumul* and is much sought after, owing to there being grease in it. In seasons 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 Brijia where he can easily get them. Salt (*bulung*) is obtained by exchange and eaten. Sugar and honey are eaten, the latter being obtained from beehives in the jungles.

Fire is made by rubbing two pieces of bamboo against each other. The lower piece is split and a bit of rag is fixed between. The upper piece is rubbed smartly against the lower one. The friction creates sparks, which soon set the rag ablaze. Steel and flint are not known.

The first meal called *lookma*, is taken in the fields between 9 and 10 A.M., and consists of boiled pulse or *makai*. The next meal called *kal-wa-jom-ko* is taken at noon (*dophar*) and consists of *mahua* and vegetables, or boiled *makai* or *bhat* made from *jinor* or pulse. The food most appreciated is *makai* and *marua*, together with such meat or vegetables that may be available, as also *mahua*. Rice is eaten when obtained, but is little cared for, the former and cheaper grains being the staple food of these people. Food is cooked by the wife, or if there be an elder daughter in the house, she attends to this, while the mother looks to other matters. Fuel is brought by the father or brother. Water is obtained from the nearest river or from well, if one exists, but river water is preferred. Meals are common to the household. The mother helps the husband first, then the children, and lastly herself. All eat together in the compartment adjoining the one in which the food was cooked. When the children are given rice for the first time, a fowl is killed and offerings are made to deceased relatives. Five plates made of leaves are placed in a freshly cleaned part of the floor of the hut. Rice and fowl's meat are then put on the plates and the father of the child addresses the deceased relatives thus:-

'From today this child is beginning to eat rice. May he (or she) be able to digest it and may he (or she) continue in good health'. After this some rice is taken from each of the five plates and placed in the child's mouth by the mother.

*"Marital relations.*-Two friends, called *bisuts*, go from the boy's father to the parents of the girl and ask whether a marriage would be agreeable or not. If agreeable, as is always the case, the girl's parents fix a day, which is generally within eight or ten days of the first interview, and ask the *bisuts*, to return. On the day appointed the *bisuts*, as well as the young man to be married and a few friends take two earthen vessels or *handi* or, *janr* (rice beer) with them and go to the girl's house. The *hundi* is carried there by the bridegroom. On the same evening the girl's parents relatives and friends assemble in the courtyard (*angina*) of the girl's house, and here the betrothal takes place by the girl's father, announcing that the marriage has been arranged and that he has promised to give

his daughter to the boy. After this *handi* (liquor) is distributed by the *bisuts* in a *topara* (earthen pot) or *lota* to each of the people present and the night is spent in feasting and drinking. On the following morning the girl's father fixes a day for the marriage, and after this the *bisuts* and boy return home. The date for the marriage is generally one year after the betrothal. On the lapse of the period that may be fixed, five earthen vessels of *handi* and 12 *paseries* or 72 seers of rice, as also two pigs and Rs. 6 in cash are taken by the *bisuts*, the bridegroom and his friends, together with two drummers to the bride's house. They are met on the way by the girl's people, and the marriage takes place on the same day. The rice, pigs and Rs. 6 are made over to the girl's father in the presence of the relatives and friends who assemble in the courtyard. A *sari*, called *mai sari* is given to the girl's mother, and one is also given to the bride. The *bisuts* then cause the bride and bridegroom to stand under a *marwa* (marriage shed covered over with leaves and bamboos) in the courtyard. After this the *bisuts* pour a little mustard oil over (1) the boy's head and (2) the girl's head, and then dress their hair with a *kanki* (comb of wood). This is the binding part of the ceremony. One of the *bisuts* then takes the bridegroom on his shoulder while the other *bisuts* takes the bride up in his arms and the two then dances together in front of each other, singing all the while. After this dancing, which lasts for a few minutes only, the pair are set on the ground and they then have to go together, the boy first and behind him the bride, and salute the guests present, beginning from the right and ending on the left, by bending before them and touching their feet. This completes the marriage ceremony. Congratulations follow and presents of money are given to the girl according to circumstances of their friends. The only head-dress worn by the bridegroom is his *mureta* (turban) of cloth. He wears a *kurta* over his body and *dhoti* as usual. After this there is a feasting and drinking which run into the small hours of the morning the whole of the food eaten at this feast has to be cooked by young men. No women are allowed to do this. The parents of the bridegroom are not present at the marriage. The *bisuts* represent them and arrange the whole affair. On the food for the feast being ready the girl's father addresses the male guests as follows:-Come brothers and eat the feast that is ready for you and to the women folk he says-

'Come sisters and join in this feast. After this there is feasting and thereafter the *bisuts*, as also the bride and bridegroom, return home to the latter's house and the marriage is consummated there. The bride's parents do not accompany her. Four days after this the couple takes two earthen vessels of *handi* called *Baharaoti handi* to the bride's parents and drinking follow at their house. On the same day presents consisting of money or cattle are given to the bride by her parents. This is called *dan dahy*. The couple then returns home. Polygamy is permitted. A man has been known to have three wives, but the number depends on his ability to support them. If there be three wives, food is cooked by the second or third wife, generally the latter, while the elder one attends to other affairs of the house. A man may marry two sisters, provided he marries the elder one first. If a man is unable to agree with his wife, he may divorce her by simply sending her away. The separation is effected in the presence of a few headmen at

the village. The woman so separated may join another man by mutual arrangement which is called *sagaina*.

*"Reproduction.*~ In childbirth a woman is generally attended by her mother-in-law. If she has none, the next near female relative attends her. If she has none, the next year female relative attend her. In case of difficult labour shampooing is resorted to. Beyond this, nothing is done. Oases of difficult labour are said to be rare. Marriage takes place between the age of 12 and 16. Puberty is said to begin at 12 years. A woman begins child-bearing at the age of 16 and ends at about 40 to 45 years. The average number of family is 5, of whom two are boys and three are girls. The largest family known was of 9. A mother is known to have given birth to this number, of whom five grew up and four died. A mother suckles her children up to the age of 3 years. Twins sometimes occur and are well regarded. It is said that when twins are born, if one dies, the other never survives. In cases of sickness, no medicine is given to a child. The mother only is dosed and it is believed that the child benefits thereby. The principal disease from which infants suffer is said to be fever, which prevails most in the month of *Kartik*. A barren woman is called *Barijiana*. She is not looked down on. Barrenness, however, in Brijia women is said to be uncommon. Births out of wedlock are never heard of. In fact, men respect women in this matter and there is said to be little immorality.

*"Customs at death.*-The dead are burnt. On removal of the corpse from the house paddy is scattered behind it by the head male member of the family. Wood is collected and the body is placed thereon by the male relatives of the deceased. No outsider may touch the corpse. A piece of new cloth is put over it. After this the nearest male relative walks round the pyre five times and each time applies fire from a bundle of straw first to the mouth of the corpse and then to the pyre. When the whole is burnt and nearly reduced to ashes, water is poured over the unburnt portion and the fire is extinguished. After this nearest male relative takes a bit of bone from the forehead, the right forearm, the chest, the lower end of the spine and both thighs and feet, and after placing them in a new small earthen pot which is tied in a piece of new cloth it is then buried in a suitable prominent site, generally alongside a road. Before filling up the hole in which the pot is placed, a black fowl is killed in the name of the deceased to satisfy his spirit and the blood from the fowl is allowed to drop on the pot containing the bones. After this, the hole is filled up and a large stone called *kalbudh* is erected over it. The dead fowl is taken home and cooked. On completion of burial of the bones the funeral party returns home and have their heads just above the forehead shaved after which a bath is taken in the river. The eldest male member of the family then takes some oil and turmeric (*haldi*) and applies it to the beads of the people present. This is said to purify them. On food being ready, five boys are brought and seated in the courtyard (*angina*) and are fed with rice and pork. This is called the *panch kuanri* and its performance admits of other people taking food. After this there is feasting and drinking and the funeral ceremonies are completed.

*"Inheritance.-Property* descends to the son; if there be no son, then to the next male relative and widow, half to each. Daughters get nothing except what may be given to them by their father while he is alive. If there be no male relatives, the property remains with the widow so long as she is alive and after her decease is divided by the daughters in equal shares. Relationship is thus always traced in the male line.

The mode of addressing relatives is as follows:-

Father is called Apun.

Mother is called Engain.

Elder brother is called Dadain.

Younger brother is called Bokonje.

Elder sister is called Daie.

Younger sister is called Bokonje.

Son is called Roponing.

Grandson is called Nathian.

Father's elder brother is called Gungunje.

Father's younger brother is called Xakain.

Mother's elder brother and younger brother is called Mamunje.

Father's elder sister and younger sister is called Hotomin Kakinge.

Father's wife is called Hilinge.

Sister's husband is called Tenjain.

Brother's son is called Bhutijain.

*"Clothing.-Men* wear a *barki gendra*, which is a sheet or cloak for covering the body. It is in two long pieces stitched together and costs Re. 1-8-0; or they wear a *gendra*, which is a single piece of cloth worn round the loins. It is supported on the waist by a cord called *danda-dor*. The *dhoti* costs 8 annas. One *barki gendra* and two *dhoties* are worn during each year.

Women wear an *evergendra*. or *sari*. It is worn round the lower part of the body. They do not wear a *danda-dor*. Two *evergendras* are worn each year and cost Re. 1-8-0. No *kurtas* are worn. The body from waist upward is covered by a part of the *evergendra*.

Children remain naked up to the age of four or five years. No ceremony is performed when they were clothing for the first time.

*"Diseases and medicine.-The* sick are looked after by their wives or other relatives. On recovery from sickness *puja* is generally performed by offering a fowl or pig through the *Ojhas* to the deities Khat and Dhandi. The sick are laid on a piece of mat called *patia*, which is made from leaves of the date-palm. The diseases from which Brijias suffer and the remedies employed are mentioned below:-

Brijia.	English.	Remedy.
Ruatana or Gendrain crushed After	.. Fever	.. The bark of <i>karam</i> tree is and soaked in water.  being strained the infusion is drunk.
Datahasua	.. Toothache	.. The root of <i>rangaina</i> creeper is powdered and applied to the affected tooth.
Samanghasutana ground	.. Headache	.. Turmeric and garlic are  and applied to the affected part.
Suantana stomach	.. Sttmachache	.. Ashes are spread on the  and a heated sickle is applied over the place where the pain is most severe. <i>An</i> immediate cure is said to be effected.
Aonkatitana crushed	.. Dysentery	.. Bark of mango-tree is  and mixed with milk. The liquid is strained and drunk.
Piritana affected	.. Jaundice	.. Children are said to be  most this disease. Mustered oil and lime are mixed and rubbed over the body every evening for seven days. This is said to be effect cure.
Matatana	..small-pox	.. No medicine is taken. Puja is performed to appease the goddess Debi. Fire is made and chuan (gum of sal tree) and gur are burnt over it. This

			is believed to satisfy the deity.
Khuktana are	..	.. Cough	.. Giddiness Black pepper corns ground and mixed with water. The infusion is strained and drunk.
Luturhasua and	..	.. Earache	.. A cowrie (shell) is heat-Hi, While warm, is put into water held in a leaf. The water thus heated is applied to the ear, and is said to give immediate relief.
Bultana	..	.. Giddiness	.. The fruit of the <i>kathal</i> tree is Ground and mixed with hot water. The infusion is strained and drunk.
Dautana or Babadtana the		.. Ringworm	.. Wet cowdung is applied to part in small circular cakes. These cakes are then removed and kept near the fire. It is cured within the number of days that the cakes take to dry.
Mahumaumtana by	..	.. Bleeding of nose	.. A cure is said to be effected smelling fresh cowdung.

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Rheumatism is tutaintana, cholera is markhitana and cramps are nyertana. There is no remedy for these diseases. The *Ojha* is consulted and performs *puja* to propitiate the deity.

*"Ornaments.-Among Brijias, men wear bera (bracelet) of silver on the right hand. The value of it is from Rs. 4 to Rs. 6. They wear a hisir (necklace) of beads costing two Gorakhpuri pice string on their neck. A brass hairpin called salukha is worn on the head to support the hair. It costs two pice. Kanousis of brass (ear-rings) are worn on both ears. They cost two pice. Sometimes a string containing a silver coin is worn on the neck. This is called chandwa.*

The ornaments worn by women are mentioned below :-

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						Rs.	a.
Necklace of beads.	..	..	..	Hisir	..	0	2
0							
Ditto of braas	..	..	..	Suta	..	0	6
0							
Ditto of silver	..	..	..	Do.	..	5	0
0							
Leaf ear rings	..	..	..	Dandik	..	0	2
0							
Brass bracelet	..	..	..	Sakom	..	1	8
0							
Brass armlet	..	..	..	Churla	..	0	1
0							
Brass ariklet	..	..	..	Penri	..	1	8
0							
Rings worn on all fingers	..	..	..	Mandam	..	0	0
3							
Brijia women are not tattooed."							

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### ***Birhors.***

The number of Birhors in Palamau or as a matter of fact in any district will always vary from time to time. The Birhors and particularly one class of them are absolutely nomadic in habit and will move away from their habitation at the slightest pretext. They live in vary small leaf-huts with an opening through which one could crawl in with difficulty. Birhors are still met with in the jungles of the southern thanas of Chandwa and Balumath and in Netarbat. They are fast declining. A settlement of Birhors has been recently done at Bishunpur to stop this decline.

Dalton observed about the Birhors in about 1864:-"With much trouble some Birhors were caught and brought to me. They were wretched-looking objects, but had more the appearance of the most abject of one of those degraded castes of the Hindus, the Domes or Pariahs, to whom most flesh is food, than of hill people. Assuring me that they had themselves given up the practice, the admitted that their fathers were in the habit of disposing of the dead in the manner indicate, viz., by feasting on the bodies; but they declared they never shortened life to provide such feasts, and shrank with horror at the idea of any bodies but those of their own blood-relations being served up to them. The Raja of Jashpur said he had heard that when a Birhor thought his end was approaching, he himself invited his kindred to come and eat him. The Birhors brought to me did not acknowledge this."

Paddington's Memorandum on an Unknown Forest Race inhabiting the thanas South of Palamau was published in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1855. Quotation from Paddington's Memorandum will be found in the same book. Paddington mentions that they might well have been mistaken for a large Orang-Utang. He further mentions that such that with great difficulty and by the aid of signs one of the Dhangars could make them understand the questions put to them.

The next more detailed report about the Birhors was given in the Report of L. R. Forbes, I.C.S., on the Raiyatwaree Settlement of the Government farms in Palamau. S. C. Roy has given a lengthy quotation from Forbes Report in his book on the Birhors. This Report may be looked into for fuller details about the Birhors. Dalton's Ethnology was published in the same year as Forbes Report but contains a few lines about the Birhors. Dalton observes- “

The Birhors call themselves Hindus, live in the jungles, and subsist on wild animals,

honey and what they can obtain by the exchange of jungle produce with people of the plains. They are great adepts at snaring monkeys and other small animals, and sell them alive or eat them, they have no cultivation whatever, but they are apparently Kolarian, as among themselves they converse in Kol. They sell chob, a strong fibre of which ropes and strings for various purposes are made, honey, wax, and sikas, the sticks like bows for carrying loads *bonghy* fashion and *banghy* ropes; and with the proceeds and the spontaneous edible productions of the forest they manage to exist and clothe themselves. "There are people called Birhors in Chutia Nagpur proper and Jashpur, who live in the equally wild state, but communicate with each other in a dialect of Hindi. They are a small, dirty, miserable-looking race, who have the credit of devouring their parents, and when I taxed them with it, they did not deny that such a custom had once obtained among them."

Dalton attaches a short account of Birhors supplied to him by one of his subordinates who had visited some Birhor settlements. That account runs as follows :-

"The Birhors were found living in the jungles on the sides of bills in huts constructed

only of branches of trees and leaves, but so made as to be quite water-tight; their huts are as small as those of the jungles, previously described. The entrance door faces the east, and is about two feet from the ground. A man and his wife and young children sleep together in this small hut six feet square, but grown-up children are provided with separate huts; they lie on date-tree leaf-mats spread on the ground. They have hardly any cultivation, and never touch a plough. A man and his family who not long ago left their community and took to cultivating in the plains are now considered outcaste. The men spend their time in snaring hares and monkeys, collecting edible roots and jungle fruits and the chob (*Bduhinia scandens*) bark, of which they make strings for various purposes. They are seldom



seen in the villages, but the women frequent the markets to sell their ropes and jungle produce.

"The Birhors affirm that they and the Kharwars are of the same race descended from the sun.

They came, seven brothers, to this country from Khairagarh (in the Kaimur hills); four went to the east, and three brothers remained in the Ramgarh district. One day when the three brothers were going out to fight against the chiefs of the country, the head-dress of one of them got entangled in a tree. He deemed it bad women, and remained behind in the jungle. His two brothers went without him and gained a victory over the chiefs, and returning found their brother employed in cutting the bark of the chob. They derided him, calling him the Birhor, (Birhor is

Munda for a woodman or forester) or chob cutter; he, replied that he would rather remain a Birhor and reign in the jungles than associate with such naughty brothers. Thus originated the Birhors, lords of the jungles. The other two brothers became Rajahs of the country called Ramgarh.

"The number of the Birhors is limited, estimated at not more than 700 for the whole Hazaribagh district. They are quite a nomadic race, wandering about from jungle to jungle, as the sources of their subsistence become exhausted. There are about ten families in the jungles near the village of Ramgarh, forty in the vicinity of Gola, ten in the jungles of Jagesar, and forty families about Chatra and Datar. Major Thompson, in his report on Palamau, speaks of them as the aborigines of that district. They are found in Chutia Nagpur proper, in Jashpur, and in Manbhum.

"The women dress decently; they have marks of tattooing on their chest, arms, and ankles; they have no such marks on the face.

"After child birth a woman remains in her hut for six days and has no food, except medicinal

herbs. Then the infant is taken out, not by the ordinary door, but by an opening made in the opposite wall; this, it is believed, protects it from being devoured by a tiger or bitten by a snake.

"Parents arrange the marriage of their children. The father of the bridegroom pays three rupees to the father of the bride. They have no priests, and the only ceremony is drawing blood from the little fingers of the bridegroom and bride, and with this the *tilak* is given to each by marks made above the clavicle. This, as I have elsewhere noted, I believe to be the origin of the practice now so universal of marking with red-lead. The convivialities of feasting and dancing conclude the day.

"The ceremony takes place in the bride's house and next morning she is taken to her

husband's; but after remaining there two days she returns to her father's to complete her education and growth at home.

"Their ceremonial in regard to the dead is quite Hindu. They burn the body and convey the

remainder of the bones after wards to the Ganges, they say; but probably any stream answers. They do not shave for ten days as sign of mourning; at the end of that time as have and they have a feast.

"The Birhors worship female deities and devils. They have assigned to Devi the chief place

among the former and the others are supposed to be her daughters and grand-daughters; she is worshipped as the creator and destroyer. The devils are Biru Bhut, who is worshipped in the form of a raised semi-globe of earth- Biru is also the Kharria god and Darha, represented by a piece of split bamboo three feet high, placed in the ground in an inclined position, called also the 'Sipahi', sentinel. This is the immediate guardian of the site, as a god or devil of similar name is with the Mundas and Oraons. A small round piece of wood, nearly a foot in length, the top painted red, is called 'Banhi', goddess of the jungles. Another similar is Lugu, the protectress of the earth. Lugu is the largest hill in Ramgarh, so this is their Marang Buru.

"An oblong piece of wood, painted red, stands for 'Maha Maya' Devi's daughter. A small piece of white stone daubed with red for her grand-daughter, Buria, Mai; an arrowhead stands for Dudha Mai, Buria's daughter. They have also a trident painted red for Hanuman, who executes all Devi's orders.

"Sets of these symbols are placed one on the east and one the west of their huts, to protect them from evil spirits, snakes, tigers and all kinds of misfortune.

"It is not easy to place the Birhors from what is above disclosed, but the fact that, though a

wandering and exclusive people, they commune in the Munda language, is, I think, sufficient to establish that they belong to the Kol race: and then they have the Mundari-Oraon deity Darha and adore the Biru of the Kharrias.

"The people with whom they exchange commodities are all Hindus or Hinduised, so it is not

surprising that they should take up Hindu notions."

S. C. Roy also refers to the article of Mr. W. H. P. Driver, an Emigration Agent published in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* in 1888. This is followed by details on the Birhors as a result of personal study by S. C. Roy. His monumental volume is still the standard book on the Birhors. It is a pity that this fast declining small tribe is not being investigated again by some scholars. In these three decades and half that have rolled by since S. C. Roy published his book, the Birhors have undergone great changes.

One section of them has taken to settled life. But the other portion is fast declining, and have almost refused to absorb any of the changes in which they live. An attempt has been made by the State Government of Bihar to make the Birhors take to settled life and as indicated before the success is confined to one section only.

### **Mundas.**

D. H. E. Sunder in his *Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations of the Palamau Government Estate* published in 1898, as mentioned elsewhere, I as discussed a number of tribals, but he has not discussed the Mundas. This is rather peculiar because the Mundas, although minority among the Adibasis of Palamau form quite an important tribal element.

The name Munda appears to be of Sanskrit origin and means the headman of the village. By common parlance the designation Kol is used for both Mundas and Oraons. The Mundas are more akin to the has of Singhbhum and the Santhals of Santhal Parganas than the Oraons.

Mundas are found mostly in Balumath thana. A certain number of Munda families are also found in different villages of Chhechkari valley who are designated as Bhuinher, probably indicating that they were the original settlers. As a matter of fact, the areas of Barwa, Chhechhari and Surguja were opened up by the Munda pioneers and they occupied the lands which were reclaimed. The word 'Bhuinher' also means the holder of the land.

Like the Oraons the Mundas of Palamau district have lost their language. Very few Mundas in Palamau district now speak Mundari. They speak a kind of Hindi but their manners and customs are quite akin to those of the Mundas in Ranchi and other districts.

Mundas are divided into many sub-tribes such as Kheria Munda, Maheli Munda and Oraon Munda. The sub-tribes are probably the result of inter-caste marriages with neighbouring tribes. A Munda may not marry a woman of his own sept. Maheli Munda has the pig for his totem and for this tribe consumption of pork is a taboo. Totems have still a very great value and restrictions are respected.

Like the Oraons here also the women have an assured possession. Bride-price has to be paid whatever be the sum. *Sindur dan* or the smearing of the vermilion on the bride's forehead by the bridegroom has become almost the essential binding portion of a marriage ceremony and there is no doubt that this has a clear influence of the neighboring Hindu families. Usually marriages are arranged but there have been occasions where a love-lorn girl enters the house of her beloved youth and would not leave even when beaten. After some molestation she is accepted even if the man has another wife. Widows marry again by ritual function as *sagai* in which *sindui dan* is performed by the left bane. Divorce is allowed at the instance of either party and the divorced women are permitted to marry again. In case of adultery the seducer has to pay

the husband the full amount of bride-price, stands a feast and has to marry the girl. Seduction is not favoured but tolerated within restrictions.

The highest deity for the Mundas is *Singbonga*, the sun god. He is the head of the Mundas deities but he himself does not inflict any suffering on the Mundas. There is a regular graded hierarchy of other deities, some good and some bad, and they have all to be propitiated.

The bad ones have a terrific evil power and unless they are propitiated, illness, cattle epidemic, crop failures, etc., will follow. If there are epidemics or crop failures, something must be missing and that something is the wrath of a particular deity. The priest is to find out, which particular deity has been displeased and give offering to propitiate. It is peculiar that different deities should have prescribed separate offerings. For example, the *Singbongo*, is given goats and white cocks. Other deities will be given other types of offerings. Next to *Singbonga* is *Burubonga* or *Marangburu* (a mountain god). *Marangburu* is a kind god and is very popular with the Mundas and buffalo has to be offered to him. He is the deity that presides over rainfall and naturally has to be propitiated more fondly. *Ekidbuonga* rules over tanks, rivers, etc., and if he is angry he might pull the father inside and kill him. Nearer home every village has a *Deswah* or *Karah Saranga* which is a sort of *Gramya devta* or village deity. Usually a few old trees are treated as the *Sarna* or the sacred grove and the *Deswali* deity with his wife known as *Tahid Burhi* are supposed to live in that *Sarna*. The *Sarna* is held sacred by both Adibasis and non-Adibasis, in the village. The villagers as a whole offer *puja* at the *Sarna* in every sowing season as the pair of village deities have to be propitiated for good crops. Unless they have been offered sacrifices, transplantation of paddy should not be done nor are the fresh grains of paddy be taken home. The Mundas have a very good explanation for the stars. They consider the moon to be the wife of *Singbonga* who is sun and their union has resulted in the innumerable stars that shine overhead.

The Mundas have the same set of festivals like Oraons. The most important is *Surhul* adventing the new harvest and a festival of great joy and merry-making. The other festivals are *Kadleta*, or *Bathuli* (*Asarh* festival), *Nana* or *Jamnana* festival for the advent of the new rice etc.

Their social organisation is also similar to that of the Oraons. The Pahan is the spiritual head while the Mahto and Gorait are for the worldly affairs. They have other smaller dignitaries as well like the Goalas, Gorait and Lohar. The Gorait keeps watch on the village. The village flag is an object of pride to the Mundas. On occasion of festivity and *Yatras* the village flag is lifted and zealously greeted by the Munda youths. The incidence of literacy and education is extremely poor.<sup>1</sup>

### ***Festivals.***

D. H. E. Sunder in his *Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in Palamau District* published in 1898 has made certain observations on the festivals<sup>2</sup>. As this appears to be the result of one of one earliest enquiries based on personal knowledge a verbatim quotation is given below :-

*Festivals- Nawa-the harvest festival-* When paddy is ready for the sickle, five *mutas* or *arpas* (sheaves) are cut by the head of the family and taken home. This is called taking *ala*. The paddy is husked and parched in a new earthen *handy*, and then pounded in the *akhar*. The pounded paddy is *chura*. After this the head of the family, having had a bath, takes some *sal* leaves, the number being according to the number of deceased relatives of the family, and puts a little *chura* on each of them. These leaves are placed in a circle on a part of the floor of the hut, which had been previously cleaned and plastered over with cowdung. A vessel containing fire is kept within the circle formed by the leaves. Some *ghi* is burnt on the fire. This is called doing *ham*. Water is then sprinkled over each of the leaves containing *Chura*. After this the *chura* is collected and distributed among all the members of the house, and is eaten there by them. This completes the ceremony. New rice is then cooked and friends are invited and fed. This being done, reaping operations begin. This ceremony is compulsory and is performed with respect to all crops, even to cucumbers and vegetables that are grown on *bari* lands.

*"Soharai.-*On the evening of 17th *Kartik* small lights are lit in the house and about the courtyard. On the following morning cattle are brought in from the field and hut up in the *gohar* (cow-shed). Rice-bear, called *hanria*, is made and given to each animal in a leaf cup (*dona*), one *dona* to each animals. After this, oil of *mahua* seed is rubbed on their horns, and the cattle are then released and sent to a field, in which a pig with its hind-legs tied is held by a long rope by the *giars* or cowherds. The cattle being driven towards the pig attack and gore it to death. The *giars* take the dead pig and eat it. This ceremony is performed to satisfy the deity.

*"Phagua.-*Is observed by Oraons, Kherwars and all aboriginal tribes. On 1st *Phalgun* a pig is

killed and cooked. Some meat taken from the head of the animal is put on five leaf plates in the names of the deceased members of the family. A *roti* (flour cake) is also put on them, and water is then sprinkled over the whole, the names of the deceased being mentioned all the while. After this the rice and meat are gathered from the plates and given to the members of the family and eaten by them. On the completion of this ceremony friends are invited and fed, and there is eating and drinking all night.

*"Arwa.-*This festival is observed by Brijias, and is held in Pous. Some *urid dal* and *arua* rice are put one over the other in five places on the bare ground in the name of the deceased members of the family. A black kid is then brought and held before the five offerings and wade to eat some of the *dal* and rice. As soon as this is done the animal's head is chopped off on the spot. The head is kept on the floor with the rice and *dal* round it, and water is sprinkled over it. The eldest male member of the house then salutes it by bowing before it. All this takes place in the compartment of the hut adjoining the one where meals are prepared. After this the kid's head is cut up and cooked. As soon as ready, the meat is brought on five *donas* (cups made with leaves) with five other *donas* containing *khetchari* (rice and *dal* boiled together). Five leaf plates are then made and placed on the floor on the spot where the kid had been killed, and a portion of the meat and *khetchari* is put on each of the plates as an offering to the deceased members of the

family whose names are repeated all the while. After this the meat and *khetchari* are collected from the plates and distributed among members of the family who are seated there, and is eat by them. When this is done friends are invited and informed that *dal* has been eaten forth first time in the season, and there is then feasting an drinking for the remainder of the day.

*"Karma.*-In this festival, which is observed by all aboriginal tribes of the district except Bhuinhars, a branch of the Karam trees is planted in the *angina* (courtyard) of ever homestead, and offerings of *roti* and cucumber are made to it by women of the house. In the evening and all through the night there is dancing and singing among the girls and boys, and much feasting and drinking goes on. In the morning the Karam branch is sprinkled with *dahi* and thrown into the nearest river.

*"Srawan puja.*-A pot of milk is taken on top of a hill in village Barwadih in tappa Durjag, and an offering is made to the deity *Duar Pahar*. A stone on the hill is worshipped. *Sindur* (vermilion) is rubbed on it. After this the milk is poured over the stone by the *baiga*. If the milk flows on to any length, it is believed that there will be good rain. If not, and the ground absorbs the milk it is understood that rainfall will be short. Parhaiyas alone observe this *puja*.

In Jitia women bring roots of berni grass, together with a branch of Doomur tree, and plant them in the court. The *alohal* is placed along-side, and offerings of *dahi*, etc., are made to it. All, however, do not perform this *puja*., as the Brahman has to be consulted, and his sanction obtained. He charges one rupee and a *dhoti* for this. After the branch is planted there is feasting and dancing all night. This is purely a Parhaiya *puja*."

### **Kharias.**

Kharias form a smaller section of the Adivasis in this district.\*

Regarding the Kharias of Palamau, traditions mention that they came and settled in Palamau after the Oraons. Kharias are essentially cultivators and their houses are situated on the side or tops of the hills. Usually two or three houses of Kharias are at one place and then there will be a big gap where there will be another cluster of houses. The Kharias are extremely dirty and they hardly wash themselves. They are also totemistic but the influence of totem is said to be rather weak. It is understood that the sept of Kharias with a sheep for their totem would not hesitate now to eat mutton or to use woollen rug which a few decades back their predecessors would not have done. D. H. E. Sunder in his final report or survey *and, Settlement Operations of the Palamau Government Estate* published in 1898 mentions about Kharwars as follows :-

"There are 1,919 Kharwar raiyats in the Government villages to which this report relates, and the area of land held by them is 11,1205.09 acres. They are a Dravidian tribe, and their legend is that they came to Palamau originally from Khari-Jhar, whence the

name Kharwar. Some however, allege that they came from Ramghar, but none are able to give even an approximate date as to their emigration, and nothing is known by them as to their past history. In Palamau, they are found chiefly in the southern *tappas*. They are a dark-skinned, hardy people, but extremely lazy. Although their pursuits are purely agricultural, they are fonder of remaining at home and of an idle life, than of working in the fields and improving their lands.

"Kharwars of Palamau are divided into six clans or sub-castes, viz., (1) Surujbansi, (2) Dualbandi, (3) Patbandhi, (4) Kheri, (5) Bhogti or Gounju, and (6) Manjhia. All count themselves as among the eighteen thousand or *atare hajar* Kherwars. Some Kherwars wear *jineo* or the sacred thread. These are under vow not to (1) marry by *sagai*: form, (2) not to eat pig, (3) not to eat fowl, and (4) not to drink. A man may not eat or marry save in his own sept.

"Food.-Kharwars eat goat's meat, pig, fowls, eggs, hare, peacock, doves, partridge, fish and

all edible roots. They do not eat beef or sheep. Their principal food in Palamau is Makai, *mahua*, and *marua*. Given these are three articles, they want nothing more, and do not depend on rice.

Marriage.-Infant marriages are not practised. The bridegroom must be of the age of 12 or 14

years and able to plough, and the girl should be of the same age. The marriage proceedings are as follows:-

The boy's father sends two friends (*aguas*) to the parents of the girl to ascertain, whether they would be willing to give their daughter or not. The reply is not given until the lapse of a night. If during the night that the *aguas* are at the house, the barking of a deer or the cry of a *pkekar* or *phiaou* (jackal) is heard the omen is bad and the marriage cannot take place. If the roar of a tiger be heard, the omen is considered very good, and the *lagun bandan* is completed by the girl's father giving his consent. Thereafter he is invited to the boy's house. He goes there accompanied by a few friends within ten days, and the *bar* or bridegroom is shown to him. If he is satisfied, he gives expression to this by presenting the *bar* with some money, the amount of which depends on his means. This is called the *moohdekhai* ceremony. After this a goat and food consisting of rice are brought and presented to the bride's father, and he is feasted, and then returns home. within ten days the *gatbandhi* or *paobandhi* or betrothal ceremony takes place. The bridegroom's father and a few friends go to the bride's house. The *napit* and Brahman are present there. The friends and relatives assemble in the courtyard, which had been previously well plastered with cowdung, and the bride is brought out, and made to sit here on a plate called *pathal* made of *sal* leaves sewn together. The bridegroom's father puts Rs. 7 in her hands as *dali* in token of his approval of her. The bride's father and the bridegroom's father sit facing each other on separate *pathals*. Then the Brahman takes paddy, and after touching the bride with it places it in the hands of her father. In the same way he puts paddy into the hands of the bridegroom's father. The two then cross hands, and thus swearing to be

friends for ever, rise and *johar* (embrace) each other. This is the *gatbandhi* ceremony, and binds both the bride and her father. After this the Brahman fixes a day for the *lagan*. On the date so fixed a *barat* (party) consisting of the bridegroom and his relatives and friends go to the girl's house. The bridegroom is carried there on a *jahajh*, or if one is not available, in a *palky*. A *jahaj* is a platform on which there is a chair or stool on which the bridegroom is seated under a canopy over which a yak's tail is tied. A bit of mango leaf called *Kakna* is tied to the boy's right hand with a piece of cord. On the approach of the bridegroom's *barat* the girl's people go out with music and meet them. This is the *mergheLat* on arrival at the bride's house, the bridegroom has to do the *doar puja* ceremony. He is seated at the entrance to the house, and the Brahman performs the *puja*. A brass cup containing pan leaf, *kuss* grass, betelnut (*kaselz*), *a.ruarice*, *sindur*, *gur*, *til* and *jao* is placed in front of the Bridegroom. The Brahman repeats *mantras*, and does hom by pouring *ghi* and *dhuan* (gum of *sal* trees) over some fire. After this the bridegroom distributes the *pan* among the guests.

He then proceeds to the *jhala* (shed) prepared for him. On the following morning he is called by the, *napit* to the marriage ceremony, which takes place in the *angina* (courtyard) of the house under a *marar* (canopy) built of posts with bamboo twigs and leaves. In the centre of this shed an altar of two *kalsis* (earthen vessels) alongside a plough, is erected. The bridegroom is seated in a, *pathal* leaf plate) in front of the altar. The bride's father sits to the right of the bridegroom on another *pathal*. The bride is seated on her father's right thigh with a bit of *mahua* leaf tied to her left wrist by the *napit*. A *dona* (cup) made from *sal* leaves and containing some *leuss* grass and mango leaf, together with ground rice, called (*arpan achat*) is placed by the Brahman in the right hand of the bridegroom, who then puts it in the bride's hand. She makes it over to her father, who then touches her *kealsa* with it and delivers it to the bridegroom's *kealsa*. This is done five times in token of the giving over of the bride to the bridegroom. The bride is then seated on a *pathal* to the right of the bridegroom. The *napit* now distributes *achat* (*arua* rice) from the *dona* among the relatives on both sides and then, while the Brahman is repeating *mantras*, scatters some of the *achat* over the young couple. After this some *lava* (parched rice) which is given by both parties is placed in a clean cloth, which is held by the bride's father. The bride then stands with the bridegroom behind her and his hands resting on her shoulders. The bride holds a *supli* (bamboo tray) in her right hand while the bridegroom holds her wrist from behind. Her brother puts *lava* on the *supli* and the couple jointly scatters it on the ground, while they walk five times round the altar. This is doing *bhanwar*. After this both are re-seated on their *pathals*. A *SindhoLa* (brass pot) containing *sindltr* as also some *san* fibre and a rupee are then placed in the bride's left hand and the fathers and elder male relatives on both sides hold a sheet round one after the other and apply it to the forehead of the bride. This is the *sindur* bandban. After this the *napit* makes a slight cut with his razor on the left hand little finger of the bride and on the right hand little finger of the bridegroom and the blood is drawn. This blood is wiped with a leaf of *mauhawar* cotton dyed with lac) which is then applied to the right sides of their necks by the bride to the bridegroom's neck and by him to her. This is called the *senai jora* ceremony and binds the two. If *senai*



*jom* is not done, the bridegroom may afterwards claim 'to abandon the woman. After this the *gaona* ceremony is performed. The bride and bridegroom change *pathals* and the bridegroom's father brings a silver *hasuli*, some *achat* (*arua* rice), *gur*, a *sari* called *pitamari* and a bit of silk thread, together with a piece of silver tied to them called *Dholna*, and after touching the bridegroom's *kalsa*, places them before the bride. The bridegroom's elder brother then takes each of these presents and put them one by one, in the bride's hands which remain open to receive them. He then takes *achat* and scatters it over the couple. The bride's elder brother's wife (*Bhotlji*) then applies *sindur* on her from the bridge of her nose across her forehead and up to centre of her head. Two baskets are then brought and the bride and bridegroom step on one and then on the other and so enter a hut, the walls of which are painted with circles, called *kohbar*. These are made to indicate that it is the hut of the young couple. While in the hut they eat some *dahi* out of a plate, the bridegroom first and then the bride. This is called *jhuta khabar* ceremony. The pair then walk out together and salute the guests and the bride is presented by them with gifts of money. This completes the *gar lagni* ceremony. Feasting follows and the young couple then proceed to the bridegroom's house. On arrival there the bridegroom's mother welcomes them by singing and throwing cowdung over and behind them. This is *parchan* or bringing the girl within the household. After this they step on baskets to their own *kohbar* but at the entrance they are stopped by the bridegroom's sister, to whom a present of money or any other article has to be made, after which she allows them to pass in. The marriage is consummated on the same day. Puberty begins at 12 years.

"A custom prevails among Kherwars of Palamau of marrying the blind with the blind, or the

deaf with the dumb, I have seen husbands .and wives who had been born blind. In the case of a dumb woman whom I saw in a village near Tarhassi in *tappa* Pundag and whose husband had been deaf the issue, being two boys, were shown to me. Both were born helpless cripples.

"A widow may re-marry by the *sagai* form. About two maunds of rice, as also a goat and a *sari* have to be given for her. If a man and wife fail to agree, they may leave each other by mutual consent. There is no other form of divorce. If a woman is childless, her younger sister may marry her husband. This is called *rijbia*. A. man may marry as many wives as he is able to support.

"*Births.*-At childbirth a woman is attended by a *Gharnain*, and the proceedings and ceremonies are the same as those of other Hindu castes. The woman is unclean and unable to attend to cooking of meals for twenty days. The child, if a boy, is named by the father, if a girl, by the mother. A woman is said to generally have her first child at the age of 20 years.

"Funerals.-Infants of one to three years are buried. Adults are burnt; the proceedings are the

same as at a Hindu funerals. After the burning five bones of the deceased are collected and placed in an earthen pot which is buried under a *pipul* tree. The person who had put fire to the mouth of the deceased is called *agdeoa*. For ten days he places some rice, milk, and a little water in an earthen cup (*dona*) together with a lighted *chiragon* the spot where the bones are buried. On the lapse of ten days the *kataha* or Maha Brahman goes to the bank of the nearest river, and after placing some milk, *jao*, tit, *gur* and *arua* rice in ten leaf plates performs *puja* for satisfying the spirit of the deceased. After this relatives and mends are feasted.

*"Memorial structures.*-If the deceased be a *mahto* (headman) of the village a *kalbud* is put up

in his honour alongside the principal road of the village. The *kalbud* may be of stone or wood. A face is cut on it and the name of the deceased, as also the date and year of his death.

*"Inheritance.*-Property descends to the sons. If there be two wives, their sons get the property

in equal wares. If there be only daughters, the widow retains the property so long as she continues in the house. Should she re-marry the property goes to the nearest male relative, but a portion is given to the daughters.

*"Religion.*-The deities of the Kherwars are (1) *Muchukrani* or as she is also called *Durjagin*

or *Pachiari*. She is believed to be wife of the Raksel that reigned in Palamau before the Cheros came to the district. Raksel is said to have resided on a hill in *mauza* .Barwadih, tappa Durjag, where the ruins of his palace still exist. A she-goat (*Panti*) is killed as an offering to this deity; (2) *Duarpar* who is supposed to govern the village. He is appeased with the killing of a pig; (3) *Dharti*, to whom a pig has also to be offered. No cultivation can be done until he is appeased. He is believed to be ruler of the earth; and (4) *Debi*, *Ghandi*, *Darhaand* *Dahkin*, all of whom have to be propitiated with offerings of fowls, goats or pigs.

Customs as to salutation are curious among Kherwars. Friends and relations meeting after long absence salute each other in three separate motions, viz., (1) *arkwar*, which is joining hands before each other, (2) *joha1*, which is embracing each other, and (3) *kusal mangal*, which is asking good wishes or blessings of each other. When a Kherwar meets an acquaintance he simply bows and touches his right leg. There is no greeting in the morning between members of a family nor does the husband greet his wife on return from a journey. At meals the husband eats before his wife; wives are treated kindly and many husbands consult their wives in times of danger or difficulty. The aged are tenderly treated and always have their meals before other members of the family. Guests are served before all others."

These observations could be supplemented as to the present picture of the Kharwars. Some are found amongst the laboring classes, while some have attained position as big landowners. Some Kharwars declare their original seat to have been the

fort of Rohtas. They also claim descent from Rohitasava, the son of Harischandra. They wear *Janeu* or sacred thread.

Colonel Dalton notices the traditional connection between the Cheros and Kharwars, who are said to have invaded Palamau from Rohtas and driven the Rajput chief of the country to retire and found a new kingdom in Sirguja.

It is said that the Palamau population originally consisted of Kharwars, Gonds, Mars, Rorwas, Pahariyas and Kisans. Of these, Kharwars were rather important. The Cheros conciliated them and allowed them to remain in peaceful possession of the bill tracts bordering on Sirguja. Those Kharwars who have no lands and work as labourers have certainly lower position in society. But Kharwars owning large fields are very refined and high-browed in appearance. Some of them by inter-marriages are as good as Rajputs and are very sensitive as to their status. In 1958 there was an agitation among the Kharwars., which has been referred to elsewhere.

*Bhogtas.-Bhogtas* are one of the divisions of Kharwars. They are found in the hills of Palamau skirting Sirguja and in Tori. The head of the clan was a free brother, says Dalton but was granted a *Jagir* on his surrendering and promising to keep peace. His two sons Pitambar and Nilambar Bhogtas rose against the British Government 'in 1857-58 and fought valiantly the move for independence. They were captured. One was hanged and the other transported for life and the *Jagir* was confiscated. Pitambar and Nilambar were patriots of first water who staked their life, property and everything at the altar of the service of mother-country. Bhogtas do not inter-marry with ordinary Kharwars, though they live side by side with them. They are certainly a branch of Kharwars and have formed themselves into an independent group. Among Bhogtas a bride price is regularly paid but Deswer Kharwars do not take money for their daughters. Kharwars follow Hindu usages and have Brahman priests spirits. They also propitiate spirits.

## CHAMARS.

Chamars are very strong physically. They trace their pedigree to Ravidas, the famous disciple of Ramanand. Whenever a Chamar is asked what he is, he replies that he is a Ravidas. Another tradition current among them suggests that their original ancestor was the youngest of four Brahman brothers who went to bathe in a river and found a crow struggling in quicksand. They sent the youngest brother in to rescue the animal, but before he could get to the spot, it had been drowned. He was compelled by his brothers to remove the carcass and after he had done this, they turned him out of their caste and gave him the name of Chamar.

In marriage bride price has to be paid. Widows are permitted to marry again in the *sagai* form. The dead bodies are cremated in ordinary Hindu fashion and *sradit* is performed on the 13th day after death. Libation of water and balls of rice called *pind* are offered to the spirit of the departed. A chamar breeds large herds of pigs. His occupations are tanning leather, making shoes and saddlery and grooming horses, working as

ploughman and serving as musician of wedding. His favourite instruments are *Dhol*, drum, cymbals, *khaniiai*, *Dhak*, *Binga* and *Bansari*. As a clan they are intelligent and given proper facilities of education they could absorb knowledge quickly. They have been trying to upgrade themselves in spite of their low economic status. There is wonderful human material in them.

Female Chamars are the midwives of our country. A Chamar woman is as hardy and strong as the male. She also works as labourer in field.

### **DHANUK.**

Dhanuks are a cultivating class of people. Many people of this caste are employed as personal servants in the households of members of the higher castes. Buchanan considered them a pure agricultural tribe, who from their name implying archers were probably in former times the militia of the country and are not much different from the Kurmis.

Dhanuks are divided into many sections-Magahiya, Tirhutia, Kanaujia, Dhudhwar and Kathautia, Magahiya, Tirhntia and Kanaujia are common territorial names used by many castes to denote sub-castes, who resided in and migrated from such tracts of land as Magah, Tirhut and Kanauj. They follow Hindu usages in the matter of their marriage and death. Widow marriage is permitted. Dhanuks are employed in the villages by the richer sections for ploughing the fields, bearing palanquins or do domestic chores. Owing to economic changes there is less of chance of employment in these occupations for the Dhanuks who have now taken to work in the mills, factories, small business, etc.

### **DROBL.**

They are divided into many sections such as Kanaujia, Magahiya, Awadhiya, etc. In case of marriage, preliminary negotiations are conducted by a matchmaker (*agua*) who may not be a relative of the bride. A small customary price (*tilak*) is usually paid to the parents of the bridegroom. Hindu Dhobies generally worship Siva, Vishnu and Sakti. Most of the Hindu Dhobies living in villages has taken to agriculture. In this district a Dhobi gets a special fee in cash or in kind at child birth or on the occasion of *sradh*.

### **DOMS.**

Caldwell in his Grammar of the Dravidian Languages considers these people as the surviving representatives of an older, ruder and blacker race who preceded the Dravidians in India. According to Sir Henry Elliot they were one of the aboriginal tribes

of India. Manu, the Hindu Law Giver, speaks of Doms (Chandals) as the result of the union of a Brahman woman with a Sudra male.

Several old forts neither testify to their former importance and still retain the names of their founders as nor instance, Domdiha and Domangarh. Buchanan calls Domingarh, the castle or the Dom lady. Carnegi in his notes on the Races of Audh observes that the fort of Domangarh was the stronghold of the Domar, a degenerate class of Rajputs and suggests that these Domars or Donwars may have been a family of Dams who had risen to power and got themselves enrolled in the conveniently elastic fraternity of Rajputs. In support of this theory he refers to the case of Ali Bakash Dam, who became Governor of Ramlabad, one of the districts of Audh.

Dark complexioned stodgy in stature and with rather unseemly features, the Dams are readily distinguishable from the other castes of Hindus. For centuries they have been subjected to menial duties and have served as helots of the Hindu community and this has gone to obliterate all structural traces of their origin.

Magahiya Dams of Bihar have a legend of their origin. It is said that once Mahadeva and Parvati invited all castemen to a feast. Sufat Bhakat, the ancestor of the Dams, came late and being very hungry mixed up and ate the food which the others had left. Owing to his unseemly behavior, he and his descendants were degraded and condemned to eat the leavings of all other castes. There are Magahiva Dams in Palamau. They are also called Bansphor, bamboo-splitters as they make baskets out of bamboos.

On the occasion of the funeral ceremony of all Hindus the services of Dams are taken. The dams eat pork, fowls, ducks, and field-rats. But no Dam will touch the leavings of a Dhabi. Nor will he take water, sweets or any sort of food or drink from a man of that caste.

The Doms make basket, mat, *jhanpi*, and they rear pigs also. Doms are usually watched by the police, for they commit burglary by digging through the walls of houses.

They economically belong to the lower group of population. Their house furniture and clothing are similar to those of Bhuiyas and Chamars. They are still a neglected tribe of people. The uplift of the Doms is necessary. The picture given by Caldwell is not correct now. The Doms are no longer the helots of the village.

## **DOSADHS.**

Dosadhs are mostly the cultivating class of Hindus. The member of this community are largely employed as village watchmen and messengers. They claim to be descended from Dushasan, the brother of Kuru Prince, Duryodhan. They worship Rahu and trace their origin to him. They are divided into many sections-Kanaujia, Magahiya, Bhojpuria,

Silhotia, etc. The members of all these groups will eat cooked food together but do not intermarry.

The marriage ceremony of Dosadhs is a meagre copy of the ritual in vogue among Hindus. Well-to-do Dosadhs employ Brahmans to officiate as priests. They follow Hinduism. Rahu is their chief deity. To avert diseases and in fulfilment of vows, sacrifices of animals and the fruit of the earth are offered to him at which a Dosadh Bhakat or *Chatiya* usually presides.

Dosadhs perform *Arkhar*. The sacrifice is generally performed on the 4th, the 9th or the day before the full moon of the months of *Aghan*, *Magh*, *Phalgun* or *Baisakh*. The Dosadh who is to officiate fire sacrifice to Rahu builds a hut for a *Bhakat* who is to officiate at the sacrifice. The latter spends the night sleeping on *Kusa* grass. In front of the door facing east a trench 6 cubits long, a span and a quarter wide and of the same depth running east and west is dug. The trench is filled with mango-wood soaked in *ghee*. The *Bhakat* bathes and puts on a *dhoti* dyed in turmeric. He mutters a number of mystic formula and worships Rahu on both sides of the trench. The fire is kindled and the devotee walks three times round the trench. When the actual flames subside and the cinders are aglow the devotee walks with bare foot on fire in that narrow trench. Usually the trench is so narrow that very little dexterity is required for a man to walk with his feet on either edge so as not to touch the smouldering ashes at the bottom. By passing through the fire the devotee is believed to have been inspired with the spirit of Rahu. Excited by drink and *ganja* he chants mystic hymns and distributes to the crowd *Tulsi* leaves which are supposed to heal diseases otherwise incurable and flowers which have the virtue of curing barren women to conceive. The proceedings end with a feast and religious enlightenment soon passes into a drunken revelry lasting long into the night.

Besides Rahu, Dosadhs worship Goreya, a Dosadh bandit-chief, to which members of all castes resort. Bhairava, Jagdamba mai, Kali are also worshipped. The Dosadhs themselves work as priests. This is a prominent complex among the Dosadhs and shows their advanced views.

Dosadhs usually burn their dead and perform *sradh*. They used to eat pork, fowls and indulge freely in strong drink. Food habits are rapidly changing now. They used to keep pigs and serve as Chaukidars. They serve as grooms, elephant drivers, grass and wood-cutters. Some of them are excellent cooks and domestic servants. During Muslim rule in Bengal the Dosadhs served in the army. According to Mr. Reade, most of the sepoy who served under Lord Clive were Dosadhs. The Dosadhs are in better position than Bhuiyas and Chamars. Their houses are built of mud and straw-thatched. Some Dosadhs have tiles on their houses. Economically they are people of lower income-group. Males put on *Dhoti* and females coarse *sari* and jacket. The poorest among them make use of *bhagowa*. They work as ploughmen also.

## **NAI OR NAUA.**

Nai or Naua is a barber caste of Palamau. There are several sub-castes among barbers-Awadhia, Kanaujia, Biahut, Magahiya and Turk-Naus. Of these Awadhias claim to have come from Audh. Kanaujia from Kanauj, Magahiya from Magadh Turk-Nauas are, Mohammedans.

Barbers pay a small *tilak* varying with the means and the relative status of the families. The ceremony of marriage is of the standard Hindu pattern. *Sindurdan* is considered essential. There is a *panchayat* among barbers to decide the question of divorce. Divorced Women may marry again by the *sagai* form. Nauas have Brahman priests.

The barber performs the *Chaudakaran* ceremony of a Hindu child, which takes place compulsorily at the age of six months or a year. In funeral ceremony he also plays a very important part. He shaves the head and pares the nails of the dead preparatory to cremation. He also shaves the head of the man who puts the first light to the pyre. Ten days afterwards he shaves the head of every member of the male household. The female barber pares the nail of the female household. By this time, after taking a final bath, they are purified of the contagion of death.

In the celebration of the marriage of high Hindus he acts as Brahman's assistant and to the lowest caste or tribes, he is himself the priest. He is also the match-maker among all respectable castes. The regular village barber is paid in kind annually by each house-holder. Beside this annual fee in kind, he gets a *panja* of paddy and *rabi* crop from every household he serves.

The social position of the barber is high. His clothing, housing, and mode of living are of middle class people. Barber as a class is very intelligent.

## **KAHARS.**

Kahars are the cultivating and palanquin bearing caste of Hindu. Many members of this group are employed as domestic servants. They also serve as cooks. Some of the Kahars have received education and, claim their descent from Chandrabansi Rajputs. They wear sacred thread also.

Kahars as a class claim Jarasandh, king of Magadh of *Mahakavya* age as their ancestor. Rawani, Magahiya are their sub-castes. It is said that there were no sections among the Kahars and they all lived at Ramanpur, near Gaya. The chief of Kahars married two wives who quarreled very much among themselves. So the chief removed one of his wives to Jaspur. Her descendants formed the Jaswar section while the members of the family who remained at Ramanpur were known as Ramanis or Rawanis. The

marriage is of the usual Hindu type. Widows are permitted to marry again by the *sagai* form. Bride price of varying nature *is* paid to the relatives of the bride. There is a *panchayat* in Kahar community. Kahars have titulary deities. They too worship Sokha. They have Brahman priests and Brahman *gurus*. The *gurus* are also Bairagi or Nanak Shahi Yogis.

## **KANDU.**

Kandu *is* the grain-parcher caste of Hindu. Madhesia, Magahiya, Kanaujia are some of the sections of Kandu. In *tilak* cloth and ornaments are usually exchanged; the first gift is presented by the parents of the bride and it is followed by the parents of the bridegroom. In case of poor parentage bride price *is* paid to her father. Marriage of poor bride *is* performed in the house of the bridegroom.

Kandus in village make sweets and fried rice (*chura*) out of paddy. Some follow cultivation and the poorer among them are employed as labourers. In this district they are economically of middle lower group.

## **KAYASTHA.**

Kayastha is the writer class of the district. The earliest reference to the Kayasthas as a distinct caste occurs in Yajna Valkya who describes them as writers and village accountants, very exacting in their demands from the cultivators. In the *Padma* and *Skanda Puranas* the Kayasthas are said to be the children of Chitrugupta, the supreme recorder of man's virtues and vices, who sprang from the body of Brahma and this was the 'first Kayastha. There is much controversy regarding their origin and this is not the place to enter into details about their origin.

Kayasthas are very influential people in the district. Ambastha, Sriyastava, Karan are some of their sub-castes. In this district the Akhauris and Thakurs are notable and influential people.

Their marriage is of standard Hindu type. But in Kayastha family there is an exorbitant demand of *tilak* and dowry by the parents of the bridegroom. Hence much delay is caused in the marriage of grown-up girls.

Kayasthas follow various occupations. Besides service, they carry on cultivation, trade and various other professions. The social position of Kayasthas is very high and respectable. They belong to middle upper class of people and some of them may be classed under higher income-group of people in this district. They have a higher standard of life and have better type houses and household.



## **KEWATS OR MALLARAS.**

They are fishing and cultivating people. The marriage ceremony, of these people is of absorbing interest. In their marriage the bridegroom's people pay a visit to the bride's house for the purpose of seeing the bride. This is followed by a return visit on the part of the bride's people known as *Baradekhi-seeing* of the bridegroom. Then comes *tilak*. The bride's father goes to the bridegroom's house with a present of money, clothes, etc. After that a day is fixed for wedding. When the bridegroom's party comes to the bride's house, it is lodged in *Janawasa*. There the females of the bride's household, one of them bearing on her head a *ghara* of water go in a body to the *Janawasn* and assail the bridegroom's party with abusive songs and personal ridicule. This is kept up until one of the bridegroom's friends comes out and drops some prepared betel and some money. Then the women retire. Thereafter the wife of one of the brothers of the bride returns to the *Janawasa* with a scarf and she throws it round the neck of the bridegroom and drags him away to the courtyard of the bride's house. There, in the *Marwa* he is made to walk round it scattering on the ground the paddy parched in the *Matkorwa* ceremony of the preceding day. Both parties are then seated under the *Marwa*. The family first then performs the ceremony. After *Sindurdan* the bridal pair are taken into one of the rooms, where two dishes of fried rice and milk are standing ready. A tiny scratch is then made in the little finger of the bridegroom's right hand and of the bride's left. The drops of blood drawn from these fingers are mixed with the food. Each then eats the food with which the other's blood has been mixed.

Mallahas also work as labourers in forest and prepare catechu. Economically these people are not better off. They live in mud-houses.

## **KOERIS.**

Koeris are the numerous cultivating caste of people in the district. Many koeris are prosperous cultivators holding occupancy rights. They grow all kinds of vegetables and sell them. The landless among them work as labourers also. Their skill and industry are so notorious that a Koeri, even if he has no land of his own, is usually in demand as a partner on the system of cultivation.

In marriages and funerals they follow Hindu usages, A widow is permitted to marry again by a *sagai* form.

There are sections among this caste. Banafar, Barki Dagin, Chhotki Dagin, Jaruhar are some of the sub-castes of this tribe.

Economically they are people of middle lower class. They grow every kind of crop.

## **KUMHARS.**

Kumhars are people whose occupation is to make earthen pots, tiles etc. In Palamau Magahiya, Ranaujia and Audhiya Kumhars are in abundance.

Kumhars have their kiln, store house and dwelling house beneath the same thatched roof. They prepare their clay at the door. They make use of grass, reeds or bamboo-stems and dried leaves for heating the kiln.

Kumhars make pottery during winter but in summer they make tiles. Kumbar women also assist their males in fashioning the globular part of the vessels. In this district most of the Kumhars have cultivating lands.

Koeris and Kumhars are economically better off. They follow Hindu usages in matter of marriages and funerals. There has been a considerable advancement in them recently.

## **RAJPUTS.**

Rajputs form the most influential caste in the district, Most of the rich zamindars belonged to this class. But owing to the abolition of zamindari they too have become tenants and their influence is waning. The number of Rajputs is very great in Hussainabad. Several classes of Rajputs inhabit this district. Some are Chandrabansi, Surwar, Surajbansi and Nagbaansi. The Namudag family of Surwar class is very prominent. The families of Ranka and Chainpur are descended from the families of *Diwans* or Chief Ministerial Officers under the old Chero-rulers. The heads of both these families always helped the British Government in times of emergency and difficulties. They had received the title of Rajas from the past rulers. The Raj Family of Ranka is noted for its princely contributions to the cause of secondary education of the district. Govind High School of Garhwa and the Girwar High School of Daltonganj owe their origin to the generosity of Raja Girwar Prasad Sinha of Ranka. The Sonepura and Untari families were very influential and have still large cultivation. Economically the position of the Rajputs is good. Some of them belong to higher income-group. They have pucca houses and investment in banks. Their standard of life is high. They have a tradition and a past.

## **BRAHMINS.**

Brahmins are well-to-do cultivators. They are most numerous near the towns of Daltonganj and Garhwa. Some of them held rent free land granted by the Raksel and Chero chiefs. Brahmins first came to Palamau as the priests of the Raksel Rajputs. A large number of them came also along with the Chero invaders. They acted as *Gurus*, and *Purohits* of Chero Rajas. Some of the Brahmins are now highly educated and hold responsible posts in the State. Physically they are fine and well-built. Usually intelligent, they appear to be fond of litigation. As a class they are quite distinct.

There are sub-castes among the Brahmins-Kanaujia, Sarjuparin, Sakaldwipi and Maithil. The number of Kanaujia Brahmins is exceedingly large.

Brahmins economically belong to middle upper class. Their occupations are cultivation, trade and *mahajani*. They take rice, pulse, wheat and *sattu* and vegetables. Many Brahmins have become meat-eaters now. Males wear *dhoti*, *kurta* and *ganji* and females wear *sari* and blouses. On the occasion of marriages males put on *pagri* and caps. *Sari* and *dhoti* dyed in yellow colour are used. Houses of Brahmins are mostly mud-built. Among Brahmins *Satyanamyan \$atha* and *Bhagwat Puran* are very often recited. When *Bhagwat Puran* is recited by Pandit for seven continuous days, a great *Yajna* follows. Hundred of Brahmins are fed, gifts are distributed and great rejoicing takes place. Their influence as priests or leaders in the society is on the wane.

## VAISYAS.

Vaisyas are generally traders. They have many sections or subcastes. Agrawals, Ralwars, Telis and others are included in this group of these people Agrawal is a wealthy section. People of this group deal in grain and jewellery. They are also bankers. Raja Agrath, was the first son of this tribe. According to Nesfield people taking to the calling of trading in *Aguru* (sandal) was called *Agrahari*. The bulk of Agrawals belong to the Vaishnava form of Hinduism. A few are Saivas and Saktas also. The social status of Agrawal is very high. They wear sacred thread. In marriages the standard form of Hindu ritual is used. Brahmins act as priests.

This caste has produced two historical persons-Madhu Sah and Todar Mal. They were Akbar's ministers.

Some Agrawals have landed properties. The poorer members of the caste work as brokers, touts, workers in gold and silver embroidery. The other sections of Vaisyas also follow Hindu customs. But their social status is inferior to Agrawal Vaisyas. Among some sections of Vaisyas widow marriage is permitted by a *sagai* form.

## BARAIS.

Barais are essentially cultivators. Barais are orthodox Hindus and they bear the title of Raut. They worship both Mahabirjee and Goreya, a godling of the Dusadhs. They engage Brahmin priests for worshipping Mahabirjee and engage Dusadhs for worshipping Goreya godling. Betel cultivation and agriculture are their chief occupations. They are also engaged in preparing lime and *Katha*. They are very fond of *krtans* and *kathas*.

## **BHUINYAS.**

Bhuinyas are scattered all over the district and they claim to, be the original clearers of the jungles and claim to be the first settlers. They are dark-brown people with black straight hair on head, middle sized and capable of enduring great fatigue. They regard Rikhmuni as their patron deity and claim their descent from him. They form usually the landless labour force for the field. Divorce and widow marriage are permissible. A divorced woman may marry again in *sagai* form.

Bhuinyas have barber priests. They worship Rikhmuni and *Tulsi Bir*. They also appease spirits like Goreya, Sokha and Darha. They have great belief in witchcraft. When a member of the tribe falls ill he seeks the aid of village *ojha*. Economically they belong to a lower group of rural people. Most of these people wear a *Bhagwa*, a narrow piece of cloth about three feet long and a few inches broad. It is passed between the thigh and is fastened in front and behind to a string worn round the waist. Women wear a very coarse *sari*. They have hardly more than one *san*. The Bhuinyas males and females do not bathe for months together. Their houses are very small and straw-thatched. A small house of ten to fifteen cubits long and four to five feet wide serves the purposes of a kitchen, sleeping room, dining room and a guest room. Their poor life is more to be imagined than described.

Some of them rear goats and pigs and fowls as well. Coarse food consisting of maize, *kodo*, *sawan*, *Khesari* and other crop is their lot. Some times they take rice and *chapati* also. They are given to drinking. There is hardly any family of Bhuinyas where *khaini* (tobacco) is not taken. Even little children of eight or nine years old are found taking *khaini*. Despite their hard life these people appear cheerful and in the evening most of them play upon *mahar* (a musical drum). They sing and dance merrily. This is the only source of recreation to these people. Women also work as labourers. Transplantation of paddy is generally done by these women. They are also very hardy.

## **MOHAMMEDANS.**

Mohammedans are in a minority in this district. Their number in the district population is about seven per cent. The Muslim population consists of Ansaris, Pathans, Sheikhs and Saiyads. More than half of them are Ansaris. The Pathans chiefly live in Hussainabad and Garhwa, the Sheikhs in Hussainabad and Daltonganj. The number of

Mohammedans is larger in the north of the district. In this part of the district the two *parganas* of Japla and Belaunja were granted as *Jagir* to officers in the Mughal emperor's employ. The descendants of the Nawab's family are still found at Hussainabad and Sheikhpur and are held in great respect. The Ansaris are mostly cultivators and weavers. There is a large section of Muslims called Kunjras who deal in vegetables.

In Patan thana, Ansari worship the Panchpir and Sheikh Sadhu. At Lesliganj, Anjin Saheed is worshipped by them. A small mound of earth in a room of almost every Ansari in Patan thana is set apart for the purposes of the worship of Panchpir. At Lesliganj a tile-thatched shed marks the spot of Anjan Saheed.

## CHRISTIANS.

In 1951 census the population of Christians in Palamau district has been recorded as 3,666 souls. This is clearly a very great underestimate as at Mahuadanr thana alone, it is said there are more than 25,000 Christians. In the last *District Gazetteer of Palamau* (1926) it was mentioned that there were altogether 7,283 Christians in the district, of whom 7,232 were Indians. Nearly all of these were to be found in Chhechhari and the book mentions how in February, 1890 a deputation of 70 "Chechariens" visited Ranchi and two days before Christmas in that year Fathers Cardon and Dehon reached Kurund on the hills between Barwe and Chhechhari where the valley gave itself to the mission *en bloc*. Father Dehon made Mahuadanr his home. He built the church, school, etc., and in February, 1896 he was well established there. The church was built brick by brick by the local converts under Father Dehon's inspiration and guidance. The Father laboured with his own hands along with his fold. It is an attractive tall red brick building, 100 ft. long, 45 ft. wide and surmounted by a steeple 90 ft. high. In 1905 he died of heatstroke in the train at Rajhara as he was returning to his work at Chhechhari in spite of ill health. His remains were first interred at Daltonganj, but were subsequently removed to Mahuadanr.

While nearly all the Christians in Chhechhari are Oraons, there are also some other tribals who have become Christians. There is a network of the local representatives of the mission throughout the district. Some of the places even now inaccessible by jeep have branches of the Roman Catholic Mission. The Roman Catholic Mission maintains a large number of schools both for boys and girls and dispensaries at the centres throughout the district. The church and the other mission buildings at Mahuadanr particularly are in the midst of peaceful and picturesque surroundings. There are also Roman Catholic Churches at Kanjia Daltonganj and other places.

The other Christian Mission in Palamau is the Church of Christ Mission which first came to the district in 1809. The community in Daltonganj now numbers a few hundreds and the mission runs schools both for boys and girls and an orphanage. The mission began *its* work at Latehar in 1919. They have a branch at Bhandaria where a school is run by them.

The Christians form a small but an influential section in the district. The incidence of education among them is quite high.

## TATTOOING.

Among the women-folk of this district *godana*, a female tattoo is still in vogue almost in all the communities. In higher educated society it is declining; but the member of higher educated is very small. A short description of this established practice will be of great interest for references to students of history. When a *Godanawali* comes to a village, a married girl of every community gets herself tattooed. In tattooing the juice of the *Bhangra* plant and women's milk are the materials used and punctures are made with needles or the thorns of the *Karaunda*. While the operation is being performed, a very equivocal *mantra* .is recited by the *Godanawali* to alleviate pain. Women get their arms, chests and feet tattooed. Ordinary tattoo design either circular or stellate is made at the top of the nose in the centre of the forehead. For days together the tattooed girl remains in pain. When a female was asked as to why she took so much pains in getting the parts of her body punctured and tattooed, her immediate reply to the query was that everything from her body would be removed after death but only the tattooed marks would go with the body".

## WITCHCRAFT.

The Adibasis of Palamau district have also a strong belief in witchcraft which still rules their socio-economic life particularly in the rural areas.

Generally barren women or widows, old and uncomely in looks, are taken to be witches. The popular belief about witches training among the Oraons is as follows:- Where as certain persons are born with the evil eye and the evil mouth, witches in general have to acquire their art by a course of training in secret. At the dead of night especially ill new moon nights, the witches gather under Bone tree at a secluded spot at some distance from human habitation. There, it is said, they strip themselves of their clothes and wear only the fringes of old brooms, made of wild grass, suspended from a girdle round their waists. Thus arranged, the naked women hold the witches dance with the help of the weird light of lamps burning on tiger's skulls. On these occasions a black chicken, a day or two old, is said to be sacrificed. It is at these witches' dances that novices learn the spells and incantations and other techniques of magic art. Should any outsider happen to come their way during these dances and sacrifices the stranger is challenged and if found to be a mere way-farer and not an inquisitive spy, he is warned *on* pain of death not to speak to anyone of what he may have seen or heard. On his promising not to utter a word about it, he is permitted to depart. It is said, however, that for days afterwards the intruder is shadowed to make sure that he keeps to his promise. Should he prove faithless, it is said, he is sure to be killed through magic. All traces of foot-steps or other marks of

the witches dance are said to be wiped off through magic. It is particularly on the night of the full moon ('a-ma-was') in the month of Kartick when the *Sohorai* festival is celebrated that these witches dances are celebrated with special eclat. Large-companies of witches, it is said, move about that night and people are afraid of stirring out of their houses at a late hour that night. The company solemnly interrogates the new initiate Rori Pasa Sahabe Ki Tanga Pasa Sallabe? (Are you prepared to suffer chastisement with the handle of axe or the spade rather than betray our secrets). And the initiates take pledge of secrecy and replies "Sahab Gum Sahab" [I shall suffer all, Master (Preceptor), I shall suffer, suffer, suffer]. That night, it is said, that some witch extracts, unobserved, by her magic spells the heart of some man, packs it up in a bundle of *pipal* (*Ficus religiosa*.) leaves and secretes it in a pipal tree and names a day for the death of the unfortunate victim and on the appointed day death is said to actually occur. A powerful witch, it is asserted, can by her spell uproot a tree and in the same night remove it to a distance of twelve miles (more than twenty-four miles) and again bring it back to former position. It is further said that witches enter into communion with spirits that ordinarily receive no sacrifices such as the spirits of the dead (*Puma Khunti*) and such spirits is '*Hankar Bai*' and by tempting them with sacrifices get their nefarious designs on others executed with the aid of these spirits; and such spirits are therefore called '*Nisan bhuts*'.

*The witches modus operandi.*-The various methods by which a witch brings on disease or other calamity to an individual, a family or so village, are (1) the use of spirit bundle or *sans*, also called *nasan*, (2) the employment of the magic *ban* or arrow-shot, (3) magical extraction of the intended victim's heart, (4) overshadowing or otherwise harming an intended victim in the guise of a black cat or '*chordewa*' or of a manikin. The spirit bundle or *sans* or *nasan* of the witch consists of a small parcel of torn rags or a small earthen-ware jar, containing various sorts of fried grains and bits of the leg, bead, horn or bones of Bone fowl or animal. These are meant as pledges of sacrifices to the *Nasan* spirit or spirits. The witch buries such a *nasan* bundle unobserved, at some spot in the doomed village or in the compound of the doomed family. And calamity is sure to overtake the village, so long as a witch doctor or spirit doctor does not, with the help of his *sadhak-bhut* discover the *nasan* bundle and brings it out and offers the required sacrifices.

The *ban* or arrow of the witch appears to be nothing more than the force of the magic spell. This magic arrow, it is said, has it very long range and silently hits the intended victim from a very long distance, altogether unperceived. When, as a consequence, the victim feels pain on the face or shooting pain in one of his limbs or some other sudden physical affliction to which no known cause can be assigned, it is inferred that some witch must have aimed her magic arrow at the patient and a *sokha* is consulted and a witch doctor or *Mati* is called in.

As has already been noted another method by which a witch kills an intended victim is to extract the heart of the victim through magic spell on the '*sohorai amawas*' night and pack it up in bundle of *papal* leaves and name a day for the death of the victim. And the victim gradually pines a way and dies on the day so named. It is believed that a

witch can see right through the body of men and animals into their hearts, for a taste of which organ in particular, they have a great hankering; so, when a man or animal pines away and dies without any apparent sickness, it is believed that the heart has been extracted by a witch.

A fourth method by which the witch effects her nefarious designs is to harm people by taking the shape of *chordewa* in night. She takes the shape of a cat and in this shape, the witch enters people's house, licks the saliva trickling down the corners of the mouth of some sleeping person or bites off a lock of hair of a sleeping person, and the unfortunate person falls ill or his hair falls off. Even if the witch in this shape throws her shadow on a sleeping person the latter suffers from a nightmare. In the same shape of a cat, the witch is also believed to enter people's houses at night and mew in a plaintive strain and as a result Borne calamity is sure to overtake the family. If such a cat (*chordewa*) can be laid hold of and killed or its legs or other limbs broken, the witch too, it is said, will be found dead at his home or maimed in her leg or other limb as the case may be..... Witches are also credited with the evil eye and the evil mouth. It is said that when a wizard or a witch looks at anybody's healthy children or well-fed cattle or good crop with the eyes of malice and mutters to himself or herself how fine, the words act as an incitement to malice of some malignant spirit and serious harm is sure to be caused to the children, cattle or crops.

The above description about belief in witchcrafts among the Oraons of Ranchi also applies generally to the collateral tribes like the Mundas, *etc.*, living in the district of Palamau.

It may be observed that it is not known how much basis there is for this elaborate pattern of belief. Regarding individual woman taken as practising witchcraft, a majority of the cases are based absolutely on no real foundation. The tribal people believe that all diseases and mishaps are caused by mischievous spirits. They also think that in the majority of cases witches are responsible for employing the mischievous spirits. Old ladies with queer penetrating looks in the eyes and ugly shape, provoke fear into the mind of the people and so these women are taken for witches. When a so-called witch-finder divines an old lady as witch responsible for a mishap, she has practically no other alternative than to plead guilty. As a potential source of future danger, she is either killed by beating or driven away from the village. The queer effect of this belief is that the suspected lady under the pressure of popular opinion is sometimes led to form a belief that she wields supernatural forces and gradually develops the habit of performing typical magical rites customarily ascribed to the witches.

While practices of witch craft by suspected women are too often hypothetical, there are actual specialist witch-finders known variously as the *Sokha, Mati, Deonra or Bhagat*. About the process of witch findings Mr. S. C. Roy writes : The *Bhagat* or *Mati* lights fire and when the smoke rolls up and curbs around him he begins by slowly chanting his *mantras* and quickly swaying his body till at length he works himself up to a state of frenzy and declares he has seen the witch who has roused up a particular spirit to afflict his clients. The spirit, too, is named as also the sacrifices required to appease him. The afflicted party now return to their village, hold a *panchayat* before whom the



offender is summoned and she is required to pay as fine the cost often estimated liberally of the sacrifices necessary to appease the infuriated spirit. In case of denial of guilt and refusal to pay the fine demanded, the suspected witch is not unoften severely thrashed, dispossessed of her lands and in some cases driven out of the village."

Suspicion of witchcraft is a major source of criminal offences among the Chotanagpur aboriginals and as such is a baffling problem for the administration. This is so in Palamau district as well. As the belief in witchcraft is too deeply ingrained in their mind associated with their fundamental belief in supernatural cause of diseases and other mishaps, the belief cannot be eradicated by merely taking to penal measures. It is suggested that the following steps may in course of time considerably tone down this existing superstition:-

(1) In the middle schools and the high schools situated in the tribal areas, natural causes of diseases are to be thoroughly explained along with the fallacy of the belief in witchcraft. Teachers are to explain how this belief has been discarded in the advanced areas of the country.

It is not advisable to introduce this at the primary school level.

(2) In the aboriginal students hostels the inmates of the hostel may be made convinced of

the fallacy of the belief in witchcraft and the necessary harm done to their society through this belief.

(3) All the while, penal measures are to be maintained against beating any person on the suspicion or witchcraft.

(4) As a substitute for the belief in the witchcraft which adequately explains to the tribal mind the causes of diseases, modern medical aids must be supplied to them to make them encouraged to discard the old belief.

### **BELIEFS, ETC.**

Beliefs, superstitions, customs regarding ploughing, reaping and weaving have an important bearing on the culture of the people. A brief survey will be of some interest although many of the beliefs are on liquidation.

*Village superstitions and beliefs.*-Although changes are seen, people of every nationality are more or less superstitious. In every village there is a village deity and other subsidiary deities, without the worship of which no work of any kind is undertaken. When the transplantation of paddy seedlings is done, the village deity through *Pahan* or *Baiga* is invoked and worshipped. On the occasion of marriage, or when the threshing of corn is done, the same formula is repeated. If in a village there is a number of co-sharers:

so long the chief co-sharer does not perform the *puja* of a village deity, no one can transplant paddy. This superstitious belief goes a great way to hamper the agricultural operations of poor cultivators as they have to sit idle for days together in anticipation of the lead to be given in *puja* by the chief cultivator.

Belief in witchcraft or exorcism is a common feature and it predominates the life of 95 per cent of village-folk. If a child falls ill or a bullock is indisposed, the cause is attributed either to witchcraft or to the wrath of a village deity. Forthwith the aid of an *ojha* (exorcist) is solicited. He comes, recites the *mantras* and tries by his words to give immediate relief to the suffering party.

*Good and bad omens.*-Omens control to a great extent the life and activities of credulous villagers. Sights of men and beasts and sounds of birds and animals play their own part in this connection. The sight of pitchers filled with water, pregnant woman, fish, funeral procession, the sight of sucking calf, woman with a pot filled with water or curd, prostitute, washerman with a bundle of washed clothes are considered to be good omens for the occasion of starting any work or in a journey.

The sight of an oil-woman with oil pots on her head, a man or woman with empty pitcher, a jackal passing by the road on which the villager is going, howling of jackal and hooting of an owl are considered inauspicious omens.

*Customs regarding cultivation and agricultural work.*—Cultivators as a class of people observe many customs regarding ploughing sowing, reaping and, threshing of corn. Akshoy *Tritiya Utsab* is one of the most auspicious occasions for the life of a *kisan*. The work of ploughing begins from this day. The household of a *kisan* rejoices on this day along with the ploughman.

Another common custom is in connection with the sowing of paddy seeds. This is also a day of rejoicing for the *kisan*. Sumptuous food is prepared and ploughmen are fed and handful of paddy are also given away to the needy and ploughmen. Seedling transplantation is one of the most important agricultural ceremonies for the *kisan*. An organized cooperative method is followed for transplanting paddy seedlings. When the transplantation in the field of the head man takes place, all the co-villagers assist him with the result that three-fourths of his transplantation work is finished in one day. The people are fed and shown respect. The finishing touch of transplantation of paddy is the last ceremony connected with paddy transplantation. Just after the completion of work, each labourer is given 2 seers of paddy, in addition to their usual wages. All the labourers are given oil, vermilion and the wife of the chief ploughman is given a jacket. The women labourers sing songs and dance in the *angan* of a *kisan*.

*Seasonal customs.*-There are some ceremonials connected with seasons also which a *kisan* observes. *Karma* and *Jitia* are two very important festivals for the women of cultivators. *Karma* is generally observed among the Ailibasis, Cheras, Kharwars, Bhuiyas and other, "low caste" people. High class Hindu women observe *Jitia* festival. *Karma* is a great festival celebrated in Chotanagpur. With this ceremony ends the *Bhadai*

cultivation. Women appear gay and colourful. The typical folk dance is performed. *Jitia* appears to be a national festival among the Hindus. Its observance marks the triumph of good forces on the evil ones. Many mothers fast for 24 hours for the good of their children. The festival marks the end of the rains and heralds the advent of *Sharad* season.

There are other ceremonies connected with *Nakchatra* months. Of them *Adra* is very important. On this day all work of *kisan* is suspended. He observes this day with great awe and reverence. It is believed that the seeds sown within 13 days of this *Nakchatra* never go a-miss.

Besides, these customs, *Min-Sankranti* and *Brikcha, Sankranti* festivals connected with months are of great significance to the cultivators. *Fafun*, also comes under this head. The cultivator's customs, ceremonies and festivals are all inseparably connected with *Nakchatra* seasons and months.

*Rituals.*-Every religion has her own rituals connected with birth, marriage, pregnancy and death. According to *Sutra-Granth*, Hindus, have to observe about 40 rituals from conception to death. But these days a few rituals are observed. *Chhati, Barahi, Annaprashan, Mundan, Upanayan, Bibaha* and *Antesti-kriya* are some of the rituals that are observed. The Mohammedans too observe *Sunnat*, marriage and death ceremonies. The same is the case with the Adibasis.

*Social Institutions.*-The district lacks miserably in social institutions. There are a very few places of amusement in the district. Throughout the whole district there is a picture house at Daltonganj and another at Garhwa. People are educationally backward. Museum or art centres are unknown. In towns there are libraries but they too cannot cater to the mental needs of scholars for they are poorly equipped with books. This was the only district in the State which had no college before the year 1953

*Standard of living.*-In order to deal with the standard of living of the people of this district, they may be classified under three heads; (1) higher, (2) middle and (3) lower. The higher class people are economically sound. Hence they live a comfortable life both in town and in village. They take rice, pulse and bread. They get milk, *ghee*, vegetables and protein food as well. They use a number of clothes and their costume is differentiated as usual. Middle class people find it very difficult to get rice, pulse, bread, *ghee* and vegetables throughout the year they have to limit their comforts. But middle class people living in rural area take rice only for a month or two. They have to depend on other coarse kind of edibles. They hardly get milk and *ghee*. Middle class people living in villages have cows and she-buffaloes. But they sell *ghee* and utilise the income for the purchase of clothes and paying of dues. Only on ceremonial occasions they make use of *kurta* and cap. In winter season the middle class people cannot make provision for quilt and warm clothings for all members or their family. The higher class people can only have quilt and warm clothings.

The lot of the lower class people is very pitiable. In this district people find it very hard to get two full meals. Their food consists of *Sattu and Ghatta* of maize and *jinora*. Sometimes in a week they get rice and pulse. Milk, *ghee* and oil are rare for them.

Their clothing consists of a *dhoti* of two or three yards. If they save something, they can buy a *ganji* or small *kurta*. Their children live almost naked and the women-folk have only one *sari*. When the clothing of these people get dirty and unclean, they have to face tremendous difficulties in washing their *saris*. The males wash their *dhoti* and put it on without getting it dry. In winter season the people of lower class have to face the cold very boldly. They make use of an earthen pot filled with cow-dung, etc., in which fire is kept. This is the standard of living of these people who live upon wages and have no other source of income.

The poor people living in jungle depend a great deal for their living on *mahua*, *safai* (fruits of *sal* tree), *pichar*, *kaland* and *bair* fruits. When there is a failure of *mahua*, people find it very difficult to live.

Coating and shirting are meant for either educated people or rich people. These people have of late taken to trousers and *paijamas*. Generally people make use of fire-wood and dried cow-dung for cooking food. Owing to the restraint put on fire-wood and owing to the policy of the State Government in letting out forest on lease to *thikadars* (contractors), the people living in villages have to depend on dried cow-dung called *goitha* and *chipari*. It is only in town that charcoal is used.

Kerosene oil is used for lighting purposes. Electricity has of late been introduced only in Daltonganj town of the district. Garhwa Road and Garhwa have also got electricity recently, Latehar not yet. Use of electricity for industrial purposes is confined to saw mills, breaking of stones, processing of food grains and oil and lac factories besides at Hutar coal mines.

The middle class people living in rural area use seasonal food. That is to say that when *bhadai* crop is reaped they take *bhat* of *sawa*, *ghatta* of maize and bread of *mahua*. After the reaping of *agahani* crop they take rice for a month or two.

Generally speaking people living in villages prepare their food on *chulha* made of earth. Higher and middle class people have no doubt a place set apart for cooking purposes in their house. But the poorer people have very small hut of 10 or 12 cubits in length and, 4 cubits in breadth. This hut serves all the purposes of a sleeping room, cooking room, drawing room and guest room simultaneously. The so called Harijan people called *Dusadh*, *Chamar*, *Dam*, *Parhaiav* and *korwas* have such abodes. Their condition is more to be imagined than described.

Barber is used both in rural and urban areas for shaving purposes. In Daltonganj saloons have been started but in other towns it has made little progress. In rural area poorer people hardly shrove in a month. There are hospitals in every police-station of the district but they are not sufficient to cater to the needs of the vast population of the

district. Some Ayurvedic institutions have been started. These hospitals and Ayurvedic institutions are not always equipped with medicines.

Smoking and drinking are becoming quite common. Tobacco chewing is also in vogue. *Pan* (betel) is in common use. Tea has come to stay. Coffee and cigars are still rather uncommon. Consumption of electricity is common wherever electricity is provided. People do not like to walk long distances if there are passenger buses. Cycles, torches, good shoes, lantern, some rude furniture and tea-shops are becoming common in the country side.

A random sample survey in the rural and urban areas of a few chosen families indicates that as a rule there is no change or craze to enjoy leisure and relaxation. If there is some craze for it, the Adibasis have it.

The pattern of social life is in a crucible owing to the impact of the present day socio-economic changes. Palamau is no longer the unopened district of hill and forests, tigers and diseases. In the past century Palamau did not offer much of attraction to the outsiders. Rather a popular maxim was in vogue that if one wants to court death he has just to settle down in Palamau. The great resources of the district are being tapped and the district has now a fair share of roads and railways. People from other tracts with different culture-complex have started settling down in Daltonganj. The very fact that a second grade college for boys was only opened at Daltonganj less than a decade back and that there is already a growing incidence of co-education in that institution is a clear indicator of the great *zeitgeist*. The last Great War saw the recruitment of a number of tribals and others from this district in the military. The settlement of large military camps in the interior of the neighboring district of Ranchi led to a number of construction projects including aerodromes. A large labour force had to be recruited on very high wages to complete the projects. Along with the other districts of Chotanagpur, Palamau also sent quite a large number of men and women to work in the aerodromes, etc. The large recruitment in the tea gardens had also contributed to the upgrading of the common man. The coolies who returned from the tea gardens or from the military camps with shirts, trousers and shoes or with *sans*, under-garment and trinkets helped to break the exclusiveness of this, district of forests and tigers. The opening of the mineral resources in the neighboring districts like the cement factories in Shahabad and Singhbhum, steel factory at Jamshedpur, the collieries in Ranchi and Hazaribagh naturally attracted the economically backward common man of the district. This process has continued and in the near future the Hatia, Project and the other projects in Ranchi and other districts including Palamau itself will help the men of this district to earn more money.

The impact has been marked on home life. The types of dwellings are changing. The mud-huts in the urban areas are slowly giving way and people who worked and lived outside would not be satisfied unless there is probably a chair or stool and a table. Use of trinkets and soaps is an index of the present trend. The old loin cloth of the Adibasis is hardly to be seen. Gone are the days when the coy Adibasi girl would be happy to move about with a small piece of rolled coloured mat in her ear-lobes. Instead she would wear cheap trinkets of coloured plastic. Similar changes are also observed in dress and ornaments of middle class family and the families in the higher income-groups. Their

dress, on the whole, is now simpler more with an eye to durability and cheapness. The present day dwellings that are going up in Daltonganj are not being controlled and hence different types of houses with variegated pattern are to be seen. The furniture pattern in the dwellings of the family of middle class and higher income- groups is also changing. The present day youths are allergic to squat on the ground and have their meals. There is more of furniture in the living rooms. The change in the pattern is definitely underlining a more comfortable mode of living. Along with the other changes in home life, the pattern of food is also showing a change. More people are turning non-vegetarian and drinking of tea is replacing consumption of milk. Restaurants and hotels are springing up in the towns and villages. There are more people now that have taken to smoking and drinking. There is a perceptible shift of the upper and middle class people to the urban areas. The changes are more to be seen in the urban areas. But as the district headquarters largely determines the social trends one may expect that without the economic resources these more expensive habits will go to the villages. This *is* unfortunate but looks almost inevitable. The long distance buses like those to Bhandaria or Mahuadanr are upgrading the villages on the routes. The Block headquarters in the interior have the same effect.

There are also changes in amusement sources. The *melas* and *hats* used to have some rustic sources of amusements. The communal dances of the Adibasis were great in the past. The *melas* and *hats* are now visited by roving small movies, *nawtanki* dances and demonstrative cinema shows. *Jatras* and *kirtans* are, however, still there to keep up the older tradition of instructive amusements. The natural beauty spots are hardly resorted to.

In urban areas cinema shows are becoming more popular. The loudspeaker broadcasting cinema hits as an advertisement has almost become a nuisance. Songs and dance demonstrations by school girls are getting common. The *puia* festivities at Daltonganj are attended by thousands of villagers every night.

Another change *is* the shift of the social life to a more individualistic, pattern. The average villager and particularly the average Adibasi had much more of a communal life earlier. While the Adibasis still retain this approach of life and to some extent the Christians too, the others are clearly becoming more materialistic and have developed an individualistic approach. This is strange because it was in Palamau district that still a couple of decades back, it was usual for the entire village folk to plough up another man's land and this process went on rotation. It is this approach that might have led to a real national revolution in Palamau in 1857, as mentioned elsewhere this is the only district in Bihar where almost every section of people joined the movement of 1857. The approach to an individualistic life is more perceptible in the urban areas.

The recent abolition of zamindari system has had a tremendous influence on social life, the effects of which are too early to be felt. The traditional leadership in society, rural or urban, came from either the men of the higher caste or the zamindars. The present day stem of education and the socio-economic changes previously indicated had already started sapping the leadership of the castemen when came the abolition of zamindari in 1957. The numerous zamindar families had been nursed with the tradition of

keeping a number of *kamias* and *launris*, (maid-servants). In presence of the zamindar, his tenants would not dare to sit on the same platform where the zamindar sat. The average zamindar riding on a horse would have a couple of *kamias* run after him to hold the horse if he got tired and wanted to get down. The inaccessibility, of a number of thanas helped to keep up this trailition of zamindars. The economic status of the zamindar was hardly a factor. Even a small zamindar would be a satrap in a small way.

By one stroke of the statute this leisured and pampered class was pulled down from the high pedestal. He has now the problem to earn his livelihood. Excepting a few, the economic condition of others is not enviable. The *kamiauti* system had been abolished some time back and now it is a problem for them to have a domestic servant and agricultural labourers. Some of them are turning to business. Some zamindars are now taking lease from the Government to work the very mineral resources of their previous estates which they had neglected. Some are turning forest-contractors, timber merchants or licensees of public vehicles. There is a distinct shift of this class to come and live in towns of this district and beyond. Exploitation of the industrial resources, in big or small scales, will open new employment chances.

The impact of the abolition of zamindari is being felt in the changes of social values. Dignity of labour is more appreciated. The professional classes previously taken to be socially degraded because of their avocations have their position now. The adult franchise, the statutory removal of untouchability and change of the character of the Police State into Welfare State since Independence had been won, has highlighted the importance of the common man. The political and social changes are leading to a certain imbalance and confusion. In this great change the educated professional groups like the lawyers, doctors, educationists, businessmen, etc., have a great role to play. It is the educated middle class that gave the leadership in the 19th and early 20th century almost everywhere before high casteism or long purse came to be overvalued. It is felt that with the liquidation of zamindari and high casteism the educated professional groups should again come into their own after a little while. There is bound to be a certain amount of frustration and economic instability in this class for sometime owing to the abolition of zamindari and other changes and the aftermath of the upheaval of the common man. There has got to be an adjustment to maintain the social equilibrium and in that process the middle class men will have to play their great role again by acting as the cushion to absorb the shock and by giving the lead.