

CENSUS OF INDIA 1961

VOLUME IV

BIHAR

PART VI—NUMBER 5

Village Survey Monograph on

MEROMDEGA

(In Simdega Subdivision : District Ranchi)

Field Investigation and First Draft

BANGLESHWARI PRASAD, M. A.

AND

RAJENDRA PRASAD, M. A.

INVESTIGATORS

Supervision, Guidance and Final Draft

R. N. MISRA

OF THE BIHAR CIVIL SERVICE

Deputy Superintendent of Census Operations, Bihar

Editor

S. D. PRASAD

OF THE INDIAN ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICE

Superintendent of Census Operations, Bihar

1961 CENSUS PUBLICATIONS, BIHAR

(All the Census Publications of this State will bear Vol. no. IV)

Central Government Publications

PART I-A(i)	..	General Report (Chapters I to IX)*
PART I-A(ii)	..	General Report (Chapters X to XII)†
PART I-B	..	Report on Vital Statistics of Bihar, 1951—60
PART I-C	..	Subsidiary Tables*
PART II-A	..	General Population Tables*
PART II-B(i)	..	Economic Tables (B-I to B-IV and B-VII)*
PART II-B(ii)	..	Economic Tables (B-V, B-VI, B-VIII and B-IX)*
PART II-C	..	Social and Cultural Tables*
PART II-D	..	Migration Tables*
PART III(i)	..	Household Economic Tables (B-X to B-XIV)*
PART III(ii)	..	Household Economic Tables (B-XV to B-XVII)*
PART IV-A	..	Report on Housing and Establishments*
PART IV-B	..	Housing and Establishment Tables*
PART V-A	..	Special Tables for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes*
PART V-B	..	Ethnographic Notes on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes
PART VI	..	Village Surveys‡ (Monographs on 32 selected villages)
PART VII-A	..	Selected Crafts of Bihar †
PART VII-B	..	Fairs and Festivals of Bihar†
PART VIII-A	..	Administration Report on Enumeration* } (Not for sale)
PART VIII-B	..	Administration Report on Tabulation† }
PART IX	..	Census Atlas of Bihar*
PART X	..	Special Migration Tables †

State Government Publications

17 Volumes of District Census Handbooks*

*Already printed †In Press

‡Nos. 1, 2—4 & 5 (present volume) of the series already printed and 6— 8 in the Press.

CONTENTS

	Page
Foreword	vii
Preface	xi
Chapter I : The Village	
Introducing the village	1
Location	1
Physical aspects	1
Flora and founa	2
Size and number of households	2
Residential pattern	2
Communications	4
Public places	4
History of the village	4
Legends about the origin of people	6
Chapter II : The People	
Ethnic composition	7
House and House-type	10
Dress	11
Ornaments	12
Tattooing	13
Household goods	14
Food and drink	14
Birth, pregnancy and pre-natal practices	16
Marriage	17
Death	22
Chapter III : The Village Economy	
Land	24
Livestock	24
Other resources	25
Livelihood classes	25
Ownership of land	26
Factors influencing the economic life in the village	27
Occupations	28
Income and expenditure	33
Indebtedness	36
Chapter IV : Social and Cultural Life	
Introductory remarks	38
Sex ratio	38

PAGE

Age composition 38
Growth of population 39
Marital status 39
Disease and medical care 40
Literacy and education 40
Family structure 42
Intra-family relationship 42
Inheritance 43
Leisure and recreation 43
Religion 43
Panchayat 46

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION 48

INSET TABLES

1. Distribution of households by caste or tribe 2
2. Settlement history by each caste or tribe 5
3. Distribution of inhabitants by caste or tribe 7
4. Distribution of households by number of rooms occupied .. 10
5. Extent of use of ornaments among households classified by income groups 12
6. Some common ornaments 13
7. Distribution of livestock and poultry by each community .. 24
8. Occupational distribution of households by each community .. 25
9. Distribution of agricultural land 26
10. Distribution of households in each community by the extent of land owned. 26
11. Calendar of agricultural activities 28
12. Acreage under different crops 28
13. Production and consumption of crops 28
14. Households engaged in household industries 31
15. Communitywise average monthly income 33
16. Household by monthly income group 34
17. Monthly average expenditure per household 35
18. Communitywise indebtedness 36
19. Kinds of loan, amounts and number of loanees 37
20. Sex ratio in different community 38
21. Age composition 38
22. Growth of population.. 39
23. Marital status by age group 39
24. Marital status by community 40
25. Literacy and education 40
26. Households classified by size 42
27. Types of families 42
28. Religion 43

PHOTOGRAPHS — FACING PAGE

1. A view of the village 3
2. Long view of a cluster of houses 3
3. An approach road to the village 3
4. Market scene at Simdega town 4
5. The Lower Primary School in *Girja Toli* 4
6. A *katcha* drinking water well 4
7. The Village Community Hall, constructed in *Mahto Toli* in 1959 as it appeared in June, 1963. .. 5
8. The Lutheran Church in *Girja Toli*.. 5
9. The Roman Catholic Church in *Girja Toli* 5
10. A house of a Kharia 10
11. Another Kharia house—note storage of water pots 10
12. The house of Bano Gond 10
13. An elderly Mahar male 8
14. A Mahar boy 8
15. A young man of the Naik caste 9
16. A Naik girl 9
17. A Kharia girl on the way to church 12
18. A school-going Christian Kharia girl and her mother 12
19. A Chik Baraik mother with her children 13
20. A Chik Baraik on his way to sowing paddy 13
21. A smiling Gond woman 6
22. A Gond, ripe in age 6
23. A group of Christian Kharia women assemble near the church.. 7
24. Christian Kharia males near the church 7
25. A Kharia woman dehusking paddy in a hole made in a stone slab .. 14
26. Mat-making is a profitable pastime 14
27. The *Dhenki* used for dehusking 15
28. A stringed armless chair locally known as *Machia* 15
29. Storage of water pots 15
30. Mahar women—mark the designs of tattoos 30
31. *Ghutra*—Tobacco and lime container prepared by the Malar .. 30
32. Indigenous oil crusher known as *Chapi* 30
33. Starched yarn spread in the sun to dry 31
34. A Mahar is weaving *chadar* on his loom 31
35. The finished *chadar* is 12′ in length 31
36. Plough and yoke 28
37. *Kori* or the spade 28
38. Lohras at work 28
39. A Gond woman with tattoo marks 29
40. Interviewing a group of Gonds 29

MAPS AND DIAGRAMS — FACING PAGE

1. Map of Ranchi district showing the location of Meromdega .. 1
2. Map showing the lay out of village Meromdega 2
3. Diagram showing house plan 11
4. Diagram showing classification of households by occupation .. 26
5. Diagram showing sex ratio in different communities 38
6. Diagram showing marital status by sex and broad age gorups .. 38

FOREWORD

APART from laying the foundations of demography in this sub-continent, a hundred years of the Indian Census has also produced 'elaborate and scholarly accounts of the variegated phenomena of Indian life—sometimes with no statistics attached, but usually with just enough statistics to give empirical under-pinning to their conclusions'. In a country, largely illiterate, where statistical or numerical comprehension of even such a simple thing as age was liable to be inaccurate, an understanding of the social structure was essential. It was more necessary to attain a broad understanding of what was happening around oneself than to wrap oneself up in 'statistical ingenuity' or 'mathematical manipulation'. This explains why the Indian Census came to be interested in 'many by-paths' and 'nearly every branch of scholarship, from anthropology and sociology to geography and religion'.

In the last few decades the Census has increasingly turned its efforts to the presentation of village statistics. This suits the temper of the times as well as our political and economic structure. For even as we have a great deal of centralisation on the one hand and decentralisation on the other, my colleagues thought it would be a welcome continuation of the Census tradition to try to invest the dry bones of village statistics with flesh-and-blood accounts of social structure and social change. It was accordingly decided to select a few villages in every State for special study, where personal observation would be brought to bear on the interpretation of statistics to find out how much of a village was static and yet changing and how fast the winds of change were blowing and from where.

Randomness of selection was, therefore, eschewed. There was no intention to build up a picture for the whole State in quantitative terms on the basis of villages selected statistically at random. The selection was avowedly purposive; the object being as much to find out what was happening and how fast to those villages which had fewer reasons to choose change and more to remain lodged in the past as to discover how the more 'normal' types of villages were changing. They were to be primarily type studies which, by virtue of their number and distribution, would also give the reader a 'feel' of what was going on and some kind of a map of the country.

A brief account of the tests of selection will help to explain. A minimum of thirty-five villages was to be chosen with great care to represent adequately geographical, occupational and even ethnic diversity. Of this minimum of thirty-five, the distribution was to be as follows:

(*a*) At least eight villages were to be so selected that each of them would contain one dominant community with one predominating occupation, e.g., fishermen, forest workers, jhum cultivators, potters, weavers, salt-makers, quarry workers, etc. A village should have a minimum population of 400, the optimum being between 500 and 700.

(*b*) At least seven villages were to be of numerically prominent Scheduled Tribes of the State. Each village could represent a particular tribe. The minimum population should be 400, the optimum being between 500 and 700.

(*c*) The third group of villages should each be of fair size, of an old and settled character and contain variegated occupations and be, if possible, multi-ethnic in composition. By fair size was meant a population of 500—700 persons or more. The village should mainly depend

on agriculture and be sufficiently away from the major sources of modern communication such as the district administrative headquarters and business centres. It should be roughly a day's journey from the above places. The villages were to be selected with an eye to variation in terms of size, proximity to city and other means of modern communication, nearness to hills, jungles and major rivers. Thus there was to be a regional distribution throughout the State of this category of villages. If, however, a particular district contained significant ecological variations within its area, more than one village in the district might be selected to study the special adjustments to them.

It is unique feature of these village surveys that they rapidly outgrew their original terms of reference, as my colleagues warmed up to their work. This proved for them an absorbing voyage of discovery and their infectious enthusiasm compelled me to enlarge the inquiry's scope again and again. It was just as well cautiously to feel one's way about at first and then venture further afield, and although it accounts to some extent for a certain unevenness in the quality and coverage of the monographs, it served to compensate the purely honorary and extra-mural rigours of the task. For, the Survey, along with its many ancillaries like the survey of fairs and festivals, of small and rural industry and others, was an 'extra', over and above the crushing load of the 1961 Census.

It might be of interest to recount briefly the stages by which the Survey enlarged its scope. At the first Census Conference in September, 1959 the Survey set itself the task of what might be called a record *in situ* of material traits, like settlement patterns of the village; housetypes; diet; dress; ornaments and footwear; furniture and storing vessels; common means of transport of goods and passengers; domestication of animals and birds; markets attended, worship of deities, festivals and fairs. There were to be recordings, of course, of cultural and social traits and occupational mobility. This was followed up in March, 1960 by two specimen schedules, one for each household, the other for the village as a whole, which, apart from spelling out the mode of enquiry suggested in the September, 1959 Conference, introduced groups of questions aimed at sensing changes in the attitude and behaviour in such fields as marriage, inheritance, moveable and immoveable property, industry, indebtedness, education, community life and collective activity, social disabilities, forums of appeal over disputes, village leadership and organisation of cultural life. It was now plainly the intention to provide adequate statistical support to empirical 'feel', to approach qualitative change through statistical quantities. It had been difficult to give thought to the importance of 'just enough statistics to give empirical underpinning to conclusion', at a time when my colleagues were straining themselves to the utmost for the success of the main census operations, but once the census count itself was left behind in March, 1961 a series of three regional seminars in Trivandrum (May, 1961), Darjeeling and Srinagar (June, 1961) restored their attention to this field and the importance of tracing social change through a number of well-devised statistical tables was once again recognised. This itself presupposed a fresh survey of villages already done; but it was worth the trouble in view of the possibilities that a close analysis of statistics offered, and also because the consanguinity' schedule remained to be canvassed. By November, 1961, however, more was expected of these surveys than ever before. There was dissatisfaction on the one hand with too many general statements and a growing desire on the other to draw conclusions from statistics, to regard social and economic data as interrelated processes, and finally to examine the social and

economic processes set in motion through land reforms and other laws, legislative and administrative measures, technological and cultural change. Finally, a study camp was organised in the last week of December, 1961 when the whole field was carefully gone through over again and a programme worked out closely knitting the various aims of the Survey together.

This gradual unfolding of the aims of the Survey prevented my colleagues from adopting as many villages as they had originally intended to. But I believe that what may have been lost in quantity has been more than made up for in quality. This is, perhaps, for the first time that such a Survey has been conducted in any country, and that purely as a labour of love. It has succeeded in attaining what it set out to achieve; to construct a map of village India's social structures. One hopes that the volumes of this Survey will help to retain for the Indian Census its title to the most fruitful single source of information about the country. Apart from other features, it will perhaps be conceded that the Survey has set up a new Census standard in pictorial and graphic documentation. The schedules finally adopted for this monograph have been printed in Annexures I and II.

A. MITRA,
Registrar General, India

NEW DELHI:
July 30, 1964

PHOTOGRAPHS S. D. Prasad.

Shyamlanand.

The Bihar Tribal Research Institute, Ranchi.

MAPS A. K. Mathur.

Period of field survey—September, 1962.

PREFACE

This is the third volume of Village Survey monographs in which an attempt is being made to "invest the dry bones of village statistics with flesh-and-blood accounts of social structure and social change". It contains a study of Meromdega village in the deep interior of the district of Ranchi. The village is typical of the Kharia and Gond tribes of Ranchi district.

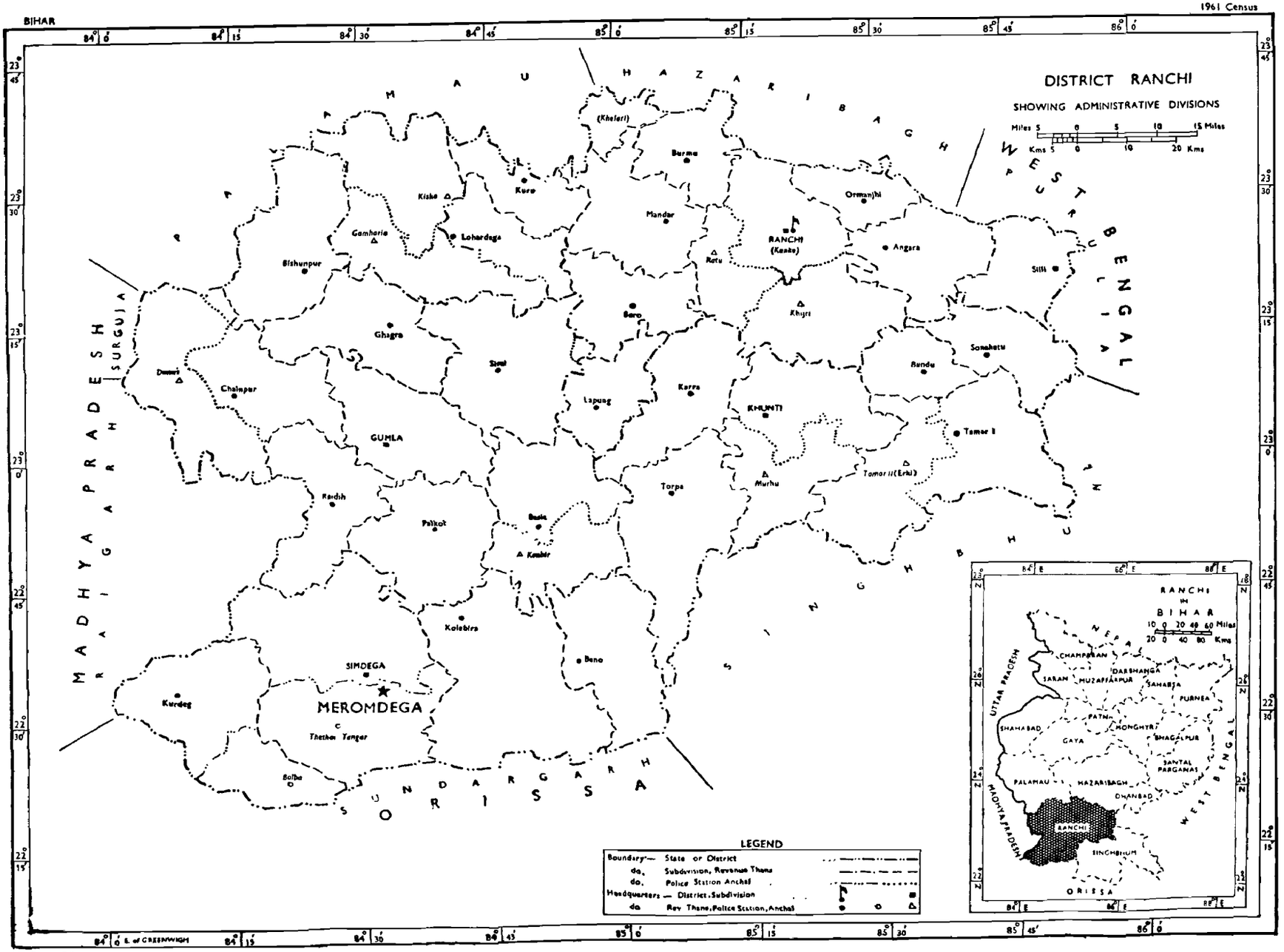
The methodology of the studies consisted, firstly, of canvassing the detailed household and village schedules (reproduced at the end of this volume). This was done initially by the Junior Statistical Supervisors of the Community Development Blocks within which the villages lay. Subsequently, wholetime Investigators were appointed by the Census organisation for studying each of the selected villages. They spent two to three weeks in each village, checking up the schedules and collecting such further details and particulars as were required. On their return to headquarters, the relevant statistics were compiled and tabulated. On the basis of these and other enquiries the Investigators prepared the first draft reports which had to be re-written and revised by the Deputy Superintendent. These revised drafts were forwarded to Dr. B. K. Roy Burman, Officer on Special Duty, Social Studies and Handicrafts, Office of the Registrar General, India, who scrutinised the reports and gave valuable suggestions for further enquiries and elucidation of obscure points. Quite often, this meant two or three revisits to the village by the Investigators for collecting further materials. At one time or the other, before the draft was finalised, the Superintendent of Census Operations as well as the Deputy Superintendent in charge of the Village Surveys also paid brief visits so as to get a practical feel of the villages under study.

Thus, these studies represent the fruits of common endeavour by several agencies. It needs to be stated that only a few of the persons engaged on this work can make any pretensions to be experts or specialists in the line. Naturally, the reports may appear to be somewhat general and discursive in their approach and treatment though objectivity of approach was never eschewed. The difficulties in conducting such enquiries among the tribal people are many. For one thing, they are generally secretive by nature and do not easily "open out" before the outsiders. Then, the problems of language and communication can be quite real. The limited time within which the enquiries had to be conducted and the reports prepared for over 20 villages proved another handicap. The published literature so far on the subject is also rather scanty.

Notwithstanding these difficulties and drawbacks, the studies have brought their own reward in the shape of a fruitful diversion from the humdrum of cold statistics. The efforts will have been certainly worthwhile if the monographs can also help in a better understanding of the life and environs of the people they seek to depict, and thus lead to a more realistic appreciation of their pressing problems.

S. D. PRASAD
Superintendent of Census Operations, Bihar

PATNA:
August 15, 1968



Census Office, Bihar.

(Facing page 1)

CHAPTER I

THE VILLAGE

1. *Introducing the village*

Meromdega, with its population of more than 1,800 persons belonging to as many as twelve communities, is a large multi-ethnic village. The predominant people in the village are the Kharias who constitute a little over one-third of its population. The Kharias are one of the seven Scheduled Tribes in Bihar with population exceeding a lakh. They form 2.4 per cent of the total tribal population of the State. They are largely confined to the southern portions of Ranchi and Singhbhum districts.

The other major Scheduled Tribe in the village is the Gond, who comprise one-sixth of the population of the village. The Gonds in Bihar number only 33,521 and are found almost exclusively in the southernmost anchals of Ranchi district bordering on Madhya Pradesh and Orissa. The Thethai-Tangar anchal contains more than 3,000 Gonds, a number which is surpassed only by the neighbouring Kurdeg anchal.

Meromdega was selected for the present survey as a representative village of Kharias and Gonds.

2. *Location*

Village Meromdega lies in Thethai-Tangar anchal of Simdega subdivision in Ranchi district. Simdega is situated on the black-topped metalled Ranchi-Rourkela road at a distance of 126 miles from Ranchi. Thethaitangar is on this road, 12 miles further south of Simdega. The road skirts only a mile away from the boundaries of Meromdega, but the main settlements are about 5 miles to the east. The subdivisional headquarters, only 6 miles away, is in fact nearer than the anchal headquarters which is 9 miles away in the opposite direction (*see* map). Nevertheless villagers have often to trek to Thethaitangar for various purposes connected with the authorities of the Anchal-*cum*-Community Development Block.

Meromdega itself is the Halka headquarters. Both the Village Level Worker of the Community Development Block and the Karmachari of the Revenue Department stay here. The headquarters of the statutory Gram Panchayat is also located in the village which is the residence of the elected leaders of the Panchayat as also of the Panchayat Sewak who is a stipendiary public servant.

The villagers have easy access to Simdega which is close by. It is the only town in the subdivision and has 3 High Schools and a College. It is also the headquarters of several Christian Missions. The market is well stocked and open to business throughout the week. The market days are Thursday and Monday. Notwithstanding its small population of a little over 10,000, Simdega has a good market. The business is largely in the hands of Marwari wholesalers who have settled there. It has also got a Cinema house.

There is a Government Hospital at Simdega which provides outdoor and in-patient services. Thethaitangar also has a State Dispensary with facilities of indoor treatment for 2 males and 2 females.

Veterinary services are available both at Simdega and Thethaitangar but the villagers get better facilities at the latter place which is, therefore, preferred.

The nearest Post and Telegraph Office is at Simdega. There is a Branch Post Office at Ghutbahar, about 4 miles from the village.

Besides the market at Simdega, the villagers also visit the market at Thethaitangar on Tuesdays and Sundays and at Ghutbahar on Saturdays. The Mahars who sell cloth, go as far as the markets of Kango and Birmitrapur, both lying in Orissa at distances of 12 and 18 miles respectively from Meromdega.

To the north of Meromdega lies Belgarh (in Simdega P.-S.); to its east Ghutbahar; village Semarkudar is situated to the south; and Tapudega and Kasdega lie to the west. All these villages contain mixed population of tribals and non-tribals—Kharias, Gonds, Chik Baraiks, Mundas and Lohras among the former, and Doms, Bhogtas, Ghasis, Kumhars and Muslims among the latter.

The village is situated at Longitude 85° 32′ East and Latitude 22° 33′ North.

3. *Physical aspects*

Meromdega lies on a plateau 500–1,000 feet above the mean sea-level. The settlements in the village are divided into 14 *tolis* or hamlets. These are situated on raised lands at varying height. The lowlands constitute the agricultural fields.

There are hills and forests within the boundaries of the revenue *mauza*. The geological formation of the hills is granite gneiss with associated schists. The hills have been named. They are: Kashbahar *Pahar* on the southern boundary, Dhol *Pahar* on the north-eastern and Lambki *Pahar* on the northern boundary of the village. The forests are situated at or near the foot-hills. The hills themselves are clad with moderate vegetation.

A stream known as Khindas flows southwards along the western boundary of the village. One of the village tanks is connected to the stream by a streamlet which flows westward, draining away the excess water of the tank into the Khindas. Meromdega proper, also called *Basti toli*, lies to the south of the streamlet not far from its junction with the stream.

4. *Flora and fauna*

There are 810 acres of protected forests in the village. The large varieties of trees yield fruits, fuel and timber. *Sal, Karanj, Koinar, Kusum, Jirhul, Bahera* are the timber-producing trees. *Mahua,* Mango, *kathal, sarifa, jamun, dumar, piyar,* papaya and guava are some of the fruit-bearing trees. Vegetables and creepers are grown in the *bari* lands adjoining the houses.

The forests and the hills contain various species of wild animals. Leopards, bears, jackals, monkeys and hares are met with. The birds include pea-fowl, *hariyal, maina, parki* and wild fowl. Snakes are numerous, the varieties most commonly found being *karait, dhamin, goriat* and *doar*. Pythons are rare.

5. *Size and number of households*

Meromdega extends over an area of 4,916.94 acres or 7.68 square miles. It is larger than any other neighbouring village except Ghutbahar. It has a population of 1,833 persons comprising 337 households.

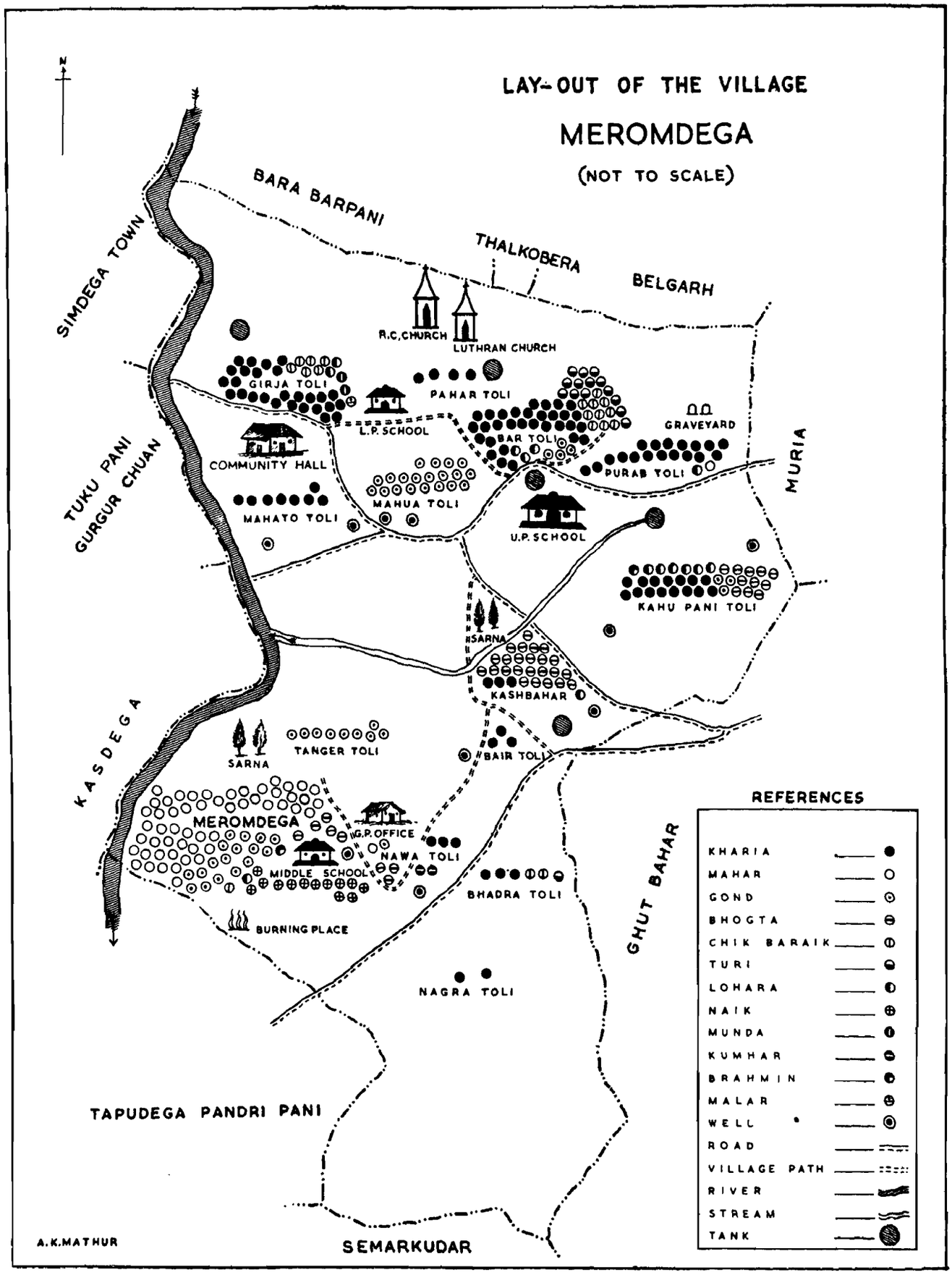
6. *Residential pattern*

As stated earlier, the village settlements consist of 14 *tolis* or hamlets. The number of households in a *toli* varies from 3 to 91. Only 7 *tolis* have 20 and more households each. Table 1 below gives the distribution of households by community in different *tolis*.

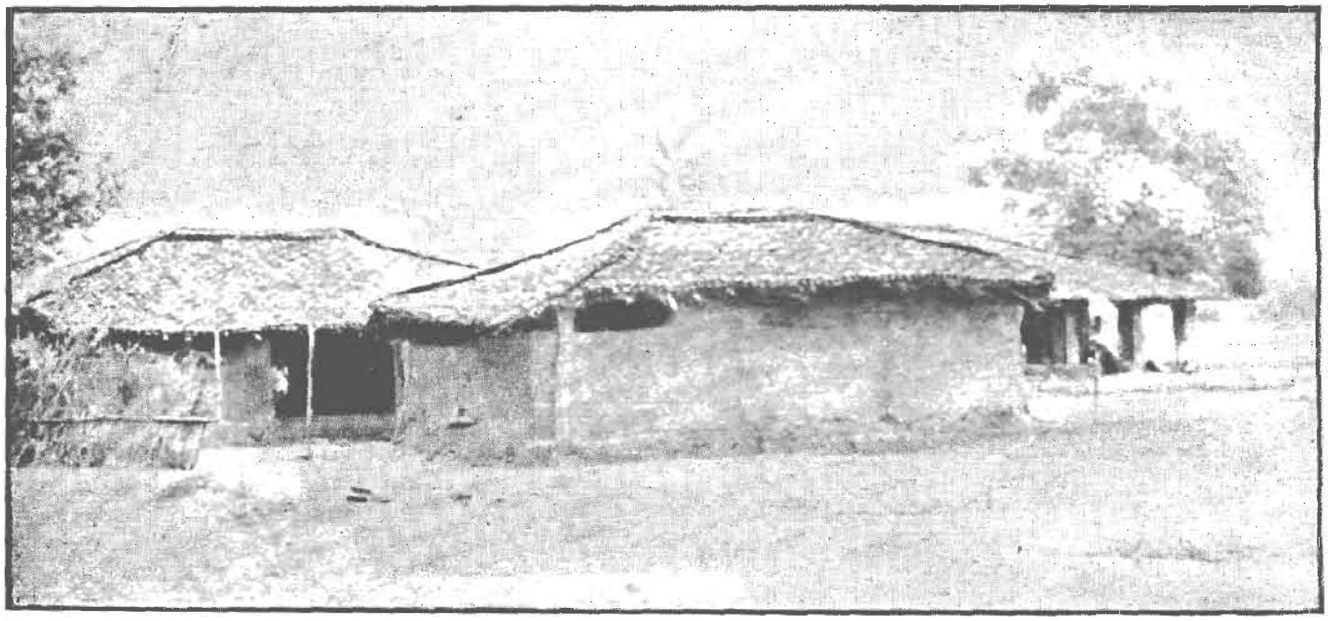
TABLE 1

Distribution of households in each *toli* or hamlet of Meromdega by caste/tribe

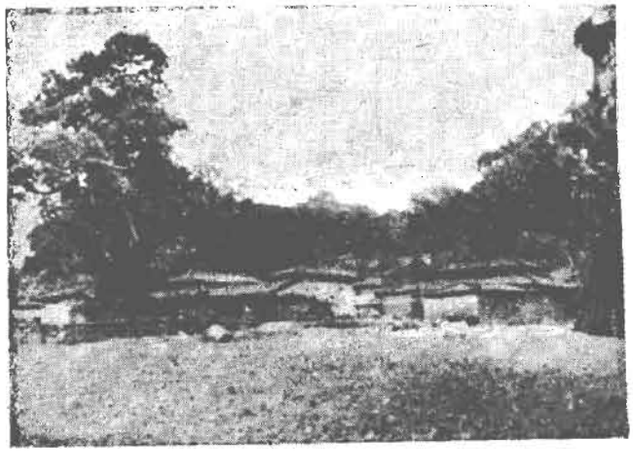
Serial no.	*Toli*	Total no. of households	Kharia	Mahar	Gond	Bhogta	Chik Baraik	Turi	Lohra	Naik	Munda	Kumhar	Brahmin	Malar	Percentage
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1	Meromdega or Basti *toli*	91	..	53	17	5	1	..	1	13	..	..	1	..	27.00
2	Bar *toli* ..	62	31	..	4	..	10	14	3	..	..	..	..	..	18.40
3	Girja *toli* ..	38	27	..	..	..	6	..	2	..	2	..	..	1	11.28
4	Kahu Pani *toli* ..	36	15	..	3	11	..	..	6	..	..	..	1	..	10.68
5	Kashbahar ..	28	3	..	..	24	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	8.31
6	Mahua *toli** ..	20	..	..	20	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	5.93
7	Purab *toli* ..	20	18	1	..	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	5.93
8	Nawa *toli* ..	10	3	1	1	3	..	..	..	..	..	2	..	..	2.97
9	Tanger *toli** ..	9	..	..	9	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	2.67
10	Mahato *toli** ..	8	8	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	2.37
11	Bhadra *toli* ..	6	3	..	..	..	2	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	1.78
12	Pahar *toli** ..	4	4	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1.19
13	Bair *toli** ..	3	3	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	0·89
14	Nagra *toli** ..	2	2	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	0.59
	Total ..	**337**	**117**	**55**	**54**	**43**	**19**	**15**	**14**	**13**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**1**	**100**
	Percentage to total households	**100**	**34.72**	**16.32**	**16.02**	**12.76**	**5.64**	**4.45**	**4.15**	**3.86**	**0.59**	**0.59**	**0.59**	**0.30**	..



(*Facing page* 2)



1. A view of the village.



2. Long view of a cluster of houses.



3. An approach road to the village.

(*Facing page* 3)

The four major communities in the village are Kharias, Gonds, Mahars and Bhogtas. The Chik Baraiks, Turis, Lohras and Doms have 13–19 households each. The remaining four communities (Mundas, Kumhars, Brahmins and Malars) are only nominally represented, having 1-2 households each.

The chief characteristic of a *toli* is the predominance of one particular community in it. Six of them (shown in the table by asterisks) contain only one community each. Of course, all but one have small populations. The Doms are found only in the *Basti toli* or Meromdega proper which also has the largest variety of population. Most of the Mahar households are found in *Basti toli,* just as most of the Turi households are in *Bar toli.*

The following account gives details of different *tolis*:

(*i*) *Meromdega* proper is known as *Basti toli.* This is the site of the original settlement in the village. It is situated to the south of the streamlet which is the source of water-supply. It lies on high level land of rocky nature. Wells are not easy to dig, and attempts in that direction have proved abortive. It is said that Bhuiyas lived in this place before any other community arrived. No Bhuiya is, however, found in the village now. It has been seen that Meromdega is the densest *toli* and also has the most variegated communal representation. It contains 91 households, which is over a quarter (27 per cent) of the total households in the village. The bulk of households consists of Mahars who are weavers by traditional occupation but are not a Scheduled Tribe unlike the Chik Baraiks. The entire population of Doms in the village is found in this *toli.* About one-third of the Gond families also reside here. Amongst the minor communities, one Brahmin household stays in it.

Meromdega derives its name from a set of footprints—resembling those of a goat, found on a boulder adjoining the streamlet by the side of the village. *Merom* in Mundari (including Kharia) language means goat and *dega* is jump. Thus Meromdega literally means the village where the goat jumped.

(*ii*) *Bar toli* is situated towards the north-east of the village. It derives its name from the existence of a *bar* (*ficus indica*) tree which was found there at the time of settlement. The majority of the people in this *toli* are Kharias. The bulk of Turi households (14 out of 15) are inhabitants of this *toli* which also contains 10 families of Chik Baraiks and 3 of Lohars.

(*iii*) *Girja toli* is so called because of the existence of churches locally called *Girjas.* The inhabitants of this hamlet are mostly Christian Kharias, with some Chik Baraiks and Lohras. All Munda and Malar families of the village reside here.

(*iv*) *Kahu Pani toli* is situated towards the north-east of *Kashbahar.* It is said that there was a *Kahua* (*terminalia arjuna*) tree on this spot beside which there flowed a stream. This led to the *tola* being called *Kahu Pani.* There is a tank in this *toli* which also is multi-communal hamlet containing Kharias, Bhogtas, Lohras and Gonds as well as one of the two Brahmin families.

(*v*) *Kashbahar* is situated north-east of *Basti toli.* A species of grass known as *kasi* grass was found here at the time of settlement. As such the *toli* was named *Kashbahar.* It is inhabited mostly by Bhogtas.

(*vi*) *Mahua toli* is situated across the stream between the village proper and *Girja toli.* It is inhabited only by the Gonds of whom there are 20 families. The *toli* owes its name to the existence of a large number of *mahua* (*bassia latifolia*) trees in the area.

(*vii*) *Purab toli* is so called because it is situated on the eastern boundary of the village. It was previously known as *Pailu toli* after the name of a Kharia who was the original settler there. The Kharias are the

dominant community in this hamlet. They are Christians of the Lutheran sect. A separate graveyard exists for them in the *toli*. A well and a *dori* are there to meet the needs of water.

(*viii*) *Nawa toli* literally means a new hamlet. It is a small hamlet with only 10 families but as many as five communities. The two Kumhar families of the village reside at this place.

(*ix*) *Tangar toli*—This hamlet is so called because of the existence of rocks (*tangar* in Gondi). Only nine Gond families, all related to each other, reside here.

(x) *Mahato toli* is situated to the north of Meromdega proper, and owes its name to the existence of *Mahato's* house. It is said that the *tola* was previously known as *Sirki toli* due to the existence of a number of *Sirki* (*anogeissus latifolia*) trees. Only Kharias live here.

(*xi*) *Bhadra toli* is situated to the east of Meromdega. It derives its name from being situated near a forest which is called *Bhadra* by the Kharias. Only six families reside here, half of them being Kharias.

The remaining three hamlets namely, *Pahar toli, Bair toli* and *Nagra toli* are isolated clusters of a few households of Kharias.

7. *Communications*

Meromdega is of comparatively easy approach, being situated only about six miles from Simdega. Proceeding from Simdega one has to proceed along the Ranchi-Rourkela State highway to *Kharem toli* and then take a turn to the east along a District Board Road. Although unmetalled this road is generally in a good condition because of the hard soil. It goes up to *Gutgur toli* from where it branches off: one leading to *Girja toli* and the other to Meromdega proper. The road going to Meromdega proper is quite good without many ups and downs, but a stream has to be crossed. The road going to *Girja toli* is more undulating and not even jeepable.

The village is also connected to the State Highway by a road going from *Ghutbahar,* east of the village, passing through *Kashbahar* and *Nawa toli* and meeting the highway at *Pandripani*. All these roads are 'bicycle-worthy'. Inter-hamlet communications are provided by narrow foot-paths. Since bullock-carts are not used, these are adequate for the local needs. The Community Development Block has constructed a road connecting Meromdega with *Kashbahar*. The road between *Pandripani* and *Ghutbahar* is used by motor trucks coming to the village or passing through it for collecting Kendu leaves and other forest produce.

Although Simdega is the nearest bus stand, buses can be caught at any point along the State highway. Birmitrapur, a terminus station on the South Eastern Railway, is situated about 18 miles away. With the construction of the Ranchi-Rourkela railway line, trains to Ranchi will be available at Birmitrapur which is at present connected only with Rourkela.

8. *Public places*

A Community Hall-*cum*-Village Level Workers' residence was constructed in *Mahato toli* under the auspices of the Community Development Block some four years back. Although meant to provide a meeting place for the villagers, the Community Hall appeared to have been neglected. In June, 1963 it was quite unfit for occupation (*see* photograph 7). In contrast a Roman Catholic Chapel had been newly constructed (photograph 9) and the Lutheran Church (photograph 8) was also kept in good trim. The two churches are situated in *Girja toli* which also has a Lower Primary School. There is an Upper Primary School in *Bar toli* and a Middle School in Meromdega proper. The L. P. and the U. P. Schools are managed by the District Board, while the Middle School is run by the villagers. Meromdega proper also has the Gram Panchayat Office. There are two *Sarnas* in the village: one near *Tanger toli* and the other near *Kashbahar*. The Gonds have a place of worship known as *Tangra Chatan* or *Burha-Ban*. There is no other place of worship for other communities. The different communities as well as the Christians have separate graveyards situated near their respective *tolas*.

9. *History of the village*

The history of the village is rather confused and lost in conflicting legends. Both the Gonds and the Kharias claim to be the original settlers of the village which is said to have been



4. Market scene at Simdega Town.

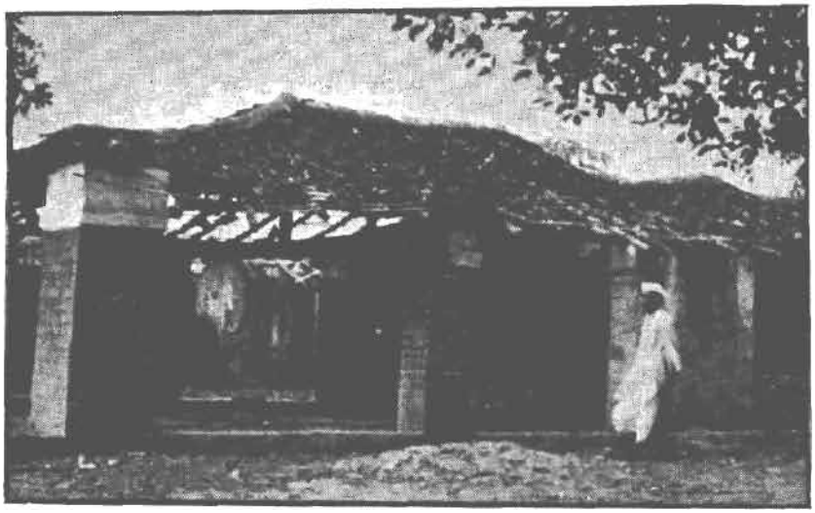


5. The Lower Primary School in Girja *Toli*.



6. A *katcha* drinking water well.

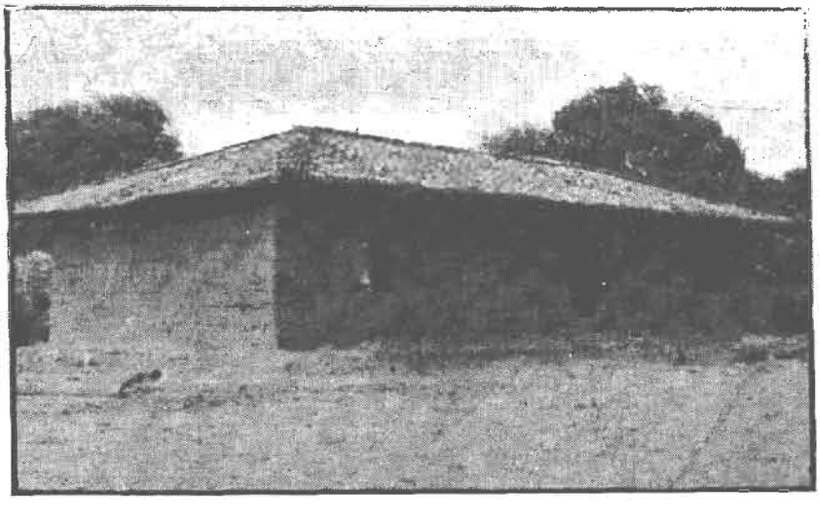
(*Facing page* 4)



7. The Village Community Hall constructed in *Mahto Toli* in 1959 as it appeared in June, 1963.



8. The Lutheran Church in Girja *Toli*.



9. The Roman Catholic Church in Girja *Toli*.

(*Facing page* 5)

founded more than 200 years ago. According to the former, the Gonds were originally inhabitants of Orissa where they faught the Bhuiyas for settlement and land. Having vanquished them but fearing fresh reprisals and further bloodshed, some Gonds left their homes and came to Thethaitangar by way of *Sirong Bera*. Later, they moved to Meromdega and founded the village. It is said that when the Gonds came, they found 12 Bhuiya brothers residing here. They took to flight on the advent of the more numerous Gonds. The Bhuiyas are supposed to have been residents of Meromdega proper having their settlements near a *Jamun* (*Eugenia jambolana*) tree still in existence. It is said that even 30 years ago, broken tiles found from the debris of their residences bore evidence of this contention. The Bhuiyas had constructed a *Dari,* lined with iron girders, which now lies buried under the earth.

With regard to the name of the village, its literal meaning has been explained earlier. The story goes that a goat of exceptional strength left its footprints on a rock near the stream to the north of the village proper. The footprints, still in evidence, bear some resemblance to those of a goat but are much too large in size to be anything but legendary. The story is, however, reminiscent of myths connected with some ancient Hindu gods and saints having left their traces behind in stone at certain places of religious importance.

The fact that the name of the village is in Kharia and not Gondi is adduced by the Kharias as evidence of their being the original settlers. But these are merely contentious claims. So far as the settlement history of the village is concerned, it appears that of the various communities now residing in it, only 19 households of Gonds have been doing so far more than five generations. The Kharias came later. The bulk of the Bhogtas and Mahars arrived only two to four generations back, which period also saw the influx of other communities. According to another Gondi legend, one Lohar Gonjhu, a Gond, was the first to come to the village six generations ago. The Mahars (weaving caste) were called by the Gonds to serve them, and so also the other functional communities such as Doms, Lohras, Kumhars, Brahmins and Chik Baraiks.

The following table gives the settlement history of the village:

TABLE 2

Settlement history of Meromdega by each caste/tribe

Serial no.	Caste/Tribe	Total no. of households	Number of households settled				
			More than 5 generations ago	4-5 generations ago	2—4 generations ago	One generation ago	Present generation
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Kharia ..	117	..	20	97	..	..
2	Mahar ..	55	..	9	40	2	4
3	Gond ..	54	19	14	21	..	..
4	Bhogta ..	43	..	1	41	1	..
5	Chik Baraik ..	19	..	..	18	..	1
6	Turi ..	15	..	..	15	..	..
7	Lohra ..	14	..	..	13	..	1
8	Naik ..	13	..	..	13	..	..
9	Munda ..	2	..	..	2	..	..
10	Kumhar ..	2	..	..	2	..	..
11	Brahmin ..	2	..	..	2	..	..
12	Malar ..	1	..	..	1	..	..
	Total	**337**	**19**	**44**	**265**	**3**	**6**

None of the communities except the Gonds could explain why and from where did they immigrate into this village.

10. *Legends about the origin of people*

(*i*) *Origin of Gonds*—Once upon a time long long ago, a couple lived in Orissa. They had 12 sons of whom six were *sudhar,* i.e., gentle and good-natured, and six were *kuchhar,* i.e., bad and ill-natured. While the *sudhars* fed upon one of their mother's breasts, the *kuchhars* did so upon the other but they not only suckled but even devoured it and consequently, the mother died. Thereupon, the *sudhars* took fright and fled from their home, only to be pursued by the *kuchhars.* In the course of their flight, the six good brothers crossed the river Gorgora. Their evil pursuers had, however, to give up the chase as the axle of the bullock cart in which they were travelling gave way. Thus, the two groups got separated. The *sudhars* came to be known as Gond from the name of the river they had crossed. Even so, the Gonds had to wander about even afterwards in search of livelihood. Finally they reached Delhi which was the seat of Muslim kings. They joined the militia and gave an excellent account of their valour and strength. But their hope of getting a share in the kingdom was dashed to the ground by the intransigence of the King who would agree only to keeping them as stipendiary soldiers. The Gonds then took up arms against the Muslim king to assert their rightful claims, but they lost. Vanquished and dejected they left Delhi and after leading a nomadic life again for sometime, some of them settled near Simdega where they are still found.

One of the Gond leaders suggested that they are really Rajputs and used to live near Kashi from where they migrated to a place where the river Gorki Narmada flows. They stayed on its banks for sometime and hence came to be known as Gonds. They came to this area and settled there in the course of their wanderings.

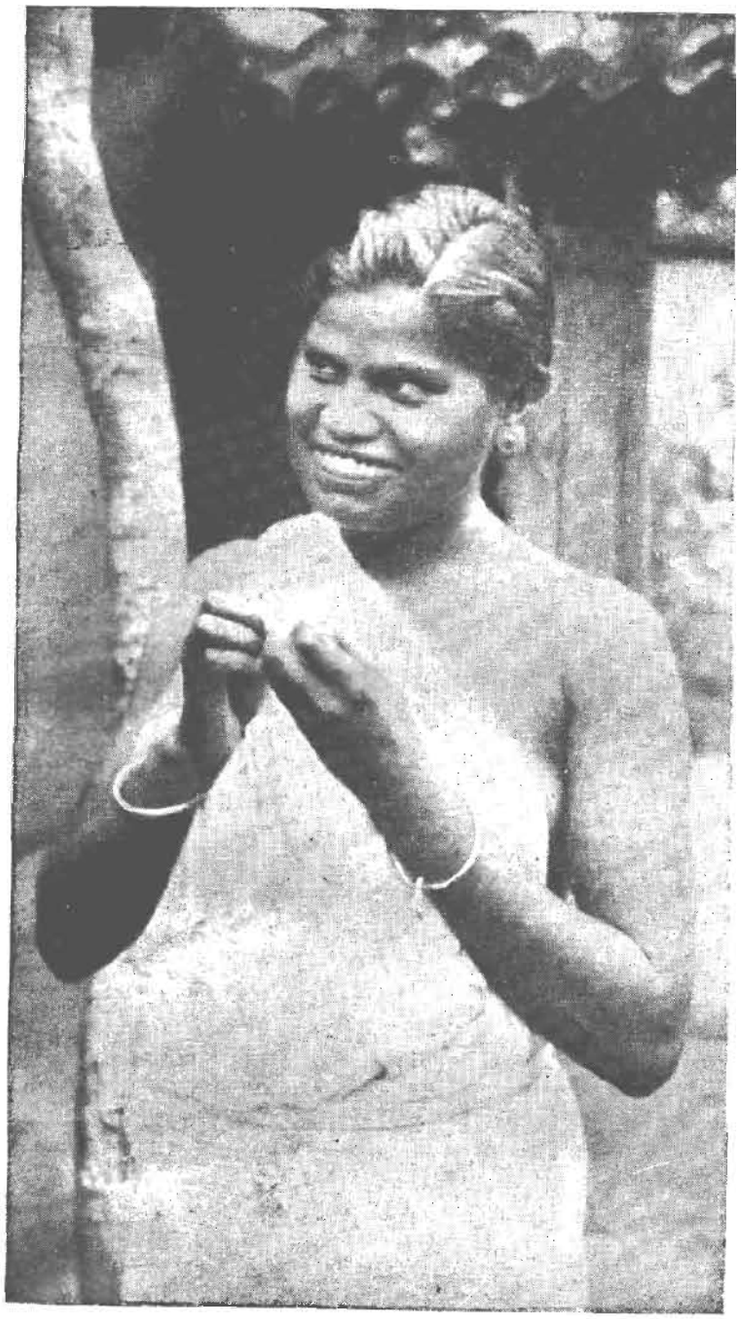
The six clans among the Pachasi Gonds chose different places for settlement. *Jaghats* went to Sabai (Simdega, Bihar), *Kachchaps* to Meromdega (Simdega, Bihar), *Nags* to Bangerkela (Jashpur, M. P.), *Kanas* to Loros (Jashpur, M. P.), *Nattis* to Samsara (Bolba, Bihar) and *Basaira* to Baghdarh (Simdega, Bihar). Members of the *Kachchap, Nag* and *Kana* clans take the title 'Pradhan', the *Jaghat* and *Basaira* that of 'Manjhi' and the *Natti* that of 'Rameshwar'. The bulk of households in Meromdega belong to the *Kachchap* clan.

(*ii*) *Doms or Domras*—The Domras take the title 'Naik'. According to their legend, they were originally residents of Sambalpur (Orissa) and Raigarh (Madhya Pradesh). They served the Gonds and supplied them with bamboo-ware which they continue to do even now. Once a Domra woman who worked in the King's palace fell in love with a Rajput soldier and begot him a son. When this was known, the Domra Panchayat was convened and the Rajput soldier was asked to take the woman as his lawful wife. This he refused to do. Even the woman herself made entreaties and threatened severance of future sex-relations with him, but to no avail. Ultimately, she was accepted in her own caste, and from that day, the eldest child in a Domra family is called Rajput and he is prohibited from taking beef, an article of food tabooed to the Rajputs. But there is no other restriction imposed upon him either in commensality or marital ties.

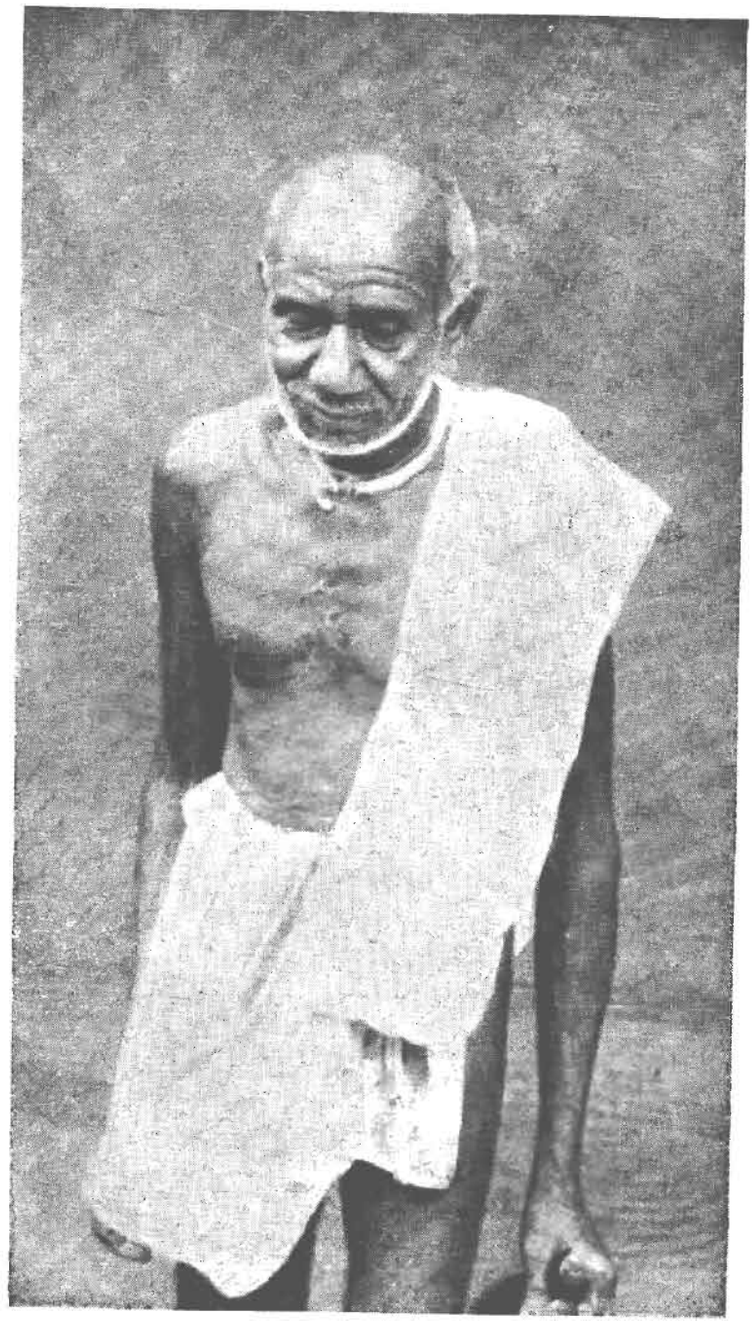
(*iii*) *Mahars*—The Mahars were originally residents of Sambalpur in Orissa where they practised their traditional occupation of weaving and had Gonds and Rautias amongst their clientele. Some of them emigrated along with the Gonds and Rautias and settled with them.

It is said that on leaving Sambalpur, the Mahars made a temporary home at Nagra in Orissa. There a Mahar begot three sons. The first one wove cloth with his hands, the second one used *Koya* and prepared silk materials, whilst the third one worked the handloom. These three persons were respectively the founders of the three sub-castes among the Mahars, viz., Mahar proper, Kosta and Jolaha. The Mahars of Palkot take the title 'Das' but those of Meromdega call themselves Mahars.

The Kharias, though a major community in the village, could not recount any tale about their origin.



21. A smiling Gond woman.

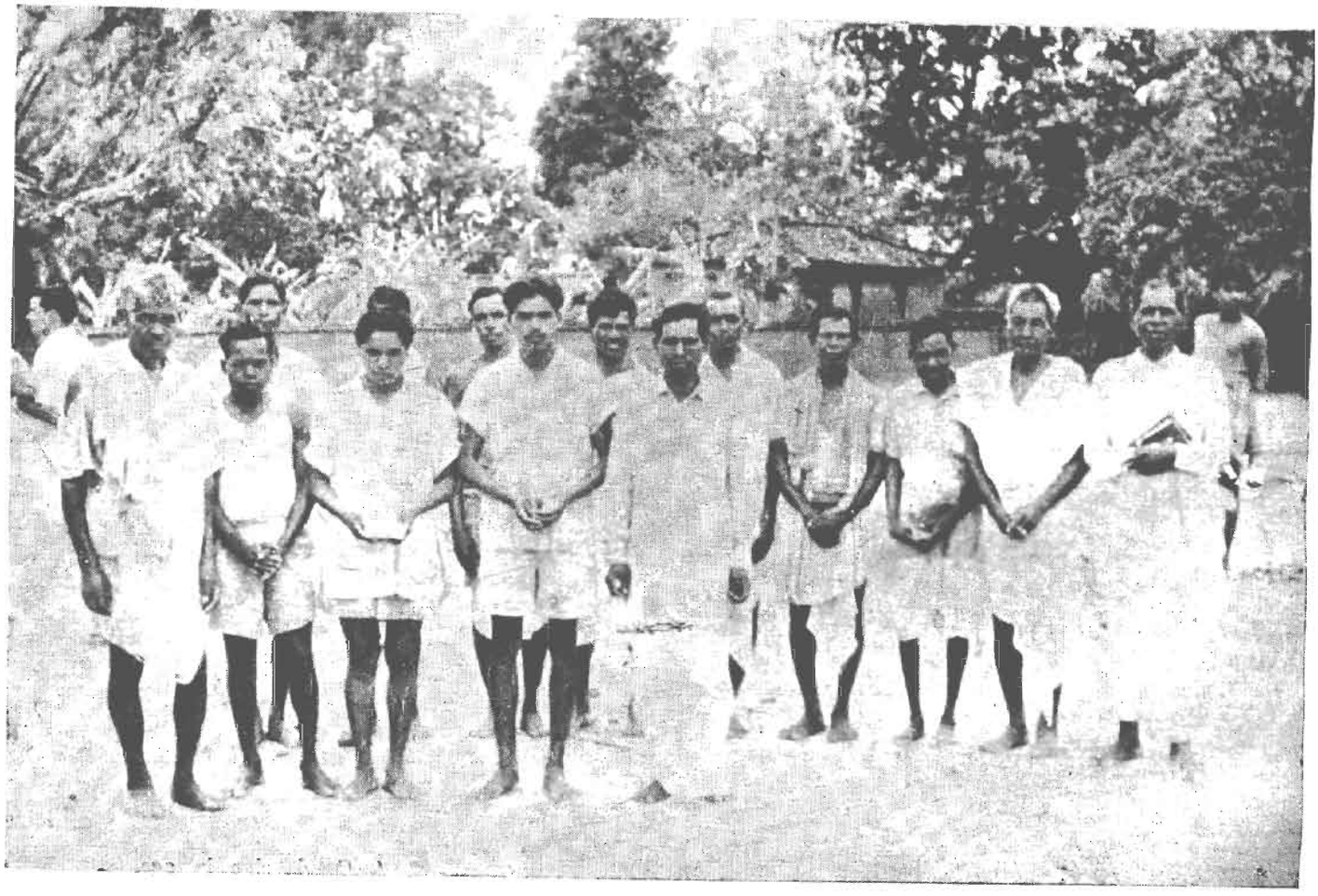


22. A Gond, ripe in age.

(*Facing page 6*)



23. A group of Christian Kharia women assemble near the church.



24. Christian Kharia males near the church.

(*Facing page* 7)

CHAPTER II

THE PEOPLE

1. *Ethnic composition*

It has been seen that Meromdega contains representatives of as many as 12 communities. The following table gives the distribution of its people by caste or tribe according to number of households, persons, males and females in each community. Percentages of households and persons to their respective totals have also been shown for each community:

TABLE 3

Distribution of inhabitants of Meromdega by caste or tribe, according to number of households, persons, males and females

Caste/Tribe	Number of households	Percentage of households	Number of persons	Percentage of persons	Number of males	Number of females
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Kharia ..	117	34.72	678	36.99	354	324
2. Mahar ..	55	16.32	244	13.31	135	109
3. Gond ..	54	16.03	343	18.71	172	171
4. Bhogta ..	43	12.76	199	10.85	84	115
5. Chik Baraik ..	19	5.64	98	5.34	44	54
6. Turi ..	15	4.45	79	4.31	45	34
7. Lohra ..	14	4.15	66	3.60	29	37
8. Naik ..	13	3.86	86	4.74	52	34
9. Munda ..	2	0.59	12	0.65	5	7
10. Kumhar ..	2	0.59	9	0.49	4	5
11. Brahmin ..	2	0.59	11	0.60	5	6
12. Malar ..	1	0.30	8	0.43	4	4
Total	**337**	**100.00**	**1,833**	**99.82**	**933**	**900**

Kharia

Evidently, Kharias are the most numerous people in the village comprising as they do a little over one-third of its total population. They are a scheduled tribe akin to the Mundas. Risley has mentioned six sub-tribes of Kharias, of whom those in Lohardaga (now Ranchi) district are represented by (*i*) Dhilki Kharia, (*ii*) Dud Kharia, (*iii*) Erenga Kharia and (*iv*) Munda Kharia. The other two sub-tribes found outside are Berga Kharia and Oraon Kharia.

The Kharias, according to another classification, are divided into three sections, namely, Hill Kharia, Dudh Kharia and Dhelki Kharia (*"Land and People of Tribal Bihar", page* 115). Of these, the Hill Kharias are the most primitive of all and confined largely to the hills of Dhalbhum subdivision in Singhbhum district. According to D. N. Majumdar also, the Dudh and Dhelki Kharias are the advanced sections among them. The Kharias of Meromdega are all Dudh Kharias and votaries of Christianity. The Kharias are divided into totemestic exogamous clans.

According to a legend recounted in the village, one of the ancestors of Kharias had nine sons. So he ordered them to go to the forest and bring one article each. The sons did as directed and the articles they brought were converted into totems. Thus, nine totemestic clans indicated below sprang up among them. It was ordained that no marriages should take place among members of the same clan :

Clan	Meaning	Number of households
(1) Dung Dung	Eel	17
(2) Kulu	Tortoise	35
(3) Kerketta	A kind of bird	27
(4) Bhilung	Salt	5
(5) Topo	A kind of bird	1
(6) Kirro	Tiger	4
(7) Soreng	..	7
(8) Dast	..	..
(9) Taru	..	..

The totemistic objects have been indicated against the names of the six clans which are the same as given by Risley also. The three others have not been mentioned by him. The Kharias of Meromdega are distributed among the 7 clans as given above. Only 96 out of 117 families are recorded. The others returned such names as Kharia, Patras and Mangra which are the name of the tribe and proper names of persons respectively. Thus clan is not a very important factor in the lives of the people. The Kharias were classified as an aboriginal tribe in the Census of 1872.

Gond

The Gonds are a Dravidian tribe having their main stronghold in Madhya Pradesh. According to Risley, the sub-tribes among Gonds are Raj Gond, Dhokar Gond, Doroa Gond and Jhora Gond. Prasad* also mentions three classes but they are Raj Gond, Dhur Gond and a third group consisting of labourers are known as Kamias. According to villagers of Meromdega, the Gonds are divided into three sections, namely Raj Gond, Pachasi Gond and Dhokar Gond. The Raj Gonds are at the apex of the Gond hierarchy. They are followed by the Pachasi Gonds, the Dhokar Gonds forming the base. The Pachasi Gonds are also called Chhau Kulia, i.e., those having six sects. Some people believe that Pachasi Gond is merely another name for Raj Gond and that the two are really the same sub-tribe. This view was supported also by Meghnath Gonjhu of village Sabai and Anand Pal Gonjhu of village Jambhar, who are held in great esteem by the entire Gond community of this area. The Dhokar Gonds are a nomadic section of the tribe who eke out a living by begging and exhibiting physical feats in the manner of wandering tribes. Risley mentions that Dhokar Gonds are also known sometimes as Mangan Gonds because of their begging habit.

The six septs of Pachasi Gonds found in the village are indicated below:

Sept	Meaning	No. of families in village
(1) Jaghat	He-buffalo	2
(2) Kachchap	Tortoise	31
(3) Nag or Saanp	Cobra	7
(4) Kana	Fish	1
(5) Natti or Bagh	Tiger	2
(6) Besra	A kind of bird	5

*Prasad, N., Land and People of Tribal Bihar.

The above accounts for only 48 out of 56 Gond families in the village. The details furnished by the remaining eight were not adequate enough for the above classification.

Mahar

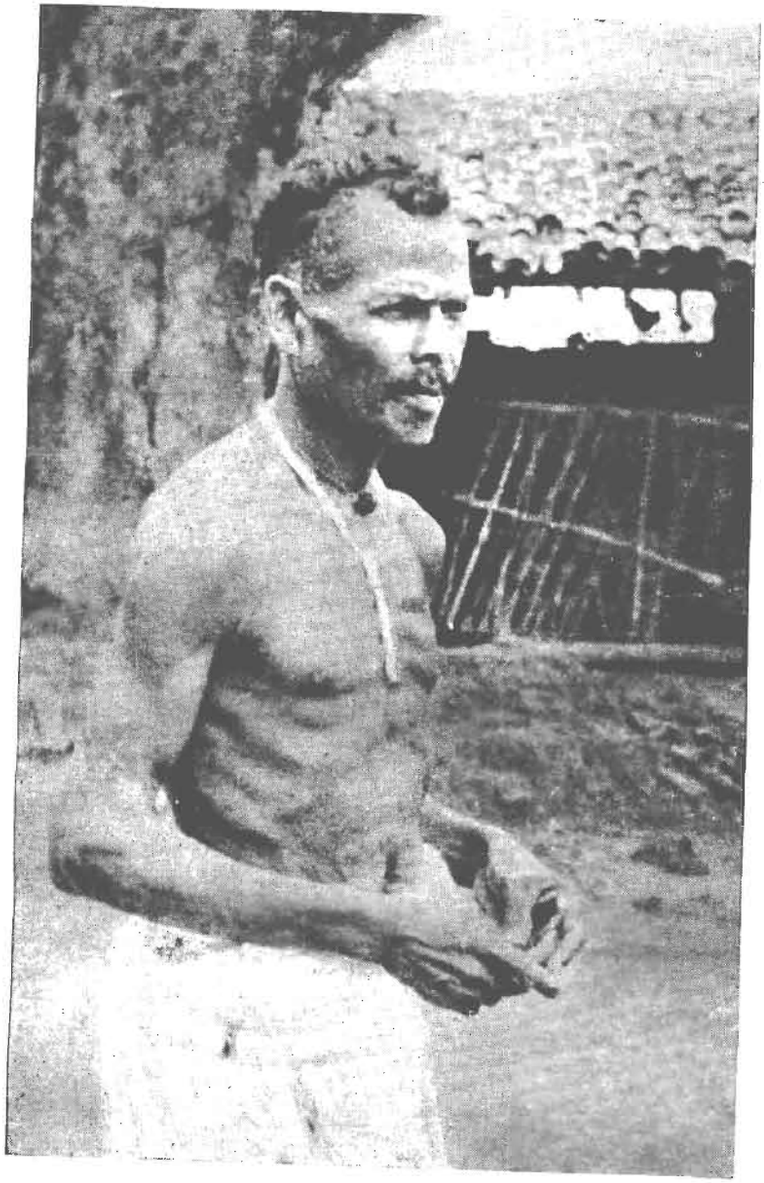
The Mahars are a weaving caste, Hindu by religion. They have been mentioned in the Census of 1901, the only census in which every caste returned was tabulated. Only 1,172 Mahars were reported at that time from the then province of Bengal. The bulk (573) was returned from Midnapur and the remainder from Orissa Division and the Feudatory States of Orissa, but none from Chotanagpur. Appendix VI to the Census Report of 1901 mentions Mahar, but the column under "remarks" is blank: the characteristics and occupations of Mahars thus remaining unrecorded at that time. The Mahars of Meromdega reported the existence of the following 12 exogamous clans among them:

Clan	Meaning	Number of households
(1) Bagh	Tiger	11
(2) Siar	Jackal	1
(3) Bhat Pahari	Boiled rice	16
(4) Sone jotia	Gold	8
(5) Manik	Pole	3
(6) Kachua	Tortoise	1
(7) Darpan	Mirror	1
(8) Chaur	Rice	2
(9) Goah	A kind of reptile	..
(10) Rabon	Eagle	..
(11) Megh	Cloud	2
(12) Hundar	Wolf	1

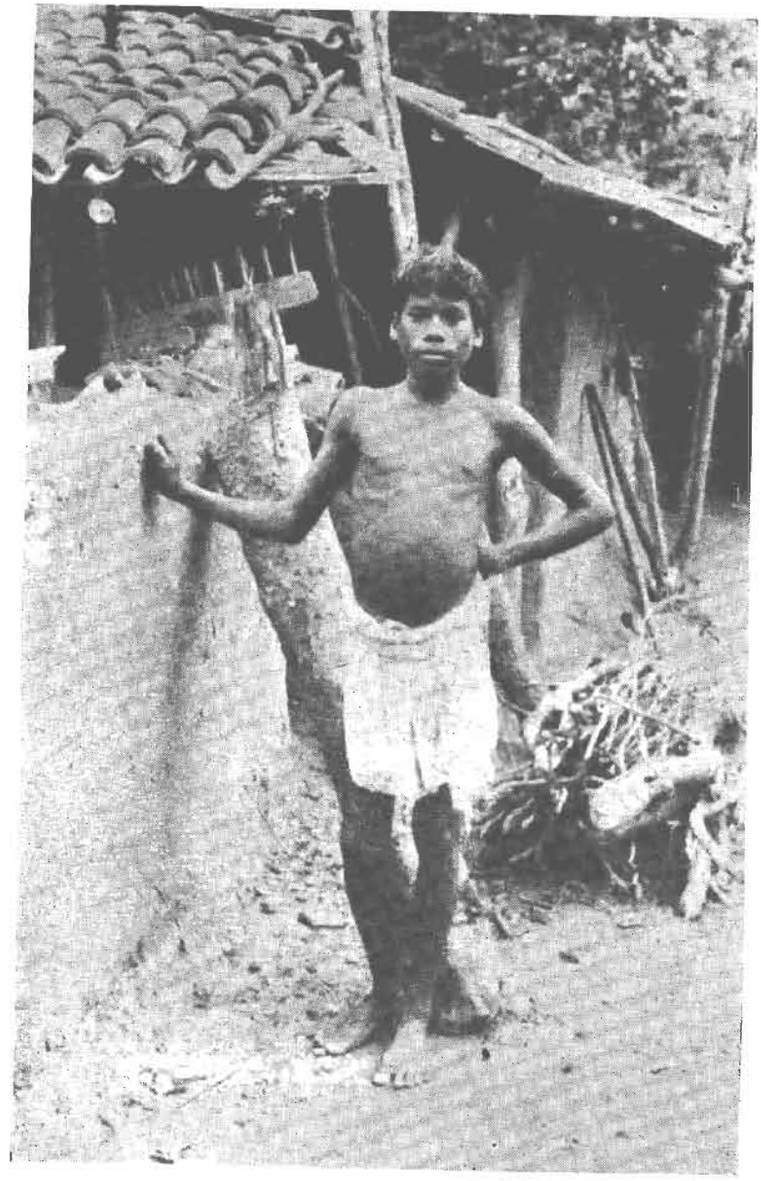
The remaining nine households of Mahars could not name their clans properly.

Bhogta

After Kharias, Mahars and Gonds, the Bhogtas are the numerically important community in Meromdega. They are treated as a scheduled caste throughout the State of Bihar. Risley mentions that the Bhogtas are a subcaste of Gowalas in Chotanagpur and also a sub-tribe of Kharwars in Southern Lohardaga. According to the then Deputy Commissioner of Ranchi (1901), the Bhogtas claimed to be Hindus brought into Ranchi district from Brindaban by one of the Maharajas of Chotanagpur. According to him, "in appearance and custom they closely resemble the Rautias and frequently called themselves 'Singh'. They

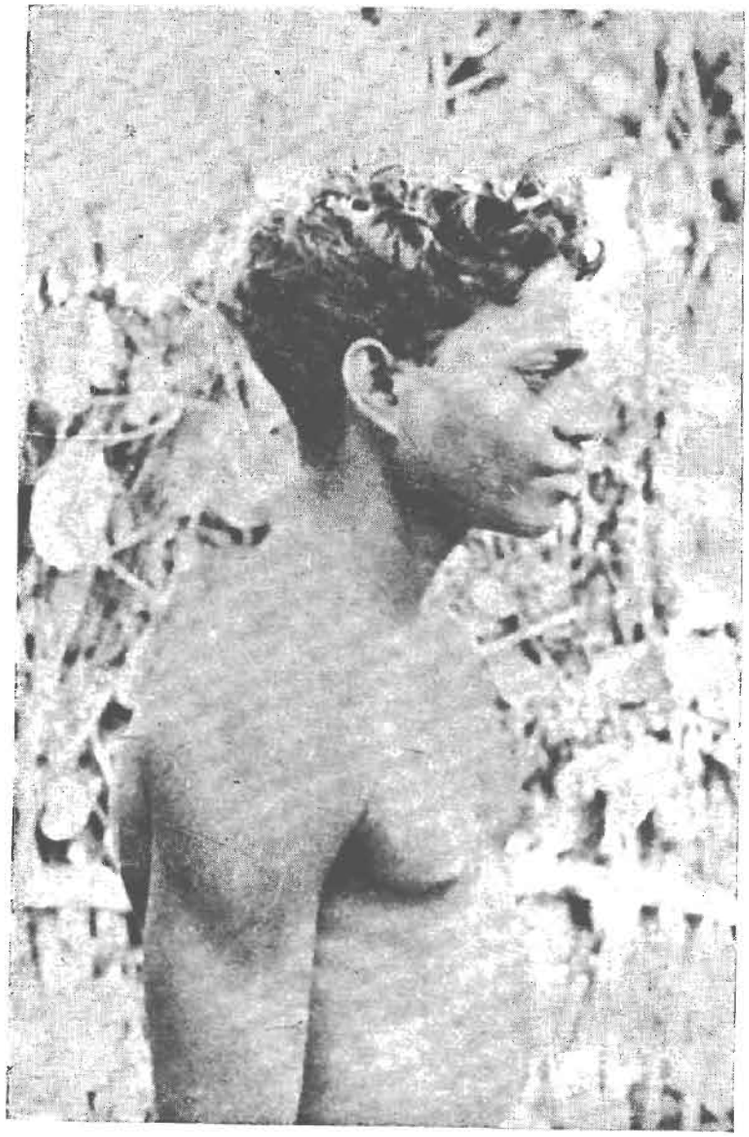


13. An elderly Mahar male.



14. A Mahar boy.

(*Facing page* 8)



15. A young man of the Naik caste.



16. A Naik girl.

(*Facing page 9*)

claim to be quite distinct from, and superior to, the Kherwar Bhogtas of Palamau." The Bhogtas were then classified as a caste served by regular Brahmins and from whom orthodox Hindus could take water. The Bhogtas are also divided into clans of which those found in the village are—

Clan	No. of households
(1) Hathia	4
(2) Samodhia	12
(3) Turwar	7
(4) Karra	2
(5) Parish	2
(6) Mailwar	4
(7) Surania	3
(8) Kurbadar	1
(9) Bonia	2

The remaining six households did not give their clan names.

Dom

The Doms or Domras take the title 'Naik' in the village. They are divided into several clans, of which some found in Meromdega are—

Clan	No. of households
(1) Bagh	3
(2) Rajput	1
(3) Bokra	3
(4) Sanwani	5

The origin of the Rajput clan among Doms has been discussed earlier. Other similar clans are Gond, Kumhar and Babhan, derived from the offsprings of unions between Dom females and males of the respective castes. Another clan with a peculiar nomenclature was reported to be Bandh (of which, however, the village has no representatives). The name is derived from a person who was born whilst his mother, under arrest and tied to a rope, was being taken to face the due processes of law. Since she was tied (*bandh*), her son and his successors got the clan name 'Bandh'.

Chik Baraik, Turi and Lohra

The Chik Baraiks of Meromdega have almost as many septs as the number of households. The septs reported in the village for Chik Baraiks, Turis and Lohras are given below :

Sept	No. of households
Chik Baraik	
(1) Molwa	1
(2) Loha	4
(3) Jamakiyer	1
(4) Urmakhuri	1
(5) Benchhar	1
(6) Sanumani	1
(7) Vanswar	1
(8) Panchbhaia	1
(9) Bakura	1
(10) Bainchore	1
(11) Masat	2
(12) Bayerpunji	1
Turi	
(1) Surin	4
(2) Charghagia	2
(3) Jamakiyer	1
(4) Badhbas	1
(5) Mailwar	3
Lohra	
(1) Kerketa	7
(2) Kachhua	2

All the households are not accounted for in the above statement for reasons indicated earlier.

Other castes and tribes

It is peculiar that out of 2 Brahmin families in the village, one returned *Garg* as its *gotra*, and the other returned *Bagh* which is actually the name of a tribal sept. The Kumhars returned *Tati* as their sept, and the Mundas *Baba* (rice). The lone Malar family is of *Bhatpahari* sept which occurs also amongst Gonds.

Language

The Kharias have their own language bearing the same name. It is akin to Mundari but has a large number of Hindi words in its vocabulary. Every Kharia household in Meromdega returned Kharia as its mother-tongue.

The Gonds have been designated as a Dravidian tribe because of their linguistic characteristics. Gond is a Dravidian language. However, every Gond of Meromdega, in common with all other communities (except the Kharias, Mundas and Brahmins) returned Sadri, a corrupt form of Hindi, as his mother-tongue. The Mundas returned Mundari as their mother-tongue and the Brahmins, Hindi.

As may be expected, all Kharias are equally at home with Sadri. 16 families among them were also conversant with Mundari and 3 families even with Oriya. Simple Hindi is well understood by most people.

Castes and tribes

The village contains 5 scheduled tribes, viz., Kharia, Gond, Chik Baraik, Lohra and Munda. These tribes together constitute 77.15

per cent of households and 65.32 per cent of population of Meromdega. Thus, the scheduled tribe population is about two-thirds of the entire village population.

The scheduled castes in the village are Bhogta, Turi and Dom. Together they comprise 21.04 per cent of households and 19.81 per cent of population. Thus, the scheduled caste population of Meromdega is only one-fifth of the total.

The remaining communities are Mahar, Kumhar, Brahmin and Malar, of whom only the Mahars are numerically significant.

Religion

All the Kharias and Mundas as well as one family of Chik Baraiks are Christians. The others are Hindus. Among the Hindus, Brahmins are at the highest rung of the social ladder. They are supposed to be the spiritual leaders and guides. The Kumhars and the Malars are numerically insignificant. The former engage themselves in the traditional occupation of pottery, and the latter similarly in brass and bell metalware. The Mahars are a weaving community but not at all looked down upon because of it. The Mahars and the Gonds rank at par although commensality between them is forbidden.

The Turis and the Doms among the scheduled castes and the Lohras among the scheduled tribes are placed low both socially and economically. The Bhogtas, though a scheduled caste, are not considered socially inferior. They are grain-parchers by traditional occupation.

The Christians have carved out a *niche* of their own and are not effected by the social attitudes or even indifference of the remaining villagers. Though socially more forward, the Christian Kharias are looked down upon by the non-Christian tribals.

2. *House and House-type*

Every family has its own dwelling made almost invariably of mud walls, the exceptions being four Kharia houses having walls of wattled bamboo plastered with mud. The houses are big and small varying from one-roomed structures to those having four or more rooms. The largest number of houses (153 out of 337), however, contain two rooms. Next in order come the one-roomed dwellings. Houses with three or more rooms account for only about one-fifth of the total number of houses.

The houses of Doms, Turis and Lohras are all single-roomed. Among Bhogtas and Mahars, such houses account for almost one half of the total number. The corresponding proportion among Gonds is one-fourth, and among Kharias one-eighth only. Of the four remaining minor communities (comprising seven households in all), the two Brahmin families have three-roomed dwellings and others have two-roomed dwellings. The bulk of the Kharia and Gond houses are two-roomed. The Chik Baraiks seem to be better off in regard to accommodation. One-third of their houses consists of as many as three rooms. The following table shows the distribution of households in the village by the number of rooms and of persons occupying them, separately for each community:

TABLE 4

Distribution of households in Meromdega by number of rooms occupied, and number of persons occupying them, separately for each caste/tribe

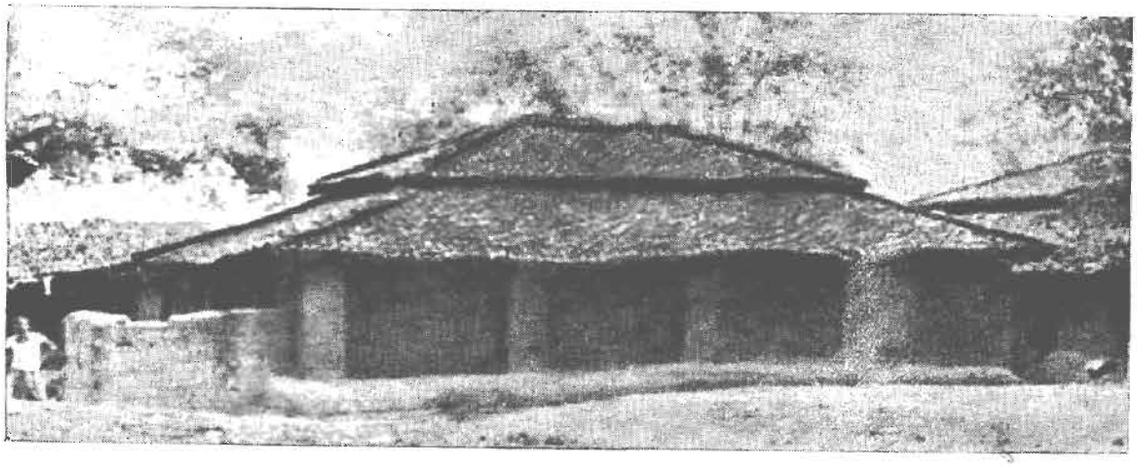
Caste/tribe	Total no. of households	Total no. of rooms	Households with one room		Households with two rooms		Households with three rooms		More than three rooms	
			No. of households	No. of family members	No. of households	No. of family members	No. of households	No. of family members	No. of households	No. of family members
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Kharia	117	260	15	63	72	301	21	231	9	83
2. Mahar	55	94	27	95	20	100	6	33	2	16
3. Gond	54	125	13	53	22	124	14	106	5	60
4. Bhogta	43	71	20	73	20	103	2	12	1	11
5. Chik Baraik	19	40	4	15	9	47	6	36	..	..
6. Turi	15	15	15	79	..	..	..	..	..	..
7. Lohra	14	14	14	66	..	..	..	..	..	..
8. Naik	13	13	13	86	..	..	..	..	..	..
9. Munda	2	4	..	..	2	12	..	..	..	..
10 Kumhar	2	4	..	..	2	9	..	..	..	..
11. Brahmin	3	6	..	..	..	..	2	11	..	..
12. Malar	1	2	..	..	1	8	..	..	..	..
Total	**337**	**650**	**121**	**530**	**148**	**704**	**51**	**429**	**17**	**170**



10. A house of a Kharia.



11. Another Kharia house—note storage of water pots.



12. The house of Bano Gond.

(*Facing page* 10)

ILLUSTRATION I

HOUSE OF SRI BANO GOND

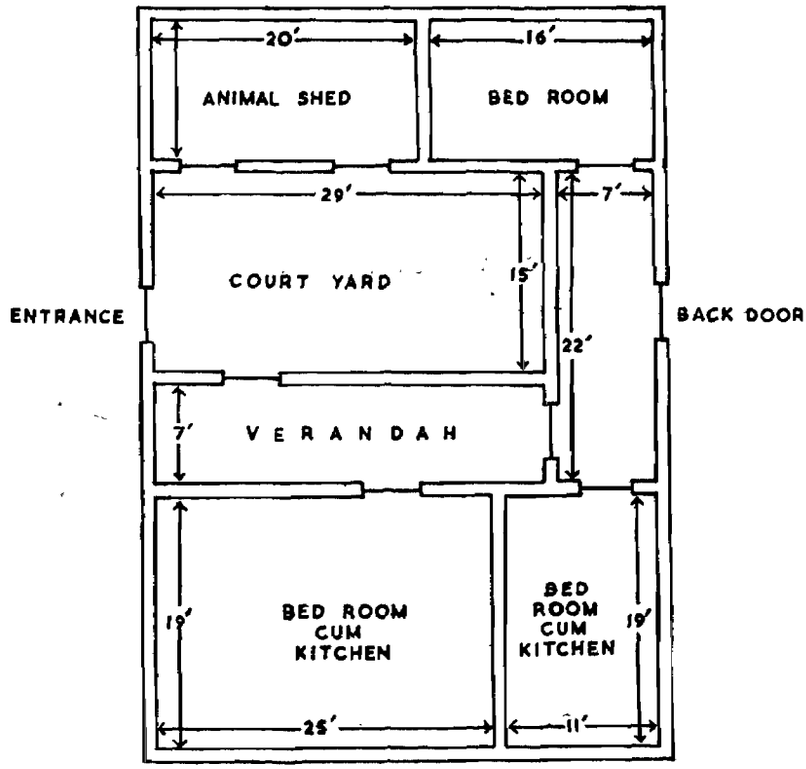
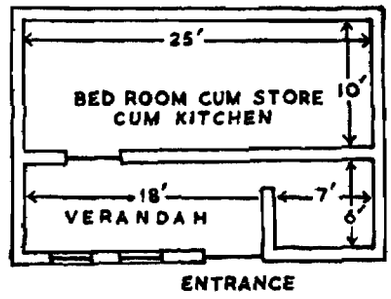


ILLUSTRATION II

HOUSE OF SRI LOHAN BARAIK



(*Facing page* 11)

The size of the house does not appear to have much relation to the present level of income of the family. Thus, amongst the 33 Kharia households having income between Rs. 25–30 a month, 13 households have one-roomed houses, 16 two-roomed houses and 4 even three-roomed ones. Similarly, among the 20 Gond households in the same income-group, only 8 have single-roomed houses; an equal number lives in three-roomed houses, the remaining four having two-roomed dwellings. Taking the highest income group (over Rs. 100 per month), a similar trend is observed. Thus out of 24 Kharia families in this income-group, as many as 12 have only two-roomed houses. Similarly, amongst the 13 Mahar families in the same income-group, none possesses a house with more than two rooms. On the other hand, none among the Turis, Doms and Lohras who constitute the economically backward sections of the village, has house containing more than one room.

As mentioned earlier, almost all the houses are made of mud walls. The soil used is known as *Nagara matti* obtained from paddy-lands. The roofs are tiled with large semi-circular tiles locally made by the Kumhars (@ Rs. 6 per thousand plus two meals) of the same kind of soil, which is believed to be particularly suited for the purpose. The bigger houses have four slopes, but two-sloped roofs are also not uncommon. The roof is often supported on wooden posts made of *sal* logs. Although bricks are not generally used, some of the houses of Gonds and Kharias have cement plastered floors.

The single-roomed houses comprise of a rectangular room, 15–20 feet long, 12–15 feet wide and about 12 feet high. A verandah is provided on the front side, i.e., the side containing the entrance. Windows are not usually provided, except by the Christian Kharias.

The bigger houses have their rooms and verandahs constructed around an enclosed place which serves as a courtyard. Sometimes two houses are built so closely together that it is difficult to tell them apart. This is particularly true of the houses of Gonds who have separate kitchens, but not so in the case of other major communities who locate their kitchen either in the central sleeping room or in a part of the verandah.

It has been seen that the Lohras, Turis, Doms and Malars are the communities having only one-roomed structures. They are not the cultivating classes and, consequently, possess no cattle. Thus, they do not have any problem for accommodating animals. However, fowls are kept by them in the same room in which they live.

Cattle-sheds and pigsties are separately provided by the villagers.

For Hindus it is usual to consult a Brahmin priest with regard to the proposed site for building a house. His approval, however, is only conditional upon the existence of favourable omens. The system for selection consists of placing five grains of *arwa* rice (kept on *Sal* leaves) at each of the four corners of the site. These are allowed to remain on the spot overnight and examined the next morning. If found undisturbed, the site is approved as being auspicious. In case, however, the grains are disturbed or diminished in quantity, the site is discarded. This system of selection of site is adopted by all communities of the village except the Christians who have no predilections in the matter and go by practical expediency. While a Brahmin is consulted by most communities, the Turis, Doms, Lohras and Malars do not do so. Of late, however, the practice of selecting the site by the above method has lost its importance due to shortage of space suitable for building purposes.

No ceremonies are observed at the time of actual construction of a house. But it is usual to make some offerings to the spirits and to invite friends and relatives to a feast when the family formally occupies the newly built house.

The work of constructing a house is largely carried out by members of the family themselves. Relatives and friends assist in return of merely a drink. Paid labourers are employed when the occasion so demands. The timber for construction is generally brought free of cost from the forest.

The houses are kept in good condition, but no special care is bestowed upon them for the sake of appearance. Decorations and mural paintings are practically unknown.

3. *Dress*

The articles of dress vary according to sex, age group, community and occasion for use. It was observed that younger people were more sophisticated in their sartorial choice than elderly people. Similarly, the Christians were more particular about their appearance than the non-Christians.

Old men do not require anything more than a simple piece of cloth worn like a *langota*. The Lohra (photograph 38) is seen wearing this

type of cloth. The upper portion of the body is generally bare. Thus, a Naik (photograph 15), a Mahar (photograph 13), a Chick Baraik (photograph 20) and a Gond (photograph 22) are devoid of any upper garment. Even so, every one possesses a shirt of modern design which is used at the time of going out. During winter, *chadars* (sheets) are used to ward off the cold.

Females don the usual *sari* which is draped in a manner so as to cover the upper part of the body also. Blouse is not commonly worn. Thus the old Kharia (photograph 25), the Naik girl (photograph 16) and the Gond maiden (photograph 21) are all without any upper garment. But a Kharia girl on the way to church (photograph 17) was found wearing a blouse. It is to be noted, however, that the photographs portray women in the dress commonly worn at home while performing the usual household chores. Most women, and certainly the younger ones, put on blouses on ceremonial occasions or whenever they go out.

The school going children and young Christians wear shorts and shirts.

The Doms and Turis are not so particular about cleanliness as the other communities. Hence, in spite of similar dress being worn by all people in the village, they appear to be more slovenly in their appearance.

Shoes are not commonly used. But most men having dealings with the outside world usually keep a pair of shoes for use on such occasions. Wooden sandals are used in the rainy season, even while engaged on cultivation.

4. *Ornaments*

The use of ornaments is not widespread. The Christians do not fancy ornaments. Amongst other women, the older ones appear to have greater fascination for ornaments than the younger ones. Thus, the Mahar women (photograph 30) and Gond woman (photograph 39) are more decorated than younger women in other photographs.

The following table assesses the extent of use of ornaments among households classified by income groups:

TABLE 5

Extent of use of ornaments among households in Meromdega classified by income groups

Income group (per month)	Total number of households	Number of households				
		Wearing ornaments				Not wearing ornaments
		Total	Both sexes	Males only	Females only	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
All income groups ..	337	46	7	6	33	291
Less than Rs. 25 ..	13	3	1	1	1	10
Between Rs. 25—50 ..	132	19	3	4	12	113
Between Rs. 50—75 ..	119	14	2	1	11	105
Between Rs. 75—100 ..	38	4	..	..	4	34
Above Rs. 100 ..	35	6	1	..	5	29

It is seen that only one household out of every seven (13.7 per cent) uses ornaments. It is rather strange to find that the proportion of households using ornaments decreases as we move from lower to higher income groups, the only exception being the last group (above Rs. 100). It is also strange that there should be households in which men do, and women do not, wear ornaments. Certain common articles of adornment such as bangles, wooden ear-tops or rings, be it noted, are not included under "Ornaments" for the purposes of above table. The main bulk of households (71.7 per cent) using ornaments comes from the income range Rs. 25—75, but this is also the group that embraces more than 74 per cent of households in the village. Communitywise, the proportions of households using ornaments are: Kharia 0.85 per cent, Mahar 27.27 per cent, Gond 16.67 per cent, Bhogta 7 per cent, Chik Baraik 11.11 per cent, Lohra 35.77 per cent, Dom 61.54 per cent. None of the Turi households use ornaments.



17. A Kharia girl on the way to church.

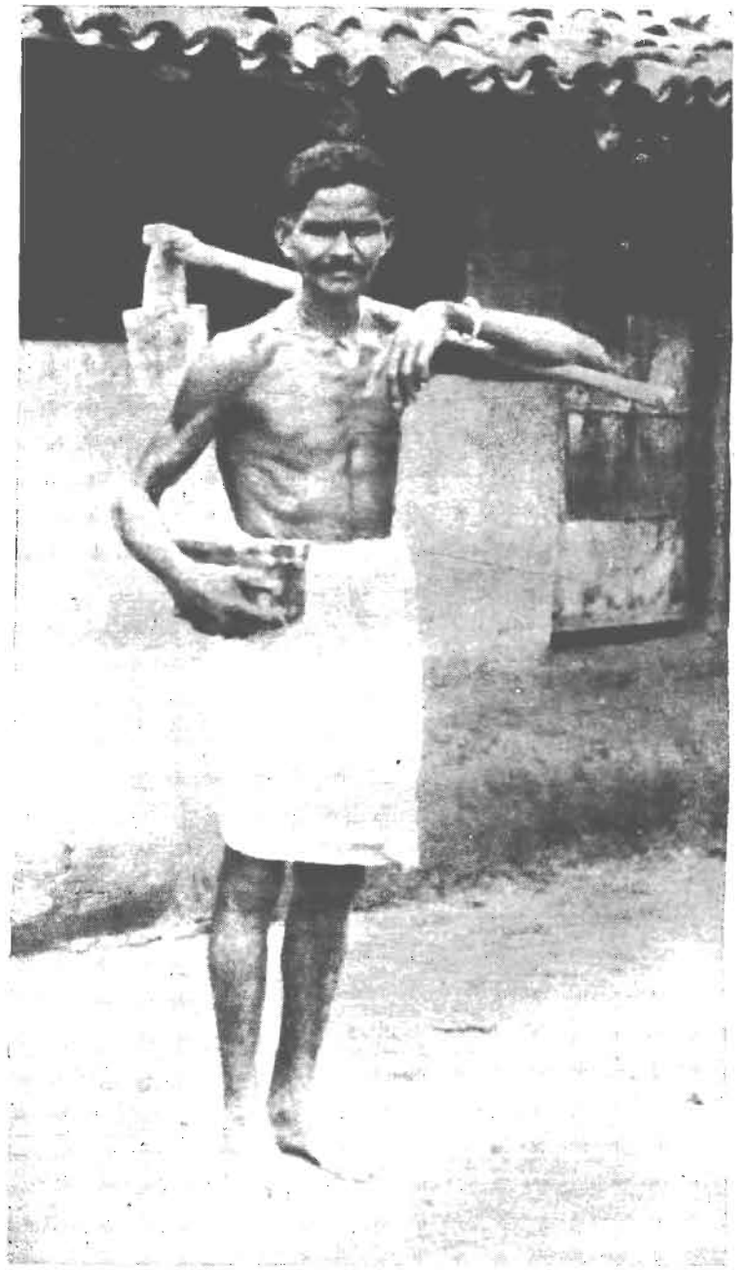


18. A school-going Christian Kharia girl and her mother.

(*Facing page* 12)



19. A Chik Baraik mother with her children.



20. A Chik Baraik on his way to sowing paddy.

(*Facing page* 13)

The following chart gives the local names of some ornaments, parts of the body in which they are used, and the material of which they are generally made:

TABLE 6

Some common ornaments used in Meromdega

Local name of ornaments	Equivalent in English	Part of the body where worn	Material of which made	Approximate price
1	2	3	4	5
1. Khomso	Hair pin	Hair on head	Copper	Re. 0.06 to Rs. 0.12 each.
2. Tarki	Earing	Ear	Silver	Rs. 3.50 to Rs. 5.00 per pair.
3. Kundal	Earing	Ear	Silver or gold	Rs. 3.50 to Rs. 45.00 ,,
4. Peepar-patta	Leaf-ear tops	Ear	Silver	Rs. 2.50 to Rs. 3.50 ,,
5. Kanausi	Earing	Ear	Silver, brass or copper	Re. 0.06 to Re. 0.12 ,,
6. Guna	Nose-ring	Nose	Gold	Rs. 12.00 to Rs. 20.00 per piece.
7. Chhuchi	Nose top	Nose	Silver or brass	Re. 0.75 to Rs. 1.50 ,,
8. Sikri	Necklace	Neck	Silver	Rs. 20.00 to Rs. 35.00 ,,
9. Munga mala	Necklace	Neck	Munga	Rs. 0.50 to Rs. 0.75 ,,
10. Khambhia	Necklace	Neck	Silver or Munga	Rs. 1.50 to Rs. 10.00 ,,
11. Bandhana	Necklace	Neck	Silver or Munga	Rs. 1.50 to Rs. 10.00 ,,
12. Chandrahar	Necklace	Neck	Silver or Munga	Rs. 1.50 to Rs. 12.00 ,,
13. Chandwa	Necklace	Neck	Coins or Munga	Rs. 1.50 to Rs. 10.00 ,,
14. Baju	Armlet	Arms	Silver or bronze	Rs. 10 to Rs. 18.00 per pair.
15. Baria	Wristlet	Hand	Silver	Rs. 5.75 to Rs. 16.00 ,,
16. Kagan	Wristlet	Hand	Silver	Rs. 20.00 to Rs. 30.00 ,,
17. Bahuta	Wristlet	Wrist	Silver	Rs. 8.75 to Rs. 18.00 ,,
18. Choori	Bangles	Wrist	Glass or silver	Re. 0.03 to Rs. 1.25 per piece.
19. Aguthi	Ring	Fingers	Silver or brass	Re. 0.12 to Rs. 0.25 ,,
20. Pari	Anklet	Foot	Bronze or silver	Rs. 3.00 to Rs. 4.50 per pair.
21. Agutta	Ring	Big toe	Silver or brass	Re. 0.50 to Re. 0.75 per piece.
22. Ghotia	Ring	Toes	Brass or bronze	Re. 0.50 to Re. 0.60 ,,
23. Bichha	Ring	Toes	Brass or bronze	Re. 0.25 to Re. 0.50 ,,

The Christians do not use many ornaments. However, every married woman wears a ring which is a symbol of marriage. Among others, men wear *Kanausi* (earing) and *tabij* (amulet) which is supposed to be a charm against evil. The Gonds, Bhogtas, Mahars and Chik Baraiks also wear *janeu* (sacred thread) and keep *teek* (pigtail or a tuft of hair in the posterior of head) in the manner of orthodox Hindus.

The ornaments described above are available in different markets which the villagers often visit. They are manufactured by silversmiths in the area.

5. *Tattooing*

Women of all communities in the village get themselves tattooed. The Kharia women, however, do so only nominally. Often, all that it implies is a few small cross marks in the centre of the forehead. The Mahars, Gonds, Bhogtas and other castes get their women tattooed on a much extensive scale. Some of the photographs clearly support this point.

Tattooing is done by the local Malar woman who lives in *Girja toli*. The practice seems to gain support from the belief that tattoo marks

are the only things that will stay even after death. Tattooing is also held to be a remedy against pain in certain parts of the body affected by it. It is also considered to be a cure for goitre.

Some old men have *sikka* marks on their left forearms. These marks, circular in shape and five to seven in number, are made with a burning wick when the subjects are about 10 years old. The practice of having *sikka* marks is, however, on the decline and only few among the younger persons now have such marks. The practice was once prevalent among all communities in the village except Brahmins and Kumhars.

6. *Household goods*

As with the villagers elsewhere, the chief item of furniture is the stringed cot or *Khatia.* Every family possesses at least one of these. Other articles of furniture such as chair and table are not widely used. Thus, chairs are owned by 17 families only, of which 14 are Christians (13 Kharias and 1 Munda). The remaining 3 families owning chairs are made up of 2 Mahars and 1 Gond. Only 6 Kharias and 1 Mahar families possess tables. Among Mahars, the Mukhia of the Panchayat naturally keeps chairs and tables for visitors. *Machias* or low stools stringed like cots are kept by almost half of the households in the village. These are offered to visitors for sitting upon.

Meals are taken sitting on the ground, *peerhas* made of wood being used for this purpose. Mirror and comb are kept by all families. Wooden combs manufactured locally by the Mahlis, Malars and Lohars have been replaced to a great extent by plastic products available cheaply and abundantly in the local markets.

About one-third of households in the village still use oil lamps for light. Hurricane lanterns are possessed by 230 households. Petromax and battery torch light are uncommon, being owned only by 2 Kharias and 1 Mahar household. There are 24 bicycles in the village—19 owned by Christians (18 Kharias and 1 Munda) and 5 by 3 Mahars, one Gond and one Brahmin. None of these are articles of recent acquisition.

Mosquito curtains are also not used in the village. The use of toilet soap is confined mainly to the Christians (including the Munda and Chik Baraik Christians and 38 Kharias). The only non-Christian using toilet soap is a Mahar family. Clothes are not sent to washermen, the use of washing soap being more widespread.

Earthenware is largely in use for cooking as well as storing water and grains. Earthen pots meant for boiling rice are known as *chhari*; those for storing water as *gagri* and *bhara-chukas* are earthen tumblers used for drinking. Vegetables are cooked in iron *tawas* (pan). Pots and pans made of aluminium are also found in some houses. The utensils used for eating are *thara* (big metal plate made of brass), *chipis* (small metal plate), *dubhi* (metal cup) and *lota* (water jug). Glassware and chinaware are found only in a few Kharia households, particularly of those whose members are working, or have worked, in towns.

Some miscellaneous articles, including implements for cutting wood and a few domestic appliances, are listed below:

(*i*) *Tanga* and *tangi* are large and small axes.

(*ii*) *Ari* (saw) and *Basula* (chisel) are kept by some families.

(*iii*) *Dhenki* (pounding implement), *ukhal* and *samath* for dehusking of grains are commonly found.

(*iv*) Baskets of various sizes are used for storing grains, dry vegetable leaves, etc. Patongs made of leaves and *moras* made of straw come in handy for this purpose.

(*v*) Boxes made of tin or steel are kept by most households for storing their clothes and other valuables.

(*vi*) Ordinary umbrellas are used by many, but the traditional ones made of leaves and known as *gungu* are not quite obsolete. Bamboo umbrellas are also in use.

(*vii*) In place of the usual *Kolhu,* oil is extracted by the use of *patta* (photograph 32). The oilseeds are first partly ground and kept in small baskets about 6″ square. They are then crushed between two planks, the pressure being applied by a person standing on the top plank. The lower plank has a small hole through which the extracted oil oozes out into a vessel kept for collecting it.

7. *Food and drink*

Except for the two Brahmin households in the village, all others are non-vegetarian. The Doms, Mundas, Turis and Lohras reported beef and buffalo meat to be permissible items of

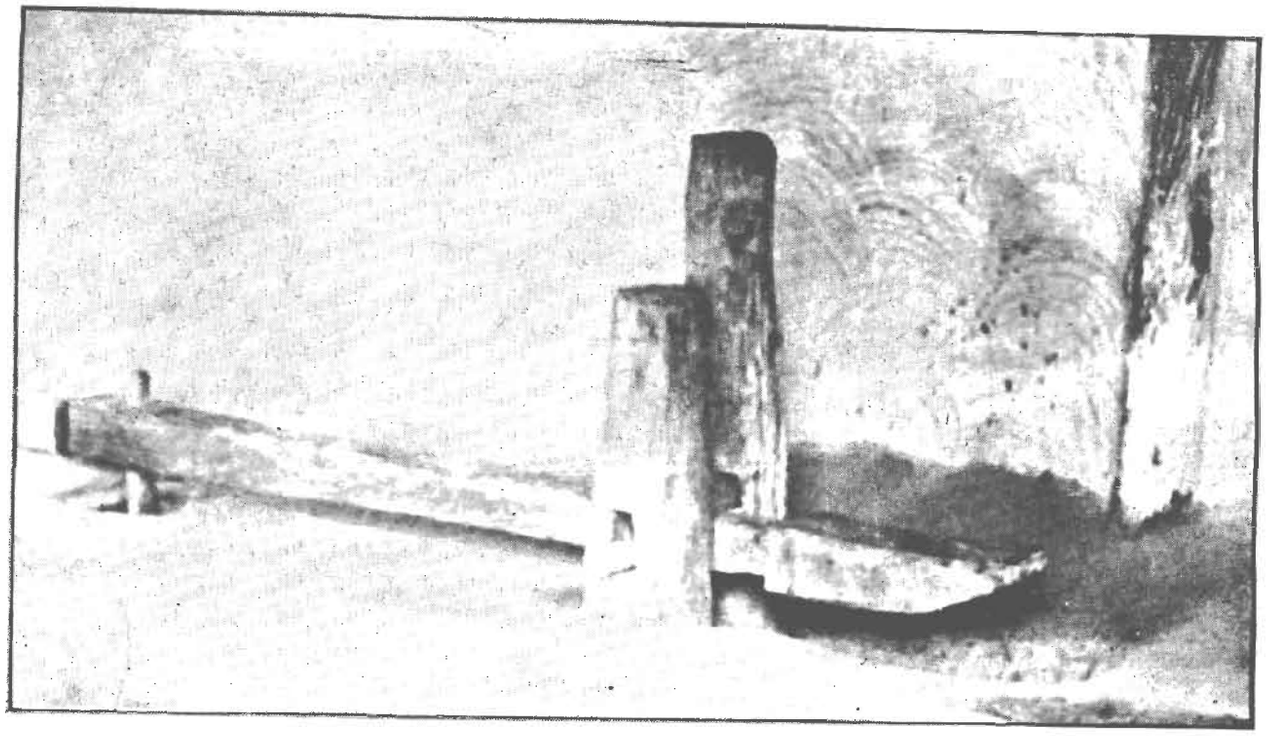


25. A Kharia woman dehusking paddy in a hole made in a stone slab.

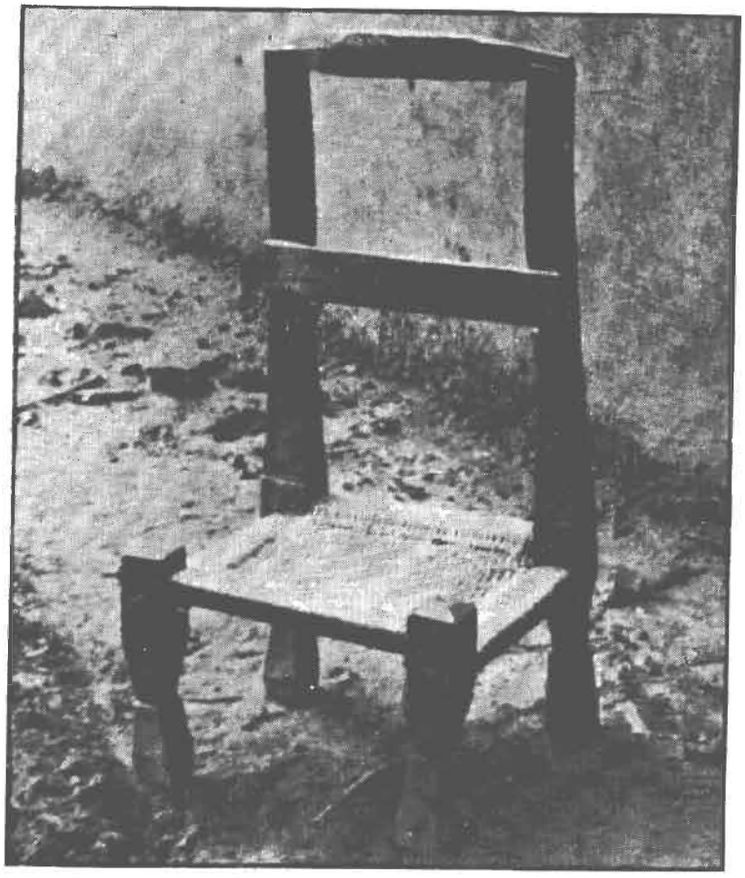


26. Mat-making is a profitable pastime.

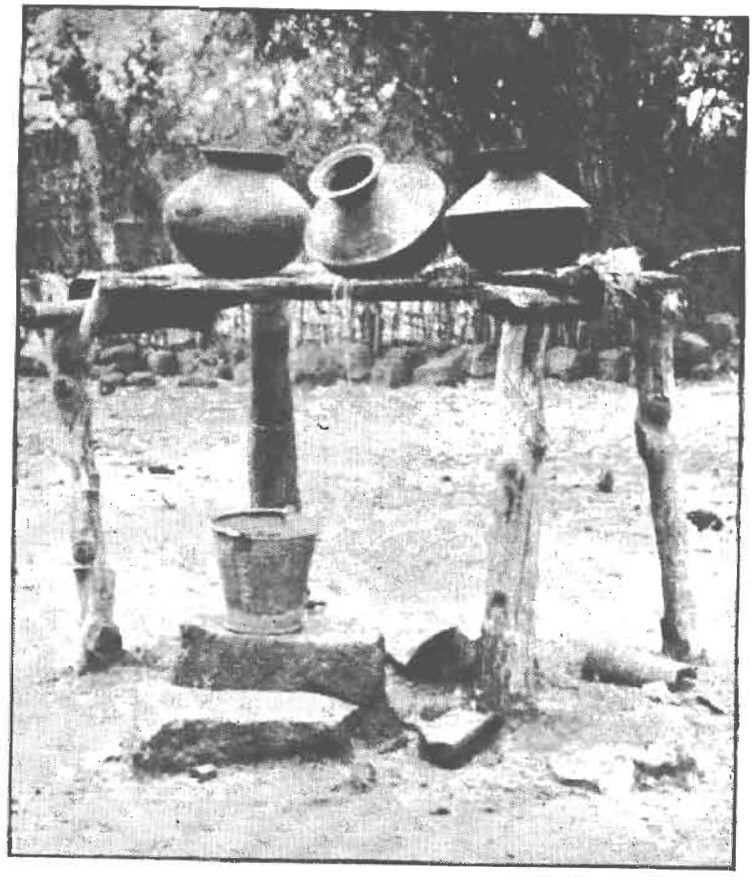
(*Facing page* 14)



27. The *dhenki* used for dehusking.



28. A stringed armless chair locally known as *Machia*.



29. Storage of water pots.

(*Facing page* 15)

food. The Doms are not averse even to taking meat of dead animals. Whilst goat and fowl are eaten by all non-vegetarians, the Mahars, Kumhars, Gonds, Bhogtas and Malars do not take ham. Venison (deer-meat) is taken by all castes, while wild boar is eaten only by those who take ham.

The staple foodgrain is rice. Millets like *marua* (*Elensine coracona*) and *gondli* (*Panicum miliari*) are supplementary foodgrains. Roots, fruits and vegetables of various kinds provide a variety in food.

Bankandari is a root available in the forests in January and February. It is eaten after boiling.

Gethi is a bitter root which is fit for consumption only after letting it stand over-night in flowing water.

Pitars and *Katain* are other roots found.

The rainy season provides various leaves, vegetables and *sags* some of which are *sarla, matta, kanpai, lariato, chakour.* Those available in the greater part of the year are *bhagi, bankachari, siliari.* Tender leaves of *Koinar* and *putkul* are used as vegetables. These are available in season. They are also dried and stored for future use. *Phutka* grows in the rainy season. It is small round vegetable which tastes like meat.

Flowers of *Jirhul* (*Lagerstroemia reginamacrocarpa*), *kachnar* (*Bauhinia tomentosa*) and *Mahua* (*Bassia latifolia*) trees are used as food. Fruits of the Sal (*Sorea robusta*), *Mahua* (*Bassia latifolia*) and *Dumar* (*Ficus hispida*), Bar (*Ficus bengalensis*), *Pakkeari* (*Ficus cordifolia*) are edible. The fruits of the common variety like guava (*Psidium Guava*), mango (*Mangifera indica*), black-berry (*Eugenia Jambolana*), papaya (*Carica papaya*), plantain (*Musa sapientum*), jackfruit (*Artocarpus integrifolia*), custard (*Recinus communis*) and *bel* (*Aegle marmelos*) are used in season.

Kusum (*Schleichera trijuga*); *Karanj* (*Carissa carandas*), *Mahua* (*Bassia latifolia*) and *Bahera* (*Terminalia belerica*) are used for extracting oils for lighting purpose and also for massaging on the body. Edible oils are extracted from *mahua* (*Bassia latifolia*) and castor seeds (*Recinus communis*) which are cultivated. Besides natural produce available the vegetables such as *beens* (*bodi*) (*vigna catiang*), cucumber (*cucumis sativus*), gourds (*cucurbita maxima*), ladies finger (*Hibiscus esculentus*), potato (*solanum tuberosum*) and Brinjals (*Solanum melongena*), are grown for consumption. The following table gives the seasonwise availability of different items of food listed above:

	Serial no.	Name	Botanical name	Season
Fruits—				
	1	Sal	*Shorea robusta*	Summer
	2	Papaya	*Carica papaya*	All seasons
	3	Mango	*Mangifera indica*	Summer
	4	Black-berry	*Eugenia Jambolana*	Summer
	5	Guava	*Psidium guava*	All seasons
	6	Kela (Plantain) ..	*Musa sapientum*	All seasons
	7	Piar	*Buchanania latifolia*	Summer
	8	Pituar	..	Summer
	9	Pakeari	*Ficus cordifolia*	Summer
	10	Bar	*Ficus bengalensis*	Summer
	11	Dumar	*Ficus Hispida*	Summer
	12	Kathal	*Artocarpus integrifolia* ..	Summer
	13	Sarifa	*Annona squamosa*	Winter
	14	Bel	*Aegle marmelos*	Summer
	15	Amla	*Phyllanthus emblica* ..	Summer
Roots—				
	1	Gethi	..	Summer
	2	Bankandri	..	Winter
	3	Pitharu	..	Summer
	4	Kathru	..	Rainy
Sag and vegetables—				
	1	Sarla sag	..	Rainy
	2	Banpani	..	Rainy
	3	Bhagi	..	All seasons
	4	Bankachhari ..	..	Rainy
	5	Siliari sag	..	Rainy
	6	Chakour	..	Rainy
	7	Lariata	..	Summer
	8	Koinar	..	Summer
	9	Munga	*Marringa pterygosperma* ..	Summer
	10	Kudrum	*Hibiscus Sabdarifa* ..	Rainy
	11	Putkal	..	Summer
	12	Potato	*Solanum tuberosum*	All seasons

Beliefs and practices relating to birth, marriage and death

8. *Birth, pregnancy and pre-natal practices*

The beliefs and practices described below, generally apply to all communities in the village, unless expressly indicated otherwise.

Conception

Barrenness is a social stigma and a childless woman is deemed to be inauspicious. She is avoided on joyous and festive occasions such as marriage, festival relating to transplantation, etc. A barren woman soon loses her husband's affection and is often divorced on the ground of her physical incapacity to bring forth a child.

Pregnancy is, therefore, a most welcome event for a married woman. Conception is recognised by the usual symptoms it produces. Stoppage of the menstrual cycle, bulging out of the abdomen, feeling of nausea and heaviness, and growing of peculiar tastes such as chewing of hard baked clay of the hearth are some of the common indications. While no restrictions are imposed in the beginning on the usual household chores and other activities of the mother, she withdraws herself from more arduous kinds of work as the pregnancy advances. Specially nutritional foods are not provided but intoxicating liquors, believed to cause abortion, are prohibited to her. She is also not allowed to carry heavy load which is believed to lead to similar disastrous consequences.

The Gonds consider a pregnant woman to be impure, for she is not permitted to go to the *sarna* nor to any other place of worship. It was stated in the village that some 30 years ago a woman who did not heed to this injunction paid heavily for her dereliction and the child was lost by early abortion. This kind of belief in pre-natal impurity of women is shared by all sections of people in the village. The Kharia women are not even permitted to go outside the village limits during pregnancy.

Sacrifices and offerings to gods and deities for ensuring a safe delivery are, however, not made by any community in the village.

Delivery

Delivery usually takes place in the husband's house. No separate structure is specially provided for this purpose but a room is set apart if the circumstances so permit; otherwise, a partitioned off portion of the living room itself has necessarily to suffice.

Dais or midwives belong to the Dom or Turi community in this area. They are supposed to specialise in this job as the Chamar and Ghasi women do elsewhere. The midwife severs the navel chord with any sharp instrument. The placenta is buried near the house sufficiently deep so as to prevent animals from getting at it. There is a belief that if the placenta is eaten by any animal, it will cause harm to the mother by bringing about reduced lactation or even its complete stoppage.

The Dom midwife attends on the mother and the child during the period of pollution. She massages them with oil, washes their clothes and renders other incidental services. For her labour she is paid a rupee in cash and three seers of rice by way of *Seedha* (food ration); also a *sari*, old or new according to the means of the client. Often, she also gets her food for the period she has been in attendance. It is customary to pay more in case of male issues, but there is no hard and fast rule and it is all left to one's sense of discretion and financial condition. The midwife is supposed not only to possess a certain degree of physical skill in bringing about safe delivery, but is also in the know of medicinal herbs which may be required in case of complications arising prior to, at the time of, or following, childbirth. These have been found by the villagers to be largely efficacious. But such eventualities also necessitate sometimes seeking of help from more potent powers, and the *Pahan* and the *Ojha* may be called in to help with their incantations and offerings. Ancestral spirits are invoked on such occasions.

People generally prefer their first born to be sons. On subsequent births and such occasions are by no means of few in most cases the sex of the child largely a matter of indifference.

Post-natal period

The mother is fed on liquid diet on the day of childbirth. *Moong dal* (*Phaseolus munga*) and mashed *kaddu* (*Langenaria vulgaris*) are added to the soup. *Urid dal* (*Phaseolus radiatus*) is prohibited as it is believed to increase bleeding. Normal food is provided from the next day. Milk, poultry and mutton are given according to the means of the family. Milk is, however, rather scarce in the area. Recuperative herbal tonics (whose ingredients are kept a closely guarded secret) prescribed and supplied by the midwife are also usually taken.

The actual period of pollution lasts for 6 days among all communities except the Brahmins, for whom the period is 21 days. During this period the woman is not allowed to touch any of the household utensils nor enter the kitchen (if separately located) nor the sacred places. Even her touch is believed to pollute.

The period of pollution ceases after purificatory ceremonies are performed on the day of *Chhathi* or *Barhi* so called because it takes place on the sixth or twelfth day after confinement. On the sixth day, the floor is cleaned and all earthenwares replaced in the house. The barber is called to shave the child's head and pare the mother's nails. The child's hair is completely shaved because, having grown in the womb, it is considered to be impure. All male members in the family, and even close relatives, get their heads shaved whilst women get their nails pared. The child's hair is placed in a leaf-cup and left on a foot-path or near a bamboo clump, the idea being that the child should grow as big as the pathway or that he should live and multiply rapidly like the luxurious growth of bamboo. The barber is paid a rupee and given a seer of rice for his services. The payment may be somewhat higher in case of male children. The relatives and friends are then given a feast in which some preparation of meat is a 'must'. Non-caste members who attend the function are given a seer of uncooked rice in lieu of cooked food. The extent of inter-communal participation on such occasions is, however, insignificant. Only close and intimate friends belonging to other castes are invited.

The Kharia children are baptised in the church, usually within a month of being born. The ceremony is conducted in the church at Simdega. A formal fee of 25 Paise is paid for registration of the name. The sacrament of confirmation is given to the child as soon as he is able to think for himself, that is, at the age of about 6 to 8 years.

The Mahars name their children on the *Chhathi* day. Besides the usual name chosen by the parents, a *Rashi* name is given by the Brahmin. According to the planetary disposition at the time of birth, horoscopes are also prepared.

The naming of child takes place on the 6th day among the Bhogtas, Doms, Turis and Lohras, and on the 12th day among the Gonds and Chik Baraiks. The names of ancestors constitute a veritable pool of available choice, the appropriateness of a particular name being dependent on certain ceremonial observances. A leaf-cup containing clean, transparent water is taken and a grain of rice is dropped in it. This is supposed to represent the child. After this, a particular name is proposed to be given and grain of rice is dropped in the leaf-cup in token of it. If the two grains meet, the name is approved; otherwise the process is repeated until the desired tally is achieved.

The Gonds and Chik Baraiks observe *Barhi* on the 12th day. Feasts are offered on that day after which the veil of pollution is lifted for good.

Children are normally breast-fed for 2-3 years. Semi-solid food begins to be given as soon as the children get some teeth; even so, mother's milk is not stopped. However, if a woman conceives soon after the birth of a child, lactation is perforce stopped and the child has to manage with other kinds of food for nourishment and sustenance. By the time a child is 3 years old, he ceases to have an urge for being breast-fed. Occasionally, however, bitter pastes (e.g., ground leaves of *neem*) are applied on the breasts to compel the child to give up the habit.

Infants and toddlers are carried on back tied by means of a cloth, leaving the mother free to attend to her usual chores.

Children are considered to be heavenly blessing and the villagers do not seem to have ever heard of such a thing as contraceptives. Yet a child may sometimes be wholly undesirable. Unmarried and unfaithful women are always eager to prevent conception as it would expose them to social opprobrium. As contraceptives are unknown, the calamity can be avoided only by seeking recourse to abortion. The midwives are believed to be adept in the art of causing abortions. Heavy consumption of alcoholic beverages, physical manipulation of the abdominal cavities and certain herbal drugs are believed to be efficacious in this regard. It is not surprising that nobody openly admits the knowledge or use of these methods.

9. *Marriage*

The rites and customs relating to marriage differ with each community and are, therefore, separately described below:

Gonds

The average age of marriage among the Gonds of Meromdega is 17 for males and 14 for females. A few males are, however, got married as late as 25 years and some as early as 8 years. The corresponding limits among females are 20 years and 7 years. Child marriages are not altogether unknown as 1 male and 5 females in the

age group 0—14 were found married at the time of survey. The boy was married at 13 and the girls between 11 and 13. In the next age group (15—24), however, only 4 out of 24 girls were found unmarried. The corresponding proportion among males was 11 out of 26 who were unmarried. None of the females over 24 years remained unmarried, though 3 males out of 162 did so. As enjoined by Hinduism, it is considered desirable by Gonds to get their daughters married before the onset of puberty (that is, before they menstruate). However, there is no rigidity about this.

Marriages are performed either within the village or near about. As many as 20 out of 110 marriages were performed in the village itself and, only 14 marriages were contracted at a distance of more than 15 miles from the village. Strict clan exogamy is practised.

Among the Gonds as with other communities except the Brahmins and Kumhars, marriage negotiations begin from the bridegroom's side. The father of the groom, accompanied by some relatives, goes to the bride's father and expresses his desire about matrimonial relationship. After necessary details about the groom have been ascertained, the bride's father usually reserves his reply so as to consult his family members about the proposal. Subsequently, a message is sent to the groom's father signifying consent or refusal. In case of refusal, the groom's father sometimes makes fresh attempts to alter the decision of the bride's father. After consent is achieved, a date is fixed by mutual agreement for the marriage to take place. Not unoften the marriage may be deferred by a year or two if the parties are not in a position to bear the expenses at an earlier date. There is a nominal payment of bride price which is only Rs. 1.25. It is, however, obligatory for the groom's father to send a *sari,* bangles, combs and other toilet articles for the bride at the time of *Karma* festival, even though the marriage may have only been fixed but not yet solemnised. This practice is not found prevalent among the non-tribal communities. It may be noted also that unlike other communities, neither the parents of the groom nor of the bride examine the bride or the groom, at any stage though reliable sources are often tapped for full details in this connection.

The actual date for marriage is fixed by the Brahmin. It is usually held in the months of February and March, i.e., immediately after the harvesting season.

The bridegroom and his party go to the bride's house for marriage 10 days before the actual date, because a ceremony known as *lagan panbandi* has to be gone through. The party carries rice, one *sari* and some money which are presented to the bride. This is called *lagan.* A marriage canopy has earlier been constructed, made up of *Sal* poles and covered with *Sal* leaves. This is called *panbandi.* The groom's party hands over a goat, rice and *chura* which is placed in the basket in the *mandap.* The bride is brought here and anointed with an admixture of oil and ground turmeric which is known as *aptan.* This ceremony is known as *lagan panbandi.*

Among the Gonds, marriage may be performed either at the house of the bride (in which case it is known as *Charh vivah*) or at the house of the groom (in which case it is known as *Karah vivah*). *Karah vivah* is preferred as it is less expensive, the groom not being required to take a large party with him to any place. In this mode of marriage, the bride is brought to the house of the groom immediately after *panbandi.* She is brought on a *doli* (palanquin) which is carried by Kharias. The bride is accompanied by her relatives, males as well as females. Up to the date of marriage, both the bride and the groom are daily anointed with *aptan.* On the night preceding the marriage, men and women dance and sing, the would be couple being carried on their arms from time to time. Next morning they are bathed and given new dress to wear. The groom wears a *dhoti* and shirt while the bride wears a *sari* and blouse. The next ceremony is *Amba vivah.* A branch of mango tree which has not yet fruited is brought. The Brahmin priest wraps two pieces of thread round the branch, one representing the bride and the other the groom. A *puja* is then performed and it is believed that the mango tree from which the branch had been brought will thereafter bear abundant fruit.

The *marwa* is made of nine or some other odd number of poles. Even number of poles is held to be very inauspicious. A mud platform known as *bedi* is provided in the middle of the *marwa.* Earthen lamps with four wicks (*chaumak*) are placed on its four corners and an earthen pot known as *kalsa* is kept in the centre. The *kalsa* is set up on paddy grains. It is covered with a leaf cup on which another earthen lamp is placed. The bride and the groom are then brought to the *mandap* where they take their seats. The bride sits on the right side of the groom. The groom sits on a *pirha* and the bride on a *silaut* (a flat stone generally used for grinding condiments). The Brahmin then performs worship of ancestors. The marriage is

solemnised either by the application of *sindur* (vermilion) or *kajal* (black soot) or even *dhuli* (dust). Some clans use *kajal* and other *sindur* or *dhuli*. In Meromdega, however, there is a special custom regulating the use of these items. According to the usual practice among the Gonds, the eldest brother in the family is the chief person who generally performs all *pujas*. Since God is worshipped by *sindur* it is considered that *sindur* should not be used by men and women. So the eldest brother in the family is not allowed (while getting married) to use *sindur* nor can his wife ever use *sindur*. However, other brothers in the family are not similarly precluded. The final act of wedding consists of application of vermilion or its substitutes. This is done behind a curtain as unmarried persons are not supposed to see it. A ceremony known as *gat-bandhan* then takes place. The ends of groom's *dhoti* and bride's *sari* are tied into a knot and the couple then go round the *bedi*. The bride's brother gives *lava* (parched rice) to the groom as the latter is doing the rounds. The former gets a *dhoti* from the groom for this rite. It is known as *sara dhoti* (brother-in-law *dhoti*). The next day *chumaun* ceremony takes place. The bride and the groom are brought to the *mandap* and made to sit on a mat. Elderly persons and relatives bless them by throwing some *arwa* rice and making some gifts which consist usually of small amounts of money. The Brahmin priest is given Rs. 1.25 and a *dhoti* for all his labours. The relatives of the bride return home on the day after marriage. On the eighth day after marriage, the bride and the groom come to the former's house. They take gifts of rice and cakes made of rice flour. They stay there for nine days and thereafter return together, this marking the end of all matrimonial ceremonies.

Marriage between persons related by blood is not prohibited. Preferential type of mating is cross-cousin union. Thus, 10 marriages have taken place with daughter of father's sister or mother's brother. Exchange of brides between families is also common. Marrying the widow of elder brother and younger sister of wife is permissible. Widow re-marriage is prevalent, though the form of marriage is by *sagai* in which a Brahmin is not required to officiate. Re-married widows, however, have lower social status.

Inter-caste marriages are prohibited. In one case a Gond girl fell in love with a married Mahar boy. She was outcasted by the Gonds but accepted by the Mahars. The children are now treated as Mahars by caste, who are deemed to be lower in the social ladder. Monogamy is the rule generally but there is no restriction on taking more than one wife. Barrenness of the first wife is a good ground for taking another wife.

Divorce is permissible. Only one case was reported in the village in which a woman was divorced because of her being barren. Infidelity and slothfulness are other grounds for divorce. In case if a woman asks for a divorce because she has taken a new lover, the caste *panchayat* (which is called upon to adjudicate) may direct that the expenses incurred in the marriage by the husband should be returned to him. This is usually done by the wife's new lover.

Kharia

Of the several communities in Meromdega, the Kharia girls have the highest average age at marriage (19 years). The corresponding age for Kharia boys is 20, which is the same as for Mahars and Lohras. Though the earliest ages of marriages recorded in the village are 12 and 10 years for males and females respectively, only 1 male below 15 years of age was found married at the time of survey in the entire Kharia community in that age group. On the other hand, the maximum age of marriage recorded in the village is 30 years for males and 25 years for females.

The field for choosing partners is not very wide. About one-seventh of the marriages were contracted within the village itself, and just over a quarter at places more than 15 miles distant. Few of the places, however, are more than 25 miles away.

The Kharia marriages usually take place well after the puberty. The negotiations are entered into by the groom's father who sends a mediator (*agua*) to the bride's father. If the preliminary negotiations prove fruitful, the groom's father pays a visit and settles the bride-price (*dali*). There is little scope for bargaining over this matter. Though formerly 12 bullocks and a new *sari* normally constituted the *dali*, only 2 bullocks and a new *sari* suffice for the purpose now-a-days. This change is obviously indicative of the lowering of the general economic condition of the people and, more particularly, of the reduction in their cattle wealth. The agreement between the fathers is, however, subject to formal ratification by the parties themselves. In practice the boy and the girl are seldom complete strangers to one another, and their prior consent is obtained informally before the formalities are begun.

After this, the groom goes to the bride's house along with his father, the *agua* and some relatives. The prospective bride comes with a *lota* (pot) of water. The boy takes the pot from her and offers it back to her. The girl takes it and offers it again to him. This is repeated thrice. The repeated exchanges of a pot of water signify the tacit approval of the boy and the girl to the proposed marriage. The ceremony is known as *lota-pani*. The groom and his party are then given a feast. While leaving, the groom's party leaves behind a stick with the bride's father. This is the token of an invitation extended to them (bride's party) to make a return visit.

A visit is accordingly performed after sometime by the bride's party who are given a feast at which pork or mutton is an essential constituent. There is singing, dancing and taking of rice-beer, but this is confined to the Roman Catholics. The next morning the bride's father selects two bullocks and takes them with him as payment of the bride price.

Among the Christians, Church ceremonies vary among the Lutherans and the Catholics. The Lutherans first fix a date for *Bachandat,* on which day the couple visit the local chapel and aver the intention of getting married before the local Padre. The actual marriage is performed 3 weeks later. The intervening period is allowed to them for further contemplation about their mutual suitability. They are free to revise their views during this period if they so desire. The marriage is finally solemnised in the church, and symbolised by the presentation of a ring made of any metal to the bride. The groom and the bride pay Rs. 3 and Rs. 1.50 respectively as registration charges.

Among the Catholics, the couple have to attend the chapel continuously for a fortnight during which period the solemnity, sanctity and indissolubility of marriage are impressed upon them. This is done to prepare them properly for a smooth conjugal life. The marriage ceremony takes place thereafter in the church, matrimony being regarded as one of the seven sacraments. The fee payable for registratioin is the same as for the Lutherans, though there is less rigidity about it.

The religious part of the marriage ceremony does not, however, supplant the customary part. The bride and the groom return to their respective houses after the marriage. Then the groom and his relatives go in a procession to the bride's house with a view to fetch her from there formally. The occasion is a joyous one and the party abounds in mirth and merry-making as it proceeds on its journey. The night is spent in the bride's village. No special conveyance is provided for the groom.

The next day, there is a ceremony known as *Gor-dhoai* (washing of feet). The mothers of the bride and the groom ceremonially wash each other's feet. *Chura* (pressed rice) is offered to the guests. Then dancing ensues. The groom is held on the shoulders of one of his party and the bride is similarly carried by one of her friends during the dance. Next, *chumaun* takes place. The couple are seated under a canopy (*marwa*) and blessed by elderly persons. Members of the groom's party offer gifts to the bride. The groom's party returns home after a feast, bringing the bride along with it. Another *chumaun* ceremony takes place at the house of the groom.

Intra-sept marriages are forbidden but there is no bar to cross-cousin marriages, which are in fact much in vogue. Widow re-marriage is also permissible.

Mahars

There is no rigidity among the Mahars about girls being married immediately after puberty. The average age at marriage is 20 for boys and 17 for girls. Extreme ages of marriage are, however, 25 and 14 years for males and 23 and 9 years for females.

Before actual negotiations begin, the *rashis* (signs of zodiac in which born) of the boy and the girl are compared by the Brahmin. Unless these are mutually favourable, no marriage can take place. Subject to this preliminary though paramount consideration being fulfilled, formal proposals are made by the father of the boy to that of the girl. A final reply is given by the girl's side at a later date after the relatives and friends have been consulted about the desirability of the proposed match. As among the Gonds, neither party sees the boy or the girl with a view to determining their suitability much less is it permissible for the would be bride and the groom to meet. Even so it is seldom that the boy and the girl are complete strangers to one another. Although marriage is prohibited among persons belonging to the same sept and also if they are related up to three generations on either parents' side, village exogamy does not exist. In fact, more than one-third of the Mahar marriages have taken place in the same village, and only one-fourth at a distance exceeding 15 miles from the village.

The marriage is settled after an accord is reached between the two parties. This is confirmed by *mangni* or betrothal ceremony. The actual wedding is often deferred by a year or two depending upon mutual agreement. Non-availability of funds or young age of the proposed match is often a consideration for postponement of the actual wedding which, however, is not always the case. As among the Gonds, the groom's father has to send presents to the girl on the occasion of every *Karma* festival during the period intervening between betrothal and marriage.

In the year of marriage, visits are exchanged by both parties in the month of *Paus* (December|January), and the formality of fixation of bride price concluded. The bride price is generally a sum of Rs. 7.25 in cash along with 2 maunds of rice in kind. The date of marriage is then fixed on an auspicious day determined by a Brahmin priest after consulting the almanac.

Although marriage at the groom's place is permissible, it is considered more dignified to have the ceremony performed at the bride's house.

A *marwa* or marriage shed is constructed in the house of both the bride and the groom two or three days before the date of marriage. *Aptan* is applied to the would be couple in their respective homes. On the day preceding the marriage, a ceremony known as *ghee-dhari* or pouring of *ghee* is performed at both places. The bride or the groom, as the case may be, takes a *thali* (plate) of *arwa* (unboiled) rice coloured with turmeric and goes round with it to the villagers who are to be invited to the marriage. The parents then make offerings to ancestral spirits at the *marwa* which is decorated with 5 *kalsas* (pots). A goat is also sacrificed on this occasion.

The groom's party proceeds to the bride's house on the day of marriage. The presents carried on this occasion include 2 *saris* for the bride, 2 *saris* for her mother, and two baskets (each containing 50) of cakes made of rice flour.

The wedding ceremony, presided over by a Brahmin priest, is solemnised by the application of *sindur* (vermilion) by the boy on the girl's head and forehead. The ceremonies of knotting up of clothes of the couple and sprinkling of *lawa* are then gone through as in the case of Gonds. The finale is with the ceremony of *chumaun* which has been described earlier.

The bride goes to the groom's house on the next day. She returns to her own house with her husband after 9 days with fresh presents of rice-cakes.

Marriage by intrusion is prevalent among Mahars though no such case was reported in the village. If the boy and the girl make up their minds to marry but their parents do not approve of the match, the girl simply goes to live with the boy and is usually accepted. A ceremonial marriage follows.

Love before marriage was reported to be a rare phenomenon. The fixation of early marriages explains it to a great extent.

Widows are eligible to re-marry in the *sagai* form which is devoid of usual ceremonies and requires no Brahmin priest. Both levirate and sororate are permissible. Divorce is possible at the instance of either party.

Bhogtas

The average age of marriage is 17 for boys and 14 for girls. An *agua* is sent by the groom's side. The *agua's* journey is postponed if he meets with ill-omens on the way in the form of a jackal, a tiger or a snake crossing the path. On reaching the girl's village, the *agua* sends a stick to her house and stays himself with some other villager. This is a symbolic method of making his arrival and purpose of visit known. The preliminaries are settled on the next day. Thereafter, the parents of both parties exchange visits in order to examine the boy and the girl, and finalise the details.

Marriage ceremonies are generally performed at the *groom's* house. Before this, groom with a party goes to fetch the bride. The bride price, usually consisting of Rs. 5 in cash and $3\frac{1}{2}$ maunds of paddy, is paid before the bride is brought. She is taken on a *doli* (palanquin). On reaching the groom's house, friends and relatives welcome the bride and the groom. Thereafter, they are suitably feasted and entertained.

A *marwa* is constructed at the groom's place on the following day. Before this is done, a ceremony called *matkorwa* (literally, digging of earth) is performed. The *Pahan* goes to a *tanr* (upland) and digs some earth after praying to the village deity and spirits for the well-being of the bride. The earth thus dug is carried home and placed on the *marwa* by the groom's mother. The next day, *pankatan* (cutting of water) ceremony is gone through. A group of men and women proceed to a *danri* singing and dancing in the manner prescribed for the occasion. A pot with wide mouth is filled with water. The groom's brother ceremonially cuts the water in

it five times with a sword. The pot is then covered with a *sari* belonging to the bride, carried to the house and kept at a safe place. This specially treated water is used subsequently for bathing the couple before the marriage ceremony.

Marriage takes place in the *marwa*. The bride and the groom sit on a *silaut* (flat stone used for grinding spices) and *pirha* (wooden plank used for squatting) respectively. The barber makes a small gash in the little finger of left hand of both the couple. A few drops of blood of each are collected and mixed with *sindur*. This *sindur* is applied behind a curtain on the bride's head by the groom as the finale of the ceremony. The barber is paid Rs. 4 in cash and a *dhoti* for his services. Later, *chumaun* takes place.

Next morning the couple take a bath in the stream. Whilst returning the groom shoots an arrow at a deer made of grass. This is said to be a symbolic relic of the bygone days when every Bhogta used to be a good hunter.

The Bhogtas have exogamous septs. Monogamy is the rule but polygamy is not barred. Divorce is permissible. Love marriages are not unknown. Thus a Bhogta in the village brought a married woman of his own caste to whom he had taken a fancy. He was allowed to live in peace with her after the castemen had been given an exonerating feast.

10. *Death*

The spirits of the deceased are believed to influence people. Therefore, ancestral spirits are propitiated at the time of festivals. The spirits of persons who have met with unnatural deaths are, however, supposed to be malevolent and are accordingly warded off. Those dying from accidents or infectious diseases are not buried in the proper community graveyards, but away from them. Persons dying from snake-bite (*sanp mua*) or fall from a tree (*gach mua*) and women dying at childbirth (before the purificatory ceremony of *chhathi*) do not find repose in the graveyard. The period of pollution in case of such deaths is shortened to three days.

The practices relating to disposal of the death among different communities are briefly described below:

Gond

The dead are almost invariably buried. There is no bar to cremation, but it can be practised only by the comparatively well-to-do as some expenditure is involved in paying for the fuel and *ghee* that is required. Moreover, if a person is cremated, it is obligatory on the part of his heirs to carry some bones of the deceased for consignment in the Ganges at Varanasi, Allahabad or Haridwar. *Shradh* has also to be performed at Gaya in such cases. By burying the dead, all these botherations are avoided. No recent case of cremation was naturally reported in the village. These post-cremation rituals are not supposed to be recent development. It was said that they were part of their traditional custom. After death, the deceased is wrapped in a piece of new cloth and carried to the graveyard on a cot. Fire is nominally applied to the mouth of the deceased before burial. This is done first by the eldest son and then by other relatives. A branch of *bel* tree is tied with cloth at one end which is dipped in *ghee* and then ignited. The flame thus produced is applied to the deceased. The ceremony is known as *Muatagani* (flame for the deceased). The body is then laid to rest with its head to the north. The members of the funeral party (which consists of men only) return to their homes after bathing. The house of the deceased is cleaned and all earthenwares replaced. No food is cooked in the house for three days, members of the family being supplied with food by their relatives. On the third day, a barber is called to shave the heads of males and pare the nails of females. The washerman is called to wash the clothes. For persons who can afford, the day is rounded off with a small feast given to relatives.

A purificatory ceremony, known as *Dashkarma,* is performed on the tenth day. A Brahmin is called to officiate on this occasion. ***Pinds*** (oblations) are offered to the spirit of the deceased at home as also on the bank of a stream. The *pinds* are made of rice-flour paste and fashioned to a shape resembling the human form. This image is cut into seven pieces with the help of *Kush* (a kind of grass). After this, the persons who had applied fire to the mouth of the deceased are called. They collect the pieces of *pind* in a small basket and cry, "O dead, let us now start for the pilgrimage to Banaras". The basket is then thrown in the stream. The *Dashkarma* ceremony is concluded by offering *dan* (gifts) to the Brahmin. A she-calf, rice, pulses, cloth and money are given according to means of the family. The Brahmin is fed with *Chura* (pressed rice) or *puri* (bread cooked in *ghee*), items of food which are not supposed to be polluted by the touch of low caste people.

The castemen and relatives are then given a feast consisting of rice, pulses and mutton topped with rice beer.

The same day a ceremony known as *Chharh Bhitarana* is performed. It is a ceremony for enabling the spirit of the deceased to join those of the ancestors. Some family members and other relatives take an earthen pot containing rice, pulses and vegetables and go to the graveyard, following the same course by which the deceased had been carried. The pot is kept at the grave and the spirit of the deceased is exhorted to return to its home. Meanwhile, the room in which the person had died is sprinkled with rice flour. On return from the river, the party inspects the room of the deceased to find out if any marks have been made on the floor. If footprints or other signs of a human being or any animal are found, it is believed that the deceased had taken re-birth. In absence of any such sign, the performance is repeated until such signs are found.

Another ceremony known as *Marimasan* takes place on the next day. The grave of the deceased is visited by family members and food (rice and pulse) is scattered as offering to the deceased ancestors.

Chharh Bhitarana and *Marimasan* take place only for married persons. In the case of unmarried persons (as also for those who die unnatural deaths), the purificatory ceremony concludes on the third day. A woman dying at childbirth is buried away from the graveyard. Thorns are pricked in her feet before she is laid to rest so that she may not be able to find her way back to her home or the village. The spirit of such a woman is believed to turn into a *churail.*

Kharia

It has been noted earlier that the Kharias of the village are practically all Christians. They bury their dead. The body is wrapped in a piece of new cloth and taken to the graveyard after it has received blessings at the Church. The body is buried with its head towards the west. Members of the funeral party bathe thereafter. This is the only action taken to remove the pollution supposed to be caused by death. Prayers for redemption of the soul of the deceased are offered in the churches.

Mahar

The dead are carried to the graveyard for burial on biers made of bamboo. Those of the Kabirpanthi sect get the heads of deceased males shaved before burial. The hair of a deceased female is, however, oiled and combed and, should she die in a married state, vermilion is applied on the parting of her hair on the head. The dead persons are buried with their head to the west, like the Kharias. However, non-Kabirpanthi Mahars bury their dead with the head towards north like other communities. The dead are buried with all their earthly belongings. In either case, the members of the funeral party bathe before returning home. The purificatory ceremonies are held on the tenth day.

Among Kabirpanthis, all the male members of the family and the clan get their head shaved. They accompany the Mahanth to the graveyard where the latter preaches some religious tenets. Two coconuts are offered at the grave and an earthen lamp is lit. This ceremony is believed to enable the spirit of the deceased to join his ancestors.

The *Daskarma* and *Chharh Bhitarana* ceremonies are performed only by those who do not belong to the Kabirpanthi sect. A Brahmin is called to officiate at *Daskarma* and the ceremonies performed are similar to those prevalent among the Gonds. The purificatory rites are, however, held on the third day for persons dying of unnatural death which includes death from smallpox, cholera and leprosy. *Pinds* are not offered to the spirits of persons dying in this manner.

Brahmins and barbers are not called by the other communities in the village.

CHAPTER III

THE VILLAGE ECONOMY

Economic Resources

1. *Land*

The revenue *mauza* Meromdega, bearing thana no. 125 of Thethaitangar revenue thana, covers a wide area of about 8 square miles within its boundaries. It has been observed that hills and forests occur within the confines of the village; so the actual cropped area is only about 30 per cent of the total area. Statistics regarding detailed classification of the entire area are maintained by the revenue authorities. According to these, the distribution of the entire village area into different kinds of land in 1961-62 was as follows:

Description	*Area (in acres)*
Total area of land ..	4,916.96
(*i*) Forests ..	290.12
(*ii*) Uncultivable waste ..	310.85
(*iii*) Homestead, etc. ..	69.98
(*iv*) Cultivable waste ..	620.30
(*v*) Pastures ..	112.00
(*vi*) Orchards ..	2.80
(*vii*) Old fallows (2–5 years)	1,088.90
(*viii*) Current fallows ..	983.41
(*ix*) Cultivated lands ..	1,438.58

The above estimates, however, appear to be on the liberal side so far as the effective cropped area is concerned. Thus, the cultivated area of land together with current and old fallows comprise 3,510 acres or more than two-thirds of the total area. Yet the forest authorities have indicated that 810 acres of the village area have been notified as constituting reserve forests. Moreover, the revenue records (*Khatian*) prepared at the last Survey and Settlement in 1931 show that about 2,600 acres of land were settled with tenants. During the present investigation in 1962, the extent of land reported to be owned by villagers sums up to about 1,600 acres only, which tallies to a large measure with the actual area cropped.

Notwithstanding differences of area under each category, it is evident that the economic importance attaches to land cultivated and (for the particular year) 1,438.58 acres may be taken to be a very fair estimate, based as it is on a plot to plot verification.

2. *Livestock*

The villagers rear livestock both for food and use in agriculture. These are sacrificed on festive occasions. Milch cattle are found among all sections but they are seldom milked. They are reared mainly for breeding purposes. Draught cattle are also common to all communities except the Malars and Christian Chik Baraiks. Goats are also found in each community except the Brahmins, Malars and Christian Baraiks. Pigs are owned only by the Kharias, Lohras and Naiks. Except the Brahmins, all other communities in the village keep poultry.

The following table shows the distribution of livestock and poultry in the village by each community:

TABLE 7

Distribution of livestock and poultry in Meromdega by each community

Caste/Tribe	Total no. of household	Milch cattle		Draught cattle		Goats and sheep		Pigs		Fowls	
		No. of household owning	Total no.	No. of household owning	Total no.	No. of household owning	Total no.	No. of household owning	Total no.	No. of household owning	Total no.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Kharia	117	107	526	103	483	67	66	46	134	114	880
Mahar	55	48	213	45	193	32	41	..	..	53	395
Gond	54	45	203	46	183	33	52	..	..	51	377
Bhogta	43	38	170	35	112	21	39	..	..	39	291
Chik Baraik ..	19	16	77	13	52	7	27	..	..	17	107
Turi	15	11	32	10	29	6	10	..	..	13	115
Lohra	14	12	29	10	31	5	12	9	29	12	98
Naik	13	8	18	9	22	7	2	5	21	9	56
Munda	2	1	6	1	3	1	5	..	..	1	10
Kumhar	3	1	4	2	4	1	4	..	..	2	12
Brahmin	11	1	3	1	1	..	..	..	..	..	..
Malar	1	1	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	10
Total	**337**	**289**	**1,282**	**275**	**1,113**	**180**	**258**	**60**	**184**	**312**	**2,351**

3. *Other resources*

The village has its usual share of professional classes who primarily depend upon their traditional occupation for earning their livelihood. Weaving, blacksmithy and manufacture of bamboo and brassware are the main occupations found in the village, though these are not always the sole occupations of persons engaged in them. Working as agricultural labourers, or as casual labourers for daily wages at Simdega, provides limited but welcome opportunities for employment which are eagerly availed of.

4. *Livelihood classes*

54 per cent of households in the village are entirely dependent upon agriculture and 33 per cent are engaged in cultivation as well as some business or industry. Thus 87 per cent or the main bulk of households in Meromdega are primarily dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. Of the remaining households, 8 per cent are primarily dependent on wages and 5 per cent on industry only. The table below gives detailed information on the subject:

TABLE 8
Occupational distribution of households in Meromdega by each community

Caste/Tribe	Total households	Number of households engaged in—						
		Cultivation	Industry	Cultivation, industry and business	Cultivation and industry	Cultivation and business	Industry and business	Wage earning
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Kharia	117	109	..	..	..	..	..	8
2. Mahar	55	6	6	..	39	..	..	4
3. Gond	54	47	..	..	..	1	..	6
4. Bhogta	43	8	..	..	31	..	..	4
5. Chik Baraik	19	7	..	..	8	1	..	3
6. Turi	15	..	1	5	8	..	1	..
7. Lohra	14	1	4	..	9	..	..	..
8. Naik	13	..	4	..	8	..	..	1
9. Munda	2	2	..	..	..	..	..	..
10. Kumhar	2	..	..	..	2	..	..	..
11. Brahmin	2	1	..	..	..	..	..	1
12. Malar	1	..	1	..	..	..	..	..
Total	**337**	**181**	**16**	**5**	**105**	**2**	**1**	**27**

It is seen that both Kharias and Gonds are primarily cultivators; those among them who are without land work as labourers. Similarly the Mahars are weavers, and the Bhogtas grain parchers. But these activities do not obviously provide adequate sustenance. Thus, a great majority of such households combine their industry with cultivation. Those who have no land either confine themselves only to their industry or take recourse to working as labourers. To a greater or smaller degree, these observations also apply to the Lohras, Chik Baraiks, Turis and Doms in the village. It is seen from Table 8 that just about one-third of the households in the village (numbering 113) have more than one occupation. In such cases there is no clear cut line of demarcation between the primary and secondary occupations, and there is apparently no inherent conflict in their simultaneous pursuit of more than one occupation. However, according to the Census figures for 1961 (which recorded the primary activity of individuals) against 46.21 per cent of the total population engaged in cultivation, 8.73 per cent were engaged in household industry and 1.48 per cent in agricultural labour.

A decade earlier, according to 1951 Census, 97.60 per cent of the population of the village was dependent on cultivation of land wholly or mainly owned. Only 1.35 per cent was dependent upon production other than cultivation. It is at once apparent that the proportion of persons engaged in or dependent upon industry is considerably higher according to 1961 Census. This does not, however, indicate any shift in the

occupational pattern in the village as persons returned as workers in household industry in 1961 have been continuing their traditional occupations since long past. However, such occupations often go hand in hand with cultivation as well.

It is pertinent to observe here that the total labour force (i.e., persons in the age group 15–59) in the village is 922 comprising of 473 males and 449 females. However, the actual working population of 1,175 (580 males and 595 females) is rather higher. This is largely due to effective participation in work by boys and girls below 15 years of age of whom 185 are workers. Moreover, 68 persons aged 60 or more were also returned as workers. The statistics indicate that non-adult participation in work is higher among females.

5. *Ownership of land*

It will be useful to investigate how the ownership of agricultural land is distributed among the different communities in Meromdega. The following table gives the relevant information:

TABLE 9

Distribution of agricultural land in Meromdega by each community

Caste/Tribe	Total Households	Area (in acres) of land owned	Percentage of households to total households	Percentage of land owned by the community to total land
1	2	3	4	5
1. Kharia ..	117	719.16	34.72	44.70
2. Mahar ..	55	267.62	16.32	16.64
3. Gond ..	54	301.38	16.03	18.73
4. Bhogta ..	43	170.36	12.76	10.59
5. Chik Baraik	19	43.74	5.64	2.72
6. Turi ..	15	24.50	4.45	1.52
7. Lohra ..	14	35.67	4.15	2.22
8. Naik ..	13	22.60	3.86	1.40
9. Munda ..	2	11.00	0.59	0.68
10. Kumhar ..	2	10.78	0.59	0.68
11. Brahmin ..	2	2.00	0.59	0.12
12. Malar ..	1	..	0.30	..
Total ..	337	1,608 81	100.00	100.00

It is seen that the Kharias, who comprise the largest single community in the village, own the largest extent of land much in excess of their fair share on the proportion of households. The proportions of land owned by the Mahars, Gonds and Bhogtas, as also the Mundas and Kumhars among the less numerous communities, are more or less in keeping with their overall proportions to the village population. The other communities have evidently less than their fair shares.

A better idea of the economic structure of each community can be had by considering the distribution of households by the extent of land owned, as in the table below:

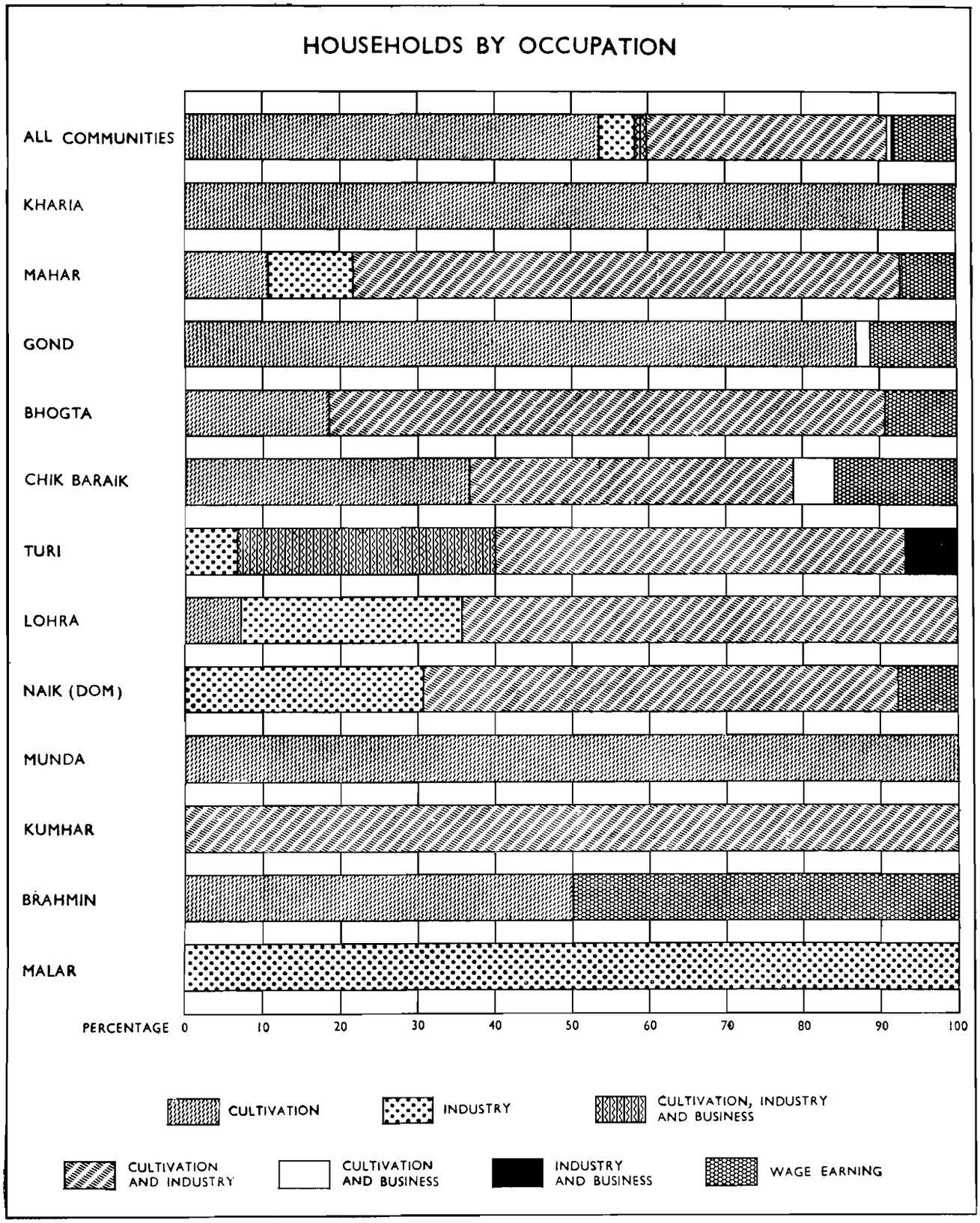
TABLE 10

Distribution of households in each community by the extent of land owned

Caste/Tribe	Number of households having—					
	No land	Below 1 acre	1—2·4 acres	2.5—4.9 acres	5—10 acres	10 acres and above
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Kharia ..	1	3	22	30	38	23
2. Mahar ..	8	2	13	9	16	7
3. Gond ..	3	3	6	12	23	7
4. Bhogta ..	1	4	12	15	9	2
5. Chik Baraik ..	1	2	7	8	1	..
6. Turi ..	1	..	12	1	1	..
7. Lohra ..	4	..	3	5	2	..
8. Naik ..	4	3	1	4	1	..
9. Munda ..	..	..	..	..	2	..
10. Kumhar ..	..	..	..	..	2	..
11. Brahmin ..	1	..	1	..	..	..
12. Malar ..	1	..	..	..	..	..
Total ..	**25**	**17**	**77**	**84**	**95**	**39**

As many as 42 households (or one out of every eight in the village) have little or no land. The proportion of landless among the Lohras and Doms is higher than other communities. The bulk of the Turis own less than $2\frac{1}{2}$ acres of land per household. On the other hand, the bulk of households owning 10 acres or more is comprised of Kharias.

Extension of area under cultivation has not kept pace with the rapid growth of population. This is evident from the fact that the present heads of 99 households reported having suffered loss of land after the death of the former heads. On the other hand, only six households reported having gained land under similar circumstances. While partition of family property accounted for



(*Facing page* 26)

the loss, gain in area has resulted from the reclamation of waste land. About 36 acres of land appear to have been thus reclaimed in the recent past.

6. *Factors influencing the economic life in the village*

Agriculture is the mainstay of an overwhelming section of people in Meromdega. We have seen that nearly seven out of every eight households in the village depend upon agriculture for their main economic activity. A significant feature of the agricultural structure here, as elsewhere in this region, is the comparatively low proportion of landless classes. Among the four major communities—Kharia, Mahar, Gond and Bhogta—comprising a total of 269 households, there are only 13 households, or less than 5 per cent, without any land whatsoever. The other communities, much smaller in number, actually represent certain functional and craftsmen classes. But it is noteworthy that even among them, quite a few depend upon agriculture as their principal or secondary source of subsistence. It is natural, therefore, that we should first take into account the various factors operating in this field as also the recent trends and developments in it.

The most important change that has taken place in recent times in the agrarian system of the State is the abolition of all intermediary rights in land, popularly known as *zamindari* abolition. This has, for the first time, brought the tenants into direct contact with the State. But its impact, so far as Meromdega is concerned, has not been very great.

Meromdega village constituted a part of the estate of the Maharaja of Chotanagpur. At the time of the last Survey and Settlement Operations (1932) the village was held by the Manager, Encumbered Estates, on behalf of the Tikait (Sri Niwas Hukum Chand Singh) as a *jagir* for the Maharaja of Chotanagpur. However, even when the *zamindari* was in existence, rent collection was carried out by local officials residing in the village itself. The villagers aver that the abolition of *zamindari* has been beneficial to them to the extent that they are no longer subjected to the kind of harassment which was not unusual in the days of *zamindari*. The homestead lands of the villagers continue to be held free of rent as in the past.

The cultivable lands in the village have, according to the usual classification in the district, been classified into two categories, viz., (*i*) low lands (*don*) and (*ii*) top lands (*tanr*), each category being further classified into three classes each and indicating the relative productivity of the land. According to the revenue records, the 2,681 acres of land settled with the tenants were classified as follows:

Don	Acres	*Tanr*	Acres
1. *Don* class I ..	405.69	*Tanr* class I ..	39.46
2. *Don* class II ..	346.75	*Tanr* class II ..	610.07
3. *Don* class III ..	307.27	*Tanr* class III	972.20
Total *Don* ..	1,059.71	Total *Tanr* ..	1,621.73

Land improvement measures are directed towards (*a*) reclamation of land hitherto uncultivated and (*b*) improvement of inferior categories of land to a superior category.

So far as the question of bringing waste land under the plough is concerned, it has been seen that about 620 acres of land classified as 'cultivable waste' are suitable for this purpose.

Not much success has apparently been achieved in this direction. Only about 36 acres of such land have so far been reclaimed in the village.

In regard to land improvement, *tanr* land can be converted into *don* land by lowering the level, i.e., by excavating earth from them. It is seen that about 60 per cent of the land settled with the villagers consists of *tanr*. There is thus considerable scope for improving the quality of such land subject to overriding physiographical factors. But in this direction also no significant progress seems to have been made. Apparently there is lack of either adequate incentive or necessary enterprise among the villagers.

The revenue records show that 30 years ago there was no source of irrigation in the village. The position in this regard has no doubt improved greatly. In addition to a number of irrigation wells and tanks, an embankment has been constructed near the main village. It provides irrigation to about 25 acres of land.

While the traditional household industries of the various communities continue to exist, hardly any step has been taken to foster these industries or to introduce new ones. A Co-operative Society has been established for the weavers but its impact is yet to be felt either by way of provision of financial loans or by channelising the sale of goods through efficient marketing.

It was only a decade ago that the road from Simdega to Rourkela was metalled. Communications to the village were considerably improved

after the formation of the Thethaitangar Multi-purpose Tribal Block in 1956. The roads leading to the village have already been described. They are very useful for the cyclist and make it possible for trucks to go up to the village. However, there is little of surplus produce in the village and improvement of communications has had no great impact on the economic life of the village. The market of Simdega continues to be as readily accessible for the bulk of the villagers (who use short-cuts and foot-paths) as it was a decade back. Marketing aids can be of help only to the weavers of the village. The Adivasi Multi-purpose Co-operative Society procures yarn in bulk quantities and supplies them to its members at reasonable price. The society has not yet, however, found it possible to advance loan to its members. Financial help will no doubt go a long way towards meeting the wants of weavers.

It has been remarked that Simdega is the only town in the subdivision but it still retains considerable rural characterists. In fact, parts of the town appear to be nothing more than over-grown villages. The villagers have, therefore, been affected more by Christian than urban influences. Yet, in point of material culture, the two are hardly distinguishable. The use of shirts and shorts is not confined to the Kharia children alone. Crudely fashioned hockey sticks provide the same absorbed interest in the game to children of all communities.

7. *Occupations*

(*i*) *Agriculture*—The following table gives the calendar of agricultural activities:

TABLE 11

Calendar of agricultural activities

Name of month		Crops			
English	Vernacular	For which ploughing takes place	Sown	Weeded	Harvested
1	2	3	4	5	6
May-June ..	.. *Jestha*	Winter paddy .	Paddy, *marua, rahar*	..	..
June-July ..	.. *Asarh* ..	*Marua, gondli*, paddy	*Gondli, marua*, paddy, *rahar, urid*, vegetables, *gora*.	..	..
July-August	.. *Srawan* ..	*Aghani* paddy ..	*Urid, kurthi, marua*, chillies.	*Makai, rahar, gora*, paddy.	..
August-September	.. *Bhado* ..	*Rahar, sarson, jetangi*	*Urid, til, kurthi* ..		*Gondli, marua*, vegetables, *gora*.
September-October	.. *Aswin* ..	*Sarson* ..	*Jetangi, sarson* ..	*Aghani* paddy	*Urid*.
October-November	.. *Kartik* ..	..	..	.	Chillies.
November-December	.. *Aghan* ..	..	..		*Aghani* paddy, *kurthi, urid*.
December-January	.. *Paus* ..	..	..	.	*Aghani* paddy, *til, urid, kurthi*.
January-February	.. *Magh* ..	Vegetables	..	..	*Sirson, jetangi*.
February-March	.. *Phalgun* ..	..	..	..	*Sarson jetangi*.
March-April	.. *Chait* ..	..	..	..	*Rahar*.
April-May ..	.. *Baisakh* ..	..	..	.	

It is seen that crops may be divided into two groups, namely those harvested in September and December, respectively known as *Bhadai* and *Aghani* crops. In the year of Survey, the following crops were grown in areas noted against each:

TABLE 12

Acreage under different crops

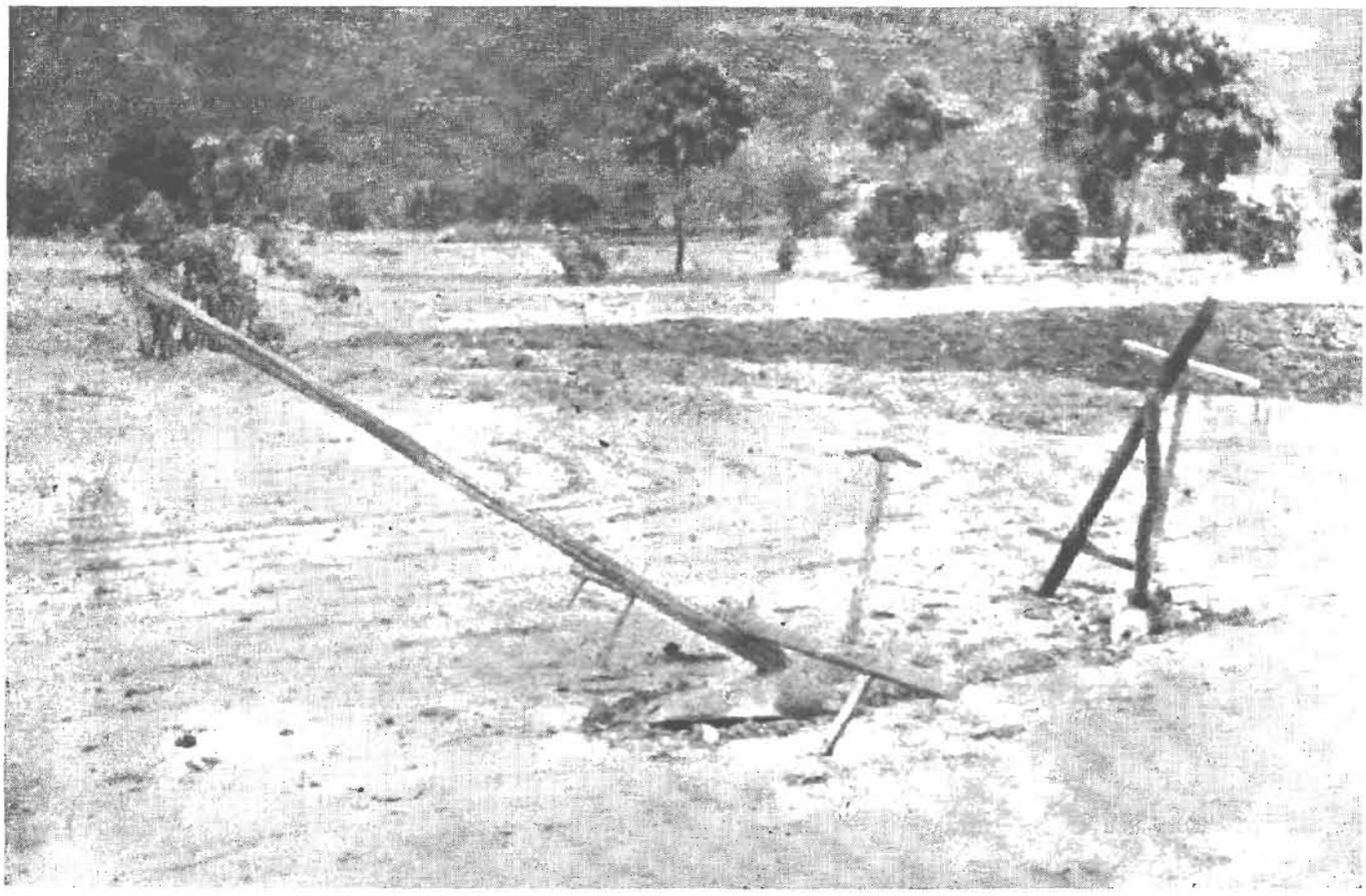
Seasonal Crops			
Name of crop	Acreage	Name of crop	Acreage
A. Bhadai		*B. Aghani*	
1. Maize ..	0.28	1. *Dhan* (Paddy) ..	480.90
2. *Gora* paddy ..	150.13	2. Other crops ..	110.36
3. *Marua* ..	24.00	3. *Kurthi* ..	138.42
4. Other crops ..	230.31	4. *Bodi* ..	2.10
5. *Urid* ..	71.08	5. *Til* ..	1.12
6. *Bodi* ..	30.00	6. Other oilseeds	130.82
7. *Sanai* ..	1.01	7. Cotton ..	2.13
8. Vegetables ..	0.27	8. Other vegetables	2.52
		9. Sweet potato ..	32.42
Total ..	**507.08**	**Total** ..	**900.79**

The quantity (in maunds) of different crops produced, consumed and available for sale (1960-61) is given below:

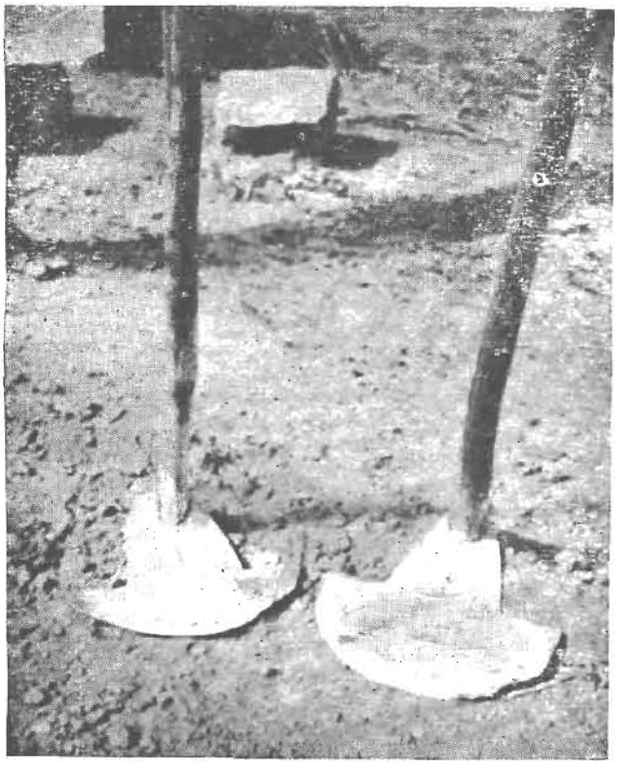
TABLE 13

Production and consumption of crops (1960-61)

Crop	Produced	Consumed	Surplus for sale
1. Paddy	11,184	10,448	736
2. Pulses	36	36	..
3. Vegetables ..	449	292	157
4. Chillies	17	17	..
5. Oilseeds ..	149	99	50
6. Fruits	155	83	72
7. *Gondli*	450	415	35
8. *Mahua* ..	159	159	..
9. *Sakarkand*	161	95	66
10. *Kurthi*	27	27	..
11. *Urid*	355	337	18
12. Cotton	4	4	..
13. *Marua*	119	119	..



36. Plough and yoke.



37. *Kori* or the spade.

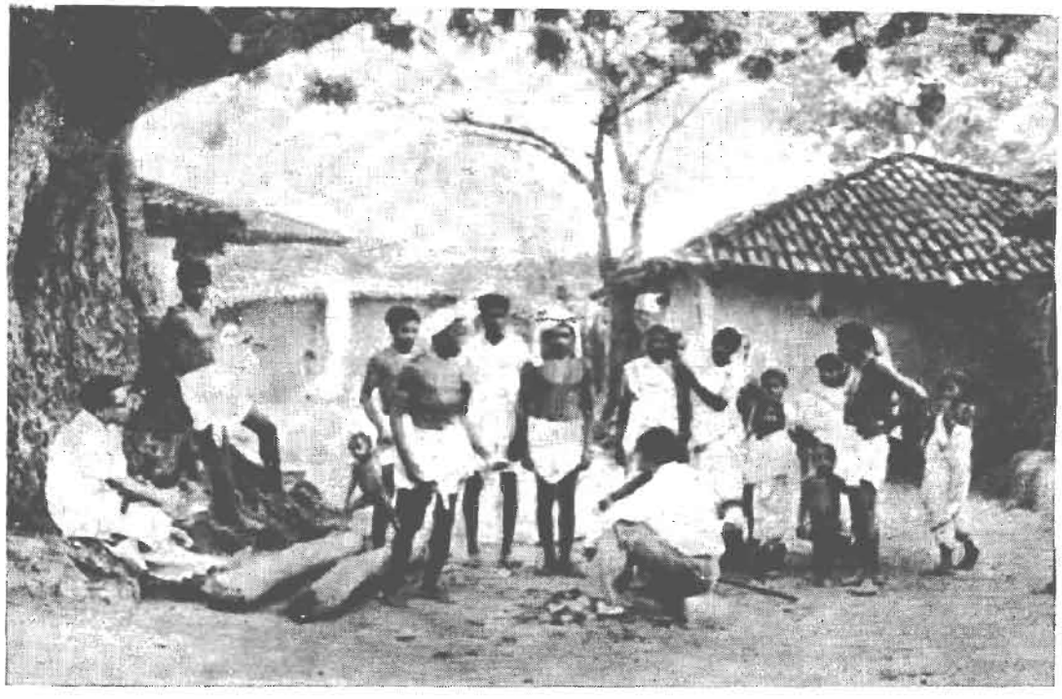


38. Lohras at work.

(*Facing page* 28)



39. A Gond woman with tattoo marks.



40. Interviewing a group of Gonds.

(*Facing page* 29)

It is seen that paddy is the chief produce, followed by millets like *gondli,* pulses, and oil-seeds. Sugarcane has been recently introduced. Paddy is grown in three ways, viz., (*i*) *Boona,* (*ii*) *Lewa* and (*iii*) *Ropa. Boona* literally means sown. According to this method the *don* land is ploughed and the seeds are broadcast. This is done before *Rohini Nakshatra* (*Rohini* asterism). Manures of cow-dung are usually applied. After the plants grow to about 10 inches in height (in the month of September) the field is ploughed and a leveller is used. This results in the paddy plants and all weeds grown being flattened in the fields. But due to the hard nature of the soil, the paddy plants are not damaged and soon come up again but the weeds and grasses are destroyed. The process serves as weeding operation. Weeding by hand (called *nikauni*) is done later. The varieties of paddy produced by the *boona* method are *Katia, Kabari, Bhilli, Kalamdani, Kaya* and *Agia.*

If the seeds are broadcast after the onset of rains, i.e., in July, the fields are already under water. This method of growing paddy is called *lewa.* Before being broadcast the paddy seeds are allowed to stand in water and sprout. The main varieties of paddy produced by this method are *Kashani, Koyo, Bhilli, Kabari, Sarguja, Jegna* and *Sathi.* The last variety owes its name to its getting mature in only sixty days.

The third process of paddy cultivation is *ropa.* In this method the field is ploughed by March or April. Seedlings are separately prepared in well-irrigated and manured plots. The seedlings are transplanted when the plants are 8 to 10 inches high. Weeding is done as usual. The varieties produced are *Kalamdani, Chativa, Nakhi, Batash Bhog, Karhani, Arunyapak, Calcuttia, Bara Sal* and *Agia Sal.*

The yield varies according to the nature of land. In years of normal rainfall the quantities obtained are 15 to 20 maunds per acre in Class I *don,* 12 to 15 maunds in Class II *don* and 8 to 12 maunds in Class III *don.* The comparative merits and demerits of different processes of cultivation of paddy are fully realised by the people as is apparent from the following saying that is prevalent in the village :

Boona ke ghar soona
Lewa ke ghar sewa
Ropa ke ghar topa.

This implies that the *boona* method is more or less a gamble, the *lewa* method requires constant care and attention while the *ropa* method is the safest.

Paddy is also grown on Class I *tanr* lands. The variety grown is known as *Gora dhan.* The seeds are broadcast in June and the crop is harvested in September. The varieties are *Soria Gora* and *Dani Gora.* The importance of this variety lies in its early harvesting.

New varieties of paddy seeds namely 36, 141, 498, 115 and CH10 have been introduced, by the Block authorities. These can appreciably increase the yield and are beginning to be used by a good number of villagers.

The *Bhadai* crops are grown on *tanr* lands. The crops grown and their average yield is given below :

Name of the crop	Average yield per acre
Gora ..	10 maunds
Marua ..	8 maunds
Gondli ..	8 maunds
Urid ..	4 maunds
Kurthi ..	4 maunds
Bodi ..	20 maunds

Agricultural implements used are :

1. *Hal* : (plough)—It is made of wood and triangular in shape. The plough share is fixed in the front.
2. *Phal* (plough share)—Made of iron, it is used to make furrows in the field. It is made by the village Lohras.
3. *Sanr*—It is a wooden log about seven feet long. It connects the *hal* with the *juath* at the time of ploughing.
4. *Juath* (yoke)—It is also made of wood and used to yoke the bullocks together at the time of ploughing the fields.
5. *Patta* (leveller)—Made of wood it is about 8 feet in length. Two iron hooks are fixed on its two ends. It is used to level up the ploughed fields prior to transplantation.
6. *Joti*—Made of rope it is used to tie the bullocks' necks with the yoke.
7. *Nangli*—It is an other string to tie the *sanr* with the yoke.
8. *Rambha*—It is an iron rod with its one end flatened and sharped and used to make holes in the ground or root out some thorny hedge from the field.

9. *Kori* (spade)—It is made of iron with a wooden handle. It is used to spade the field or also to cut the edge or to weed the fields.
10. *Khurpi* and *Nikauni*—There are small iron implements with a wooden handle to be used for weeding the fields.
11. *Hasua* (sickle)—It is also made of iron with several sharp teeth. A wooden handle is also attached to it. It is used for harvesting only.

Ploughing of the fields is exclusively confined to males in the village. Women are not permitted to use the plough. On the other hand, while there is no restriction on male participation in the work of transplantation, it is generally attended to by females only. In operations such as weeding and harvesting, both men and women participate equally.

Reciprocal aid in agricultural practices is prevalent to a large degree. Thus, out of 279 households who cultivate their lands, as many as 174 averred that they took the help of their friends and neighbours, particularly at the time of sowing and harvesting of the crops. They extend such help when required by their neighbours as well. But 105 households—mainly those with smaller agricultural holdings—depended entirely on the members of their households for all kinds of agricultural work.

The grains produced are stored in containers made of straw (*Moras*) and leaves (*potoms*).

(*ii*) *Animal husbandry and poultry rearing*—The distribution of livestock and poultry by households has been indicated in Table 7 given earlier. As many as 289 out of 337 households own milch cattle and 275 households draught cattle, 312 households keep poultry.

Animal husbandry or poultry rearing is not the main occupation of any household in the village. Cattle are reared mostly for their utility in agriculture and fowls as to provide a supplement to the diet and ready money by sale.

The animals are made to graze in the undergrowth of the forest areas and pasture lands. Little efforts have to be made to arrange for fodder : oilcakes and other nutritional items of animal food are not given. However, straw is provided to the draught cattle in the summer months. The milch cattle do not yield much milk hence normally, the calves feed on their mother's milk and no milk is extracted for use by the people. Pigs feed on all kinds of refuse.

The animal wealth of the village appeared to be on the decline. Thus the Mahar *Mukhia* of the Gram Panchayat averred that in his father's time, the family possessed 60 heads : now it owned only 6. Mangar Pahan (*Pahan* of the Gonds) claimed that against 65 animals owned by his family a generation ago, only 7 are to be found now. The difficulties of grazing the cattle were recounted as the main cause for the decline. As the forest areas were cleared, the extent of grazing facilities dwindled.

The cattle are used in agricultural operations and as food for those who eat beef. Pigs are reared for their meat only. Pigs and fowls are useful for various sacrifices. Goats milk is not extracted : the kids are eaten. Fowls and goats are occasionally sold in the markets but such sale does not contribute a regular and dependable income to any family.

A stud bull of good breed has been provided at Tukupani about 4 miles to the west of Meromdega. Villagers are free to get their cows serviced there so that the breed of the progeny may improve. It was reported, however, that hardly any villager had taken advantage of the facilities available. On the other hand, the two Yorkshire boars (at *Girja Toli* and *Bar Toli* in the village) have gone a long way in improving the breed of the pigs. Improved varieties of poulty were reported to be more susceptible to diseases and hence not welcomed by the people.

(*iii*) *Fishing*—There are altogether 5 tanks in the village; all excavated with financial aid from the State. Only one of them is, however, deep enough to retain water throughout the year. A Kharia of *Kahu Pani* owns the deep tank. He also rears the *Rehu* variety of fish in it. Besides, meeting the needs of the family, fish worth Rs. 60 were sold by him in 1962. The fish used to be carried by him personally to the market at Simdega.

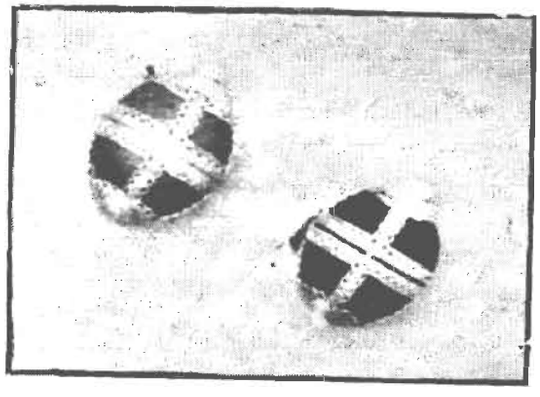
The streams yield fish in the rainy season. Villagers catch the fish for their own use. They are not available in marketable quantities.

The chief kinds of fish found are *pothia, nonia, jia* and *mongri,* all varieties of small size. Every villager is free to fish in the streams. Indigenously manufactured nets (known as *chargharia, bhanwar* and *pinali*) are used for catching fish. Fishing rods with baited hooks are usually used by youngsters.

(*iv*) *Forestry*—The earlier reference to livelihood pattern has shown that no households depend primarily on forestry though the forests



30. Mahar women—mark the designs of tattoos.



31. *Ghutra*—tobacco and lime container prepared by the Malar.

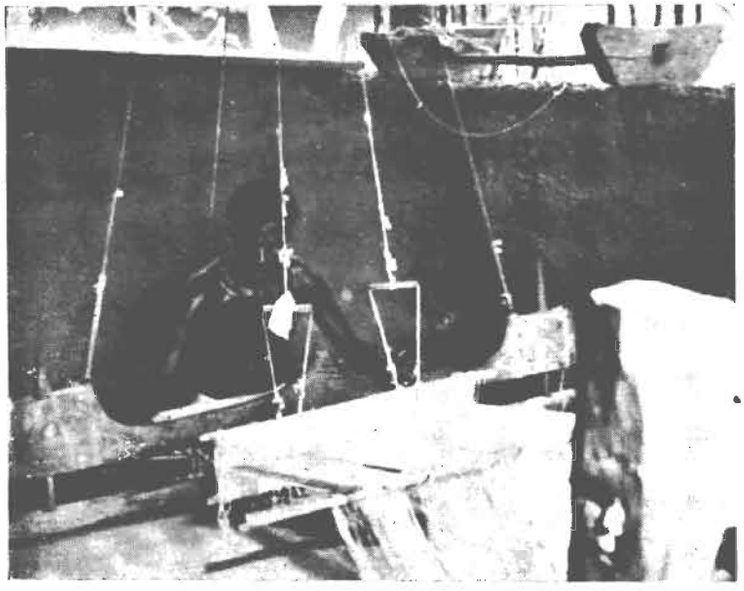


32. Indigenous oil crusher known as *Chapi*.

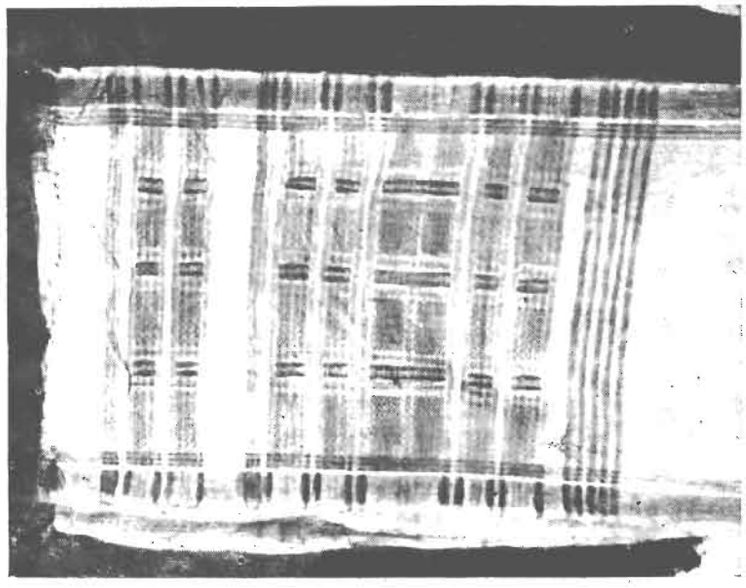
(*Facing page* 30)



33. Starched yarn spread in the sun to dry.



34. A Mahar is weaving *Chadar* on his loom.



35. The finished *Chadar* is 12-feet in length.

(Facing page **31)**

used to be the mainstay of the villagers in the past generations. The forests are still indispensible but forest conservation measures have considerably reduced the people's exploitation of the forest produce. Fruits, roots and tubers are available, as also the tender leaves of trees which are used as vegetable. The people's requirements of fuel is adequately met with. There is no restriction on the collection of dry firewood from the coupes allotted to the village. However, standing trees cannot be cut down. Though the villagers have right to obtain timber for their own constructional needs, it was said that recourse had to be made to the markets quite often. Timber is required not only for house construction but also for manufacturing various agricultural and household tools and implements.

The collection of edible forest produce and fuel is the job of the women of the village.

(v) *Village Industries*—The following table shows, communitywise, the number of households engaged in household industry as their primary or secondary work:

TABLE 14

Households engaged in household industries

Caste/Tribe	Nature of industry	Number of households primarily engaged	Number of households secondarily engaged
1. Mahar ..	Weaving ..	11	29
2. Chik Baraik	Ditto ..	Nil	10
3. Bhogta ..	Grain parching	1	30
4. Turi ..	Bamboo work	1	14
5. Naik ..	Ditto ..	7	5
6. Lohra ..	Blacksmithy	10	3
7. Malar ..	Brass work	1	Nil
8. Kumhar ..	Pottery ..	Nil	2
Total	..	**31**	**93**

It is seen that the 10 per cent of the households in the village are primarily dependent on industries and more than a third engaged in some kind of industrial activity. Weaving accounts for 50 households, grain parching for 31 and bambooware for 27 households.

The various village industries are described below:

A. Weaving—Weaving is the traditional occupation of the Mahars and Chik Baraiks, the two communities engaged in the industry. The skill has been passed on from generation to generation. In the past, the weavers were also spinners: they themselves spun yarn according to requirements. Often customers supplied the yarn spun by themselves. But now mill-made yarn is invariably used: it is finer than handspun yarn and the cloth woven out of mill-made yarn is more popular. In fact spinning of yarn is no longer in vogue in the area.

It may be noted that although 50 households are engaged in weaving, for as many as 29 it is a secondary work. Though previous statistics are not available, one is led to believe that the proportion of weaver families must have gone down though they may have increased in absolute numbers.

The articles produced by the weavers are *saris, gamchhas* (napkins), and *chaddars* (sheets and wrappers). Yarn is the only raw material required, gruel used for starching being available at home from preparations of rice.

It was reported that some thirty years ago, customers would bring their own yarn and get the necessary cloth prepared, for which payment was made in kind. Thus a maund and half of paddy was given for weaving a *sari*. Even in 1951, when yarn was available at controlled rates, the weavers had a better margin of profit than now. At present, the average daily income from weaving works out to Rs. 1.25 per day, subject to the articles finding a ready market. A *sari* ($18' \times 3'$) is sold for Rs. 6.50, *gamchha* ($7\frac{1}{2}' \times 3'$) for Rs. 3 and *chaddar* ($7\frac{1}{2}' \times 4\frac{1}{2}'$) for Rs. 4. *Saris* find readier markets and are produced in larger numbers than the others.

The loom is usually fixed in a covered part of the verandah. First the yarn is wound round the *tasara* (a circular bamboo frame). The yarn (warp) is then fixed to the *raach* and gruel is applied to it. The *raach* is fixed to the loom. The shuttle (*dongi*) is then worked to produce the cloth.

The yarn is obtained from Simdega. It is available on credit also, at higher rates.

The products have to face a strong competition from mill-made cloth which are often cheaper though perhaps not as durable. The mounting increase in the price of yarn without a corresponding raising of prices was said to be resulting in stagnation of the industry. A Multipurpose Co-operative Society has been formed for the weavers which may alleviate the situation in the future.

B. Grain parching—This is chiefly a subsidiary occupation of Bhogta females. It is their traditional occupation everywhere. Thus

village markets even in the Santal Parganas district were found being attended by Bhogta grain parchers. Peculiarly, other communities do not perform this work.

Two articles are produced from paddy, viz., *choora* and *murhi*. For preparing *choora*, paddy is first boiled, then parched and immediately dehusked with the mortar and pestle. The flattened and cooked rice is known as *choora*. It can be eaten dry, or after mixing with water, with salt or molasses. *Choora* is always prepared in the early hours of the morning (from 4 A.M. to 7 A.M.). The day is too hot for the purpose.

Murhi is prepared by parching rice. Salt is added.

The margin of profit is about 30 per cent. The articles are sold by the womenfolk in the village markets.

C. Bamboo work—Preparing articles of bamboo is the traditional work of the Doms and Turis. It is a full-time job for few only. There is some difference in the nature of goods produced by either community. The Doms specialise in small size baskets and *maunis* (receptacles for crushing oil-seeds). The Turis are adept in preparing bigger *tokaris* (baskets).

The articles are made from split bamboo pieces. The basket work is plaited, being usually checked and sometime twilled.

The raw material required consists of bamboos which are bought for Re. 1 each. *Maunis* are sold for 5 paise and baskets for 30 paise. A day's work gives a profit of Rs. 1.25 on the average.

It was stated that fifteen years ago bamboos were obtained free of cost and baskets were sold for kind. Hence better profits were obtained then. The other articles produced are winnowing fans, hand fans, umbrellas and boxes. The last two are normally prepared against specific orders.

A truck load of baskets were found being despatched from Khunti to Rourkela. It transpired from enquiry that wholesalers have started the business at Simdega. The neighbouring villagers sell their wares to the wholesalers. Though they pay less than retail market price, the goods have an assured sale.

D. Blacksmithy—10 households of Lohras are engaged in blacksmithy as their primary (as also traditional) occupation. For 3 households blacksmithy is a subsidiary occupation.

Some 15 years ago, payment for all kinds of iron articles used to be made in kind. Now every land-owning family in the village is attached to a Lohra according to the *jajmani* system. The annual payment of 30 *pailas* of paddy (approximately 19 seers) per plough ensures the maintenance and replacement of the plough shares. The other articles of iron are sold for cash.

The following table shows the price earlier receivable in kind and the present sale price of the chief articles produced:

Article	Price in kind (seers of paddy)	Price (in rupees)
1. *Phal* (plough share)	2-3	1.00
2. *Kori* (spade)	4-5	4.00
3. *Basulla* (adze)	3-4	2.00
4. *Hasua* (sickle)	1	0.31
5. *Tangi* (axe-head)	3-4	3.00
6. Knife (9″)	1	0.25

The Lohras claimed that they were better paid when they received payments in kind. The above figures, however, show that the current prices are comparatively more favourable.

Raw iron is obtained from Simdega at about 62 paise per seer. The average profit per working day ranges from Rs. 1.50 to Rs. 2.50 per day. The articles are usually made to order and the surplus sold in the village markets.

The Lohra has his workshop under a shed attached to the house. The tools and appliance used are bellows and assorted sizes of hammers and tongs. Charcoal is used as fuel.

E. Brass work—The single Malar household in the village is engaged in making articles of brass, as also fishing hooks. The brass articles are rings, *pailas, ghutras, bairas* and *ghunghrus*. *Pailas* are brass vessels used for measuring grains by volume; *ghutras* are egg shaped containers used for keeping tobacco and lime; *bairas* and *ghunghrus* are ornaments. The articles are cast from earthenware moulds. A furnace, hammers, tongs, files and moulds constitute the implements used.

The following figures indicate the average rate and cost of production:

Article	Raw material	Quantity of raw material	Cost of raw material (in rupees)	No. of articles produced per day	Total price (in rupees)	Gross profit (in rupees)
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. *Banshi* (hook) ..	Iron wire ..	3 yards ..	0.50	40	2.50	2.00
2. Ring ..	Brass ..	8 chataks ..	2.00	18	4.50	2.50
3. *Paila* ..	Brass ..	12 chataks ..	3.00	1	5.00	2.00
4. *Baira* ..	Brass ..	13 chataks ..	3.25	26	6.50	3.25
5. *Ghutra* ..	Brass or aluminium	2 chataks ..	0.50	8	2.00	1.50
6. *Ghunghru* ..	Brass ..	12 chataks ..	3.00	32	4.00	1.00

The Malar woman is the professional tattooer. Lamp soot is mixed with human milk and designs made on the desired part with the help of assorted needles. The charges range from 50 paise to 75 paise for every part of the body. The woman averred that her custom had dwindled considerably from what it was a decade ago.

8. *Income and expenditure*

The annual income of each household was convassed under the following items:

(*a*) Salary or wages.
(*b*) Industry run by the household.
(*c*) Business run by the household.
(*d*) Rent from land.
(*e*) Rent from houses.
(*f*) Pension.
(*g*) Dividends.
(*h*) Gifts and presents.
(*i*) Help from relatives.
(*j*) Other sources.

Cultivation, industry, and wages along with the residuary group of 'other sources' are the main sources of income for the villagers. Before discussing the composition of income by source among different communities with various kinds of principal occupations, it may be of interest to observe that the average monthly income of all the 337 households was found to be approximately Rs. 21,000 giving the average monthly income per household as Rs. 62. The following table gives the communitywise break up:

TABLE 15
Communitywise average monthly income

Caste/Tribe	Total number of house-holds	Total income in rupees	Average income per household in rupees
1. Kharia ..	117	8,773	75
2. Mahar ..	55	3,044	55
3. Gond ..	54	3,446	64
4. Bhogta ..	43	2,338	54
5. Chik Baraik ..	18	921	51
6. Christian Chik Baraik	1	66	66
7. Turi ..	15	833	56
8. Lohra ..	14	649	48
9. Naik ..	13	625	48
10. Munda ..	2	95	47
11. Kumhar ..	2	126	63
12. Brahmin ..	2	98	49
13. Malar ..	1	58	58
Total ..	**337**	**21,072**	**62**

It is at once evident that the main cultivating tribes of Kharia and Gond have incomes higher than the average for the village. This is also true of the two households of Kumhars and single household of Christian Chik Baraiks.

The two Brahmin households are bracketed with Doms and Lohras as the least prosperous communities in the village.

It will be of interest to note that the *per capita* annual income in the village works out to about Rs. 138.

Table 16 gives the distribution of households by main occupation, proportional break-up of the income by source and the income group in terms of monthly income.

TABLE 16

Household by monthly income group

Caste/Tribe	Main occupation	Total no. of households	Percentage of income from—					No. of households in income group (per month)				
			Wage	Industry	Cultivation	Business	Others	Less than Rs. 25	Above Rs. 25 to Rs. 50	Above Rs. 50 to Rs. 75	Above Rs. 75 to Rs. 100	Above Rs. 100
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Kharia ..	Cultivation	109	20	..	67	..	13	..	31	40	17	21
2. Kharia ..	Labour	8	55	..	36	..	9	..	2	3	..	3
3. Mahar ..	Cultivation	40	1	19	75	..	5	3	13	17	4	3
4. Mahar ..	Industry	11	20	54	16	..	10	2	9	..	..	..
5. Mahar ..	Labour	4	69	..	30	..	1	1	..	3	..	..
6. Gond ..	Cultivation	48	17	..	68	..	15	..	16	19	6	7
7. Gond ..	Labour	6	75	..	13	..	12	2	4	..	..	..
8. Bhogta ..	Cultivation	38	12	16	66	..	6	..	19	17	1	1
9. Bhogta ..	Industry	1	13	52	30	..	5	..	1	..	..	..
10. Bhogta ..	Labour	4	56	13	..	..	31	..	3	..	1	..
11. Chik Baraik	Cultivation	15	25	4	53	..	18	..	7	3	5	..
12. Chik Baraik	Labour	3	72	13	5	..	10	2	..	1	..	..
13. Christian Chik Baraik	Cultivation	1	38	..	56	..	6	..	..	1	..	..
14. Turi ..	Cultivation	14	12	24	42	16	6	..	6	5	3	..
15. Turi ..	Industry	1	15	82	..	..	3	..	..	1	..	..
16. Lohra ..	Industry	10	5	62	22	..	11	2	4	4	..	..
17. Lohra ..	Cultivation	4	9	16	67	..	8	..	2	1	1	..
18. Naik ..	Industry	7	25	53	12	..	10	..	6	1	..	..
19. Naik ..	Cultivation	5	29	17	47	..	7	1	2	2	..	..
20. Naik ..	Labour	1	48	45	..	..	7	..	..	1	..	..
21. Munda ..	Cultivation	2	17	..	71	..	12	..	2	..	..	..
22. Kumhar	Cultivation	2	..	32	58	..	10	..	..	2	..	..
23. Brahmin	Cultivation	1	..	..	58	..	42	..	1	..	..	..
24. Brahmin	Labour	1	100	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	..	..
25. Malar ..	Industry	1	..	90	..	..	10	..	..	1	..	..
Total ..	..	**337**	..	..	..	..	..	**13**	**129**	**122**	**38**	**35**

The bulk of the households have average monthly income of Rs. 25.75. Such households account for 251 out of the total of 337 households.

Only 13 households earn less than Rs. 25 per month. The 6 Mahar households account for the largest bulk among them. 2 households each among Gonds and Chik Baraiks (whose principal occupation is labour) along with 2 Lohra and 1 Dom households complete the tally.

The income groups of households with cultivation as the main occupation tend to be higher. Thus 48 of the 109 Kharia households

engaged in cultivation have monthly earning exceeding Rs. 75. Similarly the 7 Mahar households and 13 Gond households in this range are also cultivators. In fact, out of 73 households with income exceeding Rs. 75 only 4 (3 Kharia and 1 Bhogta) are those of households whose main occupation is not cultivation, but working for wages.

Table 17 gives the monthly average expenditure per household among the various communities and occupational groups. The expenditure has been classified into four categories and the percentage of total expenditure under each category has also been indicated.

TABLE 17

Monthly average expenditure per household

Serial no.	Caste/Tribe	Occupation	No. of households		Amount of expenditure per household in different occupations				
					Food and drinks	Clothing and lighting	Miscellaneous	Cultivation, Business and Household Industry	Total
1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9
					Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.
1	(1) Kharia	Cultivation	109	Actual	55.74	8.30	6.44	5.97	76.45
				Percentage	73	11	8	8	
	(2) Kharia	Labour	8	Actual	54.01	9.74	11.33	3.37	78.45
				Percentage	69	12	15	4	
2	(3) Mahar	Cultivation	40	Actual	48.04	4.29	3.34	4.86	60.53
				Percentage	79	7	6	8	
	(4) Mahar	Industry	11	Actual	28.75	2.89	1.56	0.89	34.09
				Percentage	84	8	5	3	
	(5) Mahar	Labour	4	Actual	37.93	5.81	3.25	2.00	48.99
				Percentage	77	12	7	4	
3	(6) Gond	Cultivation	48	Actual	54.81	7.17	3.60	4.73	70.31
				Percentage	78	10	5	7	
	(7) Gond	Labour	6	Actual	27.91	2.50	0.59	0.50	31.50
				Percentage	89	8	2	1	
4	(8) Bhogta	Cultivation	38	Actual	39.34	4.97	1.74	5.43	51.48
				Percentage	76	10	3	11	
	(9) Bhogta	Labour	4	Actual	39.04	5.53	2.31	3.37	50.25
				Percentage	78	11	4	7	
	(10) Bhogta	Industry	1	Actual	32.50	3.25	1.50	2.50	39.75
				Percentage	82	8	4	6	
5	(11) Chik Baraik	Cultivation	15	Actual	46.34	5.96	6.52	3.42	62.24
				Percentage	74	10	10	6	
	(12) Chik Baraik	Labour	3	Actual	25.52	3.18	0.58	..	29.28
				Percentage	86	11	3	..	
6	(13) Christian Chik Baraik	Cultivation	1	Actual	55.50	5.50	4.90	2.94	68.84
				Percentage	82	8	7	3	

TABLE 17—*concld.*

Serial no.	Caste/Tribe	Occupation	No. of households		Amount of expenditure per household in different occupations				
					Food and drinks	Clothing and lighting	Miscellaneous	Cultivation. Business and Household Industry	Total
1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9
					Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.
	(14) Turi	.. Cultivation	.. 14	Actual ..	47.49	4.55	1.52	3.37	56.93
				Percentage ..	85	8	2	5	
	(15) Turi	.. Industry	.. 1	Actual ..	56.75	7.50	3.00	..	67.25
				Percentage ..	84	11	5	..	
8	(16) Lohra	.. Cultivation	.. 4	Actual ..	40.83	6.12	3.43	6.24	56.62
				Percentage ..	72	11	6	11	
	(17) Lohra	.. Industry	.. 10	Actual ..	35.83	4.89	1.09	2.35	44.16
				Percentage ..	81	11	3	5	
9	(18) Naik	.. Cultivation	.. 7	Actual ..	38.22	3.75	0.75	3.52	46.24
				Percentage ..	83	8	2	7	
	(19) Naik	.. Industry	.. 5	Actual ..	43.15	3.65	3.56	2.90	53.26
				Percentage ..	81	7	7	5	
	(20) Naik	.. Labour	.. 1	Actual ..	45.00	4.75	3.00	2.00	54.75
				Percentage ..	82	7	6	5	
10	(21) Munda	.. Cultivation	.. 2	Actual ..	38.27	4.50	4.35	2.25	49.37
				Percentage ..	78	9	9	4	
11	(22) Kumhar	.. Cultivation	.. 2	Actual ..	39.75	7.25	1.49	10.50	58.99
				Percentage ..	67	12	3	18	
12	(23) Brahmin	.. Cultivation	.. 1	Actual ..	34.50	2.75	4.50	1.50	43.25
				Percentage ..	80	6	10	4	
	(24) Brahmin	.. Labour	.. 1	Actual ..	39.85	7.25	1.40	..	48.50
				Percentage ..	82	15	3	..	
13	(25) Malar	.. Industry	.. 1	Actual ..	50.00	5.00	1.15	2.00	58.15
				Percentage ..	86	9	2	3	

The table shows that the largest share of the expenditure incurred goes to provision of food and drinks being over 70 per cent in case of most households. Clothing and lighting account for as much as 12 per cent among Kharias and Mahars engaged in labour. The percentage is highest among them possibly on account of their more frequent contacts with the markets and other places beyond the village. Pursuits of profession do not account for large proportions in the case of households engaged in weaving or blacksmithy. Calculations of monthly income and expenditure by the households apparently took into account only net incomes and did not take into consideration expenditure on purchase of raw materials.

9. *Indebtedness*

The villagers have often to take recourse to loans for meeting their obligation. At the time of survey as many as 286 out of 337 households were in debt, though the total amount taken on loan was only about Rs. 4,350. The outstanding amounts of loan against households of different communities are given below:

TABLE 18

Communitywise indebtedness

Caste/Tribe	Total no. of households	No. of households in debt	Purpose of loan	Amounts of loan in rupees
1	2	3	4	5
1. Kharia ..	117	26	For cultivation	2,005.96
2. Mahar ..	55	1	Ditto	54.00
3. Gond ..	54	3	Ditto	226.00
4. Chik Baraik	18	7	Ditto	602.50
5. Turi ..	15	2	Ditto	75.00
6. Lohra ..	14	1	Ditto	90.00
7. Naik ..	13	7	Ditto	1,300.00
Total ..	**286**	**47**	..	**4,353.46**

A redeeming feature of the indebtedness among the villagers is that the bulk of the loan amounting to Rs. 3,737 has been obtained from the Thethaitangar Community Development Block. The loans have been categorised by purpose in the official records as indicated in the following table:

TABLE 19

Kinds of loan, amounts and number of loanees

Nature of loan	Amounts due (in rupees)	No. of persons from which due
1. Agricultural	707.18	25
2. Land improvement	982.23	10
3. Co-operative short-term loan ..	467.20	27
4. Co-operative medium-term loan ..	1,090.48	27
5. Industrial	490.50	1
Total	**3,737.59**	**90**

The interest charged on the above loans is only six and a quarter per cent per year. Agricultural and land improvement loans are secured by pledging lands. Co-operative and industrial loans are obtained on personal security.

It is seen that only about 15 per cent of the amount of loan in the village has been obtained from non-institutional sources. Money-lenders in the area reportedly charge up to 10 per cent interest. Small amounts of loan are given without any security on personal pledge only. For larger amounts handnotes are required to be executed by the loanees but no such cases were reported in the village.

In addition to credit facilities in cash, the villagers also have two grain-golas to fall back upon. The one at *Ghutbahar* is run under the auspices of the block. It had advanced 9 maunds of paddy to 17 villagers at the time of survey. The other grain-gola at *Girja Toli* is run by the Roman Catholic Mission since 1914. It has advanced 135 maunds of paddy to 35 of its members. The rate of interest in either grain-gola is 25 per cent per annum, and the loaned grain has to be returned in kind.

CHAPTER IV

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE

1. *Introductory remarks*

In this chapter it is proposed to discuss the social and cultural life of the people in village Meromdega. Before doing so, it will be worthwhile considering certain demographic and social characteristics of different communities in the village, for these factors not only provide valuable insight into their social and cultural set-up but also exercise great influence in moulding and determining these.

2. *Sex ratio*

The male-female proportion in any community or area is described by the sex ratio which is determined by the number of females per 1,000 males. If there is an excess of females over males the sex ratio is said to be favourable, otherwise, it is called adverse. In village Meromdega as a whole the sex ratio is adverse, there being 965 females for every 1,000 males. The main reason for this is the extremely low sex ratio (807) among the Mahars, quite low sex ratio (915) among the Kharias, and the slightly low sex ratio (994) among the Gonds. The Turis and the Doms also have very low ratios of 756 and 654 respectively, but their influence in bringing down the overall sex ratio of the village is limited because of their comparatively small numbers. It is remarkable, however, that all other communities in the village have very favourable sex ratios except the Malars among whom there is complete parity between the two. The following table shows the distribution of population by sex, as well as the sex ratio, of each community in the village:

TABLE 20

Sex ratio in different tribes/castes

Tribe/Caste	Persons	Males	Females	Sex ratio
1	2	3	4	5
1. Kharia ..	678	354	324	915
2. Mahar ..	244	135	109	807
3. Gond ..	343	172	171	994
4. Bhogta ..	199	84	115	1,369
5. Chik Baraik	98	44	54	1,222
6. Turi ..	79	45	34	756
7. Lohra ..	66	29	37	1,276
8. Naik ..	86	52	34	654
9. Munda ..	12	5	7	1,400
10. Kumhar ..	9	4	5	1,250
11. Brahmin ..	11	5	6	1,200
12. Malar ..	8	4	4	1,000
**Total ..	1,833	933	900	965**

3. *Age composition*

There is little variation in the proportion of sexes in the different age groups, as the following table will show:

TABLE 21

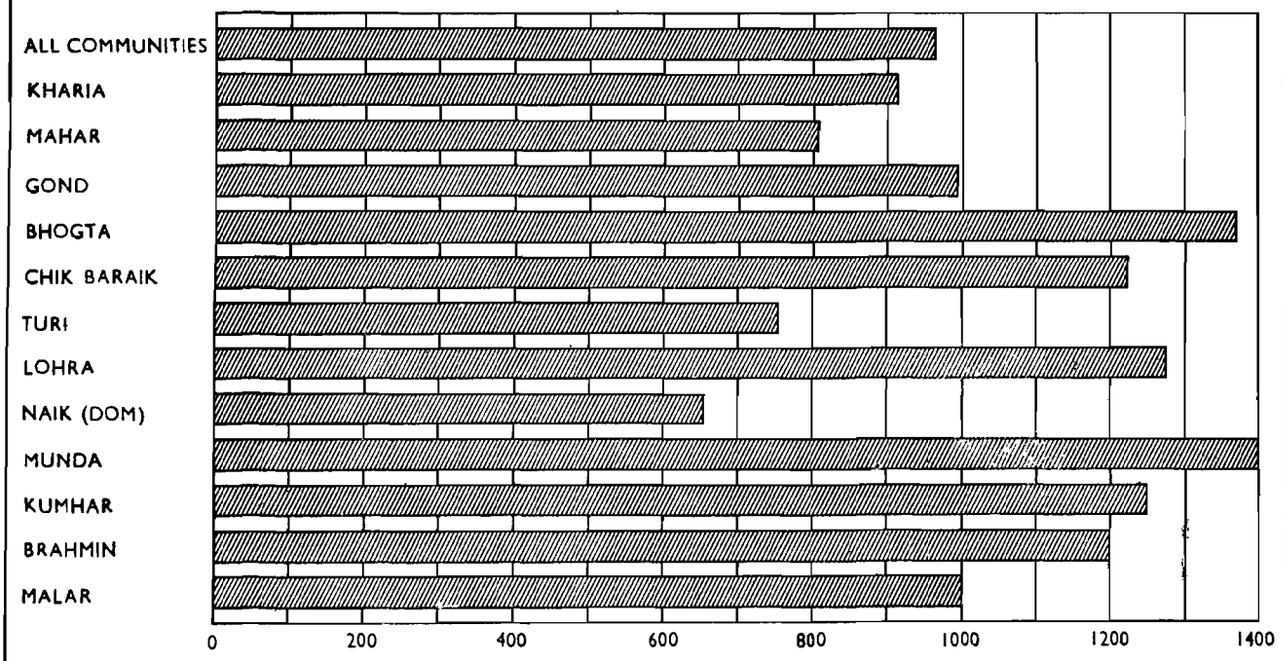
Age composition

Age group	Persons	Percentage of persons	Males	Percentage of males	Females	Percentage of females	Sex ratio
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. 0—14	805	43.92	408	43.75	397	44.11	973
2. 15—24	232	12.66	123	13.17	109	12.11	886
3. 25—59	690	37.64	350	37.51	340	37.78	971
4. 60 and above ..	106	5.78	52	5.57	54	6.00	1,038
**Total	1,833	100.00	933	100.00	900	100.00	965**

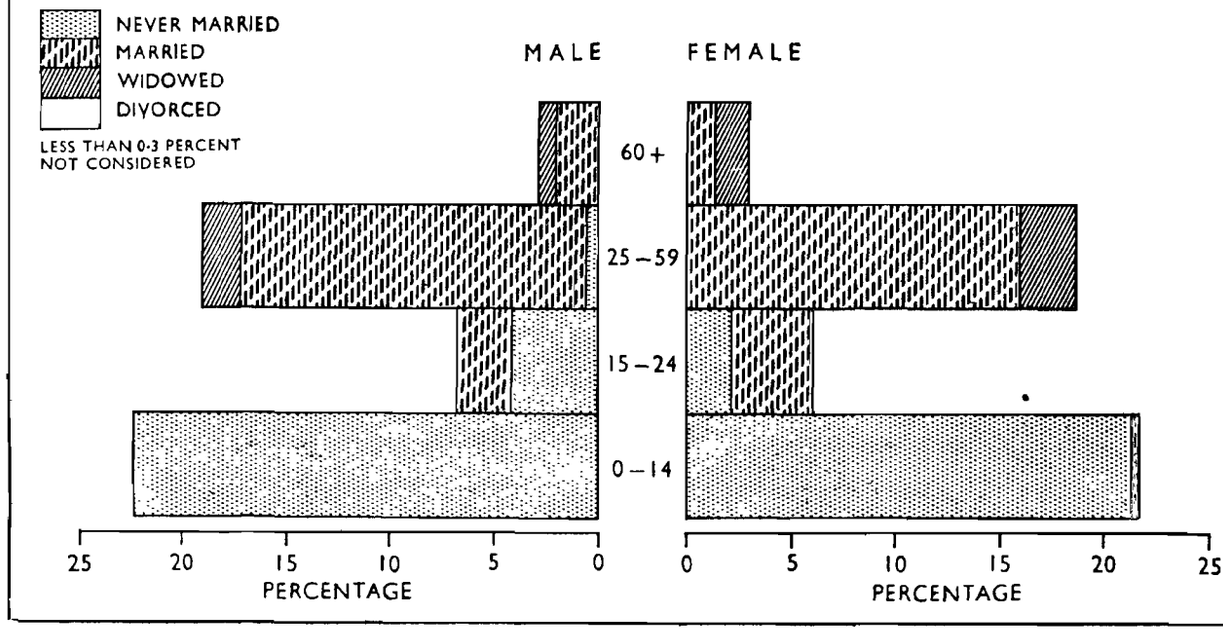
The age group 0—14 years contains the maximum number of persons, non-adults constituting about 44 per cent of the population. This ratio is slightly higher than the average for the State and indicates a progressively growing population. Old persons aged 60 years or more, comprise less than 6 per cent of the total. The working age group of 15—59 contains just about half (50.30 per cent) of the total population of the village.

SEX RATIO IN DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES

(NUMBER OF FEMALES PER 1,000 MALES)



MARITAL STATUS BY SEX AND BROAD AGE GROUP



(*Facing page* 38)

4. *Growth of population*

The village comprised of 266 households (or occupied residential houses) with 1,710 persons according to the Census of 1951. A decade later, there were 323 households with 1,822 persons. The increase in population during the period is, therefore, of the order of 6.55 per cent, a figure much lower than the district average of 15.86 per cent. The survey figures (October, 1962) show an increase of 7.19 per cent over the 1951 figures. The following table shows the position :

TABLE 22

Growth of population

Year	No. of households	Persons	Males	Females	Increase in population	Percentage increase
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1951	266	1,710	889	821	..	..
1961	323	1,822	939	883	112	6.55
1962(Oct.)	337	1,833	933	900	123	7.19

It will be observed that the sex ratio has improved during the decade though it is still adverse. The increase in the number of households (7.2 per cent) is of the same order as the increase in the population, showing that the average composition of a household has not been affected by the increase in population.

There has not been any mass emigration from the village in the recent past. It was, however, reported that many families had gone and settled in Assam about 15 years earlier. Some persons of the village are engaged as labourers in Rourkela, Sambalpur and Birmitrapur all in Orissa. According to the villagers a Kharia of the village went to the Andaman Islands and settled there about 20 years earlier.

Annual vital statistics for the village which are to be maintained by the Panchayat had not been recorded properly and could not be available during the survey.

5. *Marital status*

It has been seen that marriage is virtually a social obligation for all communities. The following table shows the marital status of the villages by age groups:

TABLE 23

Marital status by age group

Age groups	Total population			Never married		Married		Widowed		Divorced	
	P	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
All ages	1,833	933	900	490	426	396	394	43	79	4	1
0—14	805	408	397	405	391	2	6	..	..	1	..
15—24	232	123	109	75	35	44	73	1	1	3	..
25—59	690	350	340	10	..	312	294	28	45	..	1
60 and above ..	106	52	54	..	..	38	21	14	33	..	..

There are only 2 married males and 6 married females below 15 years of age. The boys are a Kharia and a Gond. The girls belong to the Gond (5) and Bhogta (1) communities. The boy who not only got married below 14 years of age but also divorced his wife is of the Dom caste.

In the age groups 15—24, as many as 48 out of 123 males had married (1 was a widower and 3 were divorcees). 74 out of 109 females of the same age group had found spouses and only 1 of them was a widow. However, as many as 35 women had not married up to the age of 24 years. These were represented by Kharias (26), Gonds (4), Mahar (1), Bhogtas (2), Chik Baraik (1) and Lohra (1). Late marriage is more widely prevalent among Kharia women.

However, none of the females over 24 years of age were in unmarried state, though there were 10 bachelors.

The following table shows the marital status of each community in the village :

TABLE 24

Marital status by community

Caste/Tribe	Never married		Married		Widowed		Divorced or separated	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Kharia	197	161	137	131	20	32	..	..
2. Mahar	75	50	53	53	7	6	..	..
3. Gond	80	65	87	88	4	17	1	1
4. Bhogta	39	58	42	43	3	14	..	..
5. Chik Baraik	21	29	23	23	..	2	..	..
6. Turi	19	14	18	17	6	3	2	..
7. Lohra	14	23	13	13	2	1	..	..
8. Naik	34	13	16	19	1	2	1	..
9. Munda	3	4	2	2	..	1	..	..
10. Kumhar	2	3	2	2	..	..	..	..
11. Brahmin	3	3	2	2	..	1	..	..
12. Malar	3	3	1	1	..	..	..	..
Total ..	**490**	**426**	**396**	**394**	**43**	**79**	**4**	**1**

6. *Disease and medical care*

Prophylactic measures undertaken by the health staff of the Community Development Block have largely minimised the incidence of epidemics. Disinfection of the drinking water wells, inoculation against small-pox and cholera, and anti-malaria measures by way of spraying of D.D.T. in the peoples' houses are the chief public health measures. When cholera or small-pox does break out, prompt measures are taken to restrict the incidence.

Skin diseases like eczema and ring-worm and alimentary disorders like dysentery are frequently met with : tuberculosis of the lungs is not unknown. The non-Christians yet have their spiritual doctors—the *ojha*—who exercises the malign spirits causing the diseases and exhorts the benign ones to restore the patient's health. Incantations and sacrificial offerings are the *ojha's* stock-in-trade. The Christians do not seek such remedies—at least they disavow the practice.

The Government Hospital at Simdega and Dispensary at Thethaitangar cater to the requirements of patients who go there as a last resort.

Sufferers from snake bites even now find greater solace from the *ojha* whose ministrations are held to be more effective than what modern medical science has to offer.

7. *Literacy and Education*

The total number of literates in the village is 370 so that the percentage of literacy is 20, much above the district and even higher than the State average. The high percentage of literacy is accounted by its wide prevalence among Kharias. Thus though Kharias constitute 33.7 per cent of the village population, 76 per cent of the literates are Kharias. This is all the more true in regard to female literacy, 85 per cent of female literates being Kharias.

The following table gives the number and percentage of literate (including educated) males and females for each community :

TABLE 25

Literacy and Education

Caste/Tribe	Total			Literates and educated			Percentage of literacy		
	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Kharia ..	678	354	324	282	185	97	41.6	52.3	29.9
2. Mahar ..	244	135	109	18	15	3	7.4	11.1	2.8
3. Gond	343	172	171	20	19	1	5.8	11.1	0.6
4. Bhogta ..	199	84	115	14	14	..	7.0	16.7	..
5. Chik Baraik ..	92	41	51	14	11	3	15.2	26.8	5.9
6. Chik Baraik (Christian)	6	3	3	3	1	2	50.0	33.3	66.7
7. Turi	79	45	34	7	4	3	8.8	8.9	8.8
8. Lohra	66	29	37	4	2	2	6.0	6.9	5.4
9. Naik ..	86	52	34	2	2	..	2.3	3.8	..
10. Munda ..	12	5	7	4	1	3	33.3	20.0	42.9
11. Kumhar ..	9	4	5	..	..	..	..	..	..
12. Brahmin ..	11	5	6	2	2	..	18.2	40.0	..
13. Malar ..	8	4	4	..	..	..	..	..	..
Total ..	**1,833**	**933**	**900**	**370**	**256**	**114**	**20.1**	**27.4**	**12.7**

It is seen that the minor communities of Kumhar and Malar have no literates at all. Brahmins fall in the same category as the Scheduled Caste Doms and Bhogtas in having no females who can read and write.

The Christian Chik Baraiks have been separately shown in the above table. Though their number is insignificant yet the wide variation in the percentage of literacy among the Christian and non-Christians becomes quite obvious. Gonds and Mahars are still largely backward in literacy, and particularly so when compared with Kharia.

Below, the communities have been arranged in order of percentage of literacy among persons, males and females respectively :

Communities arranged in order of literacy

Persons	Males	Females
1. Christian Chik Baraik	1. Kharia	1. Christian Chik Baraik
2. Kharia	2. Brahmin	2. Munda
3. Munda	3. Christian Chik Baraik	3. Kharia
4. Brahmin	4. Chik Baraik	4. Turi
5. Chik Baraik	5. Munda	5. Chik Baraik
6. Turi	6. Bhogta	6. Lohra
7. Mahar	7. Mahar	7. Mahar
8. Bhogta	8. Gond	8. Gond
9. Lohra	9. Turi	
10. Gond	10. Lohra	
11. Naik	11. Naik	

So far as higher education is concerned, there is a Chik Baraik (non-Christian) graduate in the village and a Kharia who has passed the Intermediate Examination. Both the boys are continuing their studies. Surprisingly, there are no matriculates. There are 129 persons who have read up to the primary standard. Thus two-thirds of the literates have not even had schooling up to the primary standard.

There has been a phenomenal rise in the extent of literacy in the village. In 1951, only 52 persons were returned as literates as against 359 in the Census of 1961 (and 370 at the time of the Survey). Naturally one would expect the bulk of the newly lettered persons to be children. This is so, just half of the total literates being less than 15 years old.

There are three schools in the village itself The Lower Primary School is situated in *Girja Toli*. It is a single-teacher institution teaching up to Class III. The school was established about 50 years ago by the Roman Catholic Mission and taken over by the District Board in 1936. It continues to be managed and financed by the State. The number of students on the rolls was only 38 (23 boys and 15 girls) distributed in Class I (16 boys and 8 girls), Class II (6 boys and 2 girls) and Class III (1 boy and 5 girls).

The Upper Primary School is located in *Bar Toli*. It was started in 1914 by the German Lutheran Mission as a Lower Primary School. This too was taken over by the District Board in 1936. It was upgraded as an Upper Primary School in 1957. The school has 3 teachers. One has read up to matriculation; the other two up to Class VIII. One of the latter is a trained hand. The number of students attending the school is given below:

Class		Total number of students	Number of boys	Number of girls
I	..	59	30	29
II	..	23	15	8
III	..	15	9	6
IV	..	14	6	8
V	..	9	6	3
Total	..	**120**	**66**	**54**

The third school is a Middle School organized a few years back by private contribution. It has its own building in the village proper and is in the charge of a non-matric teacher. It imparts teaching in Classes VI and VII only, there being only 18 students on the rolls (12 boys and 6 girls).

High School students go to Simdega.

8. *Family structure*

The average number of persons per household in the village comes to 5.4. Naturally, the greatest number of household contain 4—6 members each. Thus about half (169 out of 337) the households belong to this category. Single member households are few (10). About one-third of the households contain 2-3 members each, whilst the number containing more than 6 members is 98, a little under a third of the total. The following table gives the size and composition of households by size, communitywise:

TABLE 26

Households classified by size

Caste/Tribe	No. of households	Households contained									
		Single member		2-3 members		4—6 members		7—9 members		10 members and above	
		No. of households	Persons	No. of households	Persons	No. of households	Persons	No. of households	Persons	No. of households	Persons
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Kharia	117	2	2	12	31	62	305	34	263	7	77
2. Mahar ..	55	3	3	16	44	29	142	6	43	1	12
3. Gond	54	2	2	6	15	24	115	13	102	9	109
4. Bhogta	43	1	1	11	30	27	135	3	22	1	11
5. Chik Baraik ..	19	1	1	5	13	8	46	5	38	..	..
6. Turi	15	1	1	3	8	6	32	5	38	..	..
7. Lohra	14	..	..	5	13	6	31	3	22	..	..
8. Naik	13	..	..	1	3	4	21	8	62	..	..
9. Munda	2	..	..	..	..	1	4	1	8	..	..
10. Kumhar ..	2	..	..	1	3	1	6	..	..	..	..
11. Brahmin ..	2	..	..	..	..	1	4	1	7	..	..
12. Malar	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	8	..	..
Total ..	**337**	**10**	**10**	**60**	**160**	**169**	**841**	**80**	**613**	**18**	**209**

It is noticed that half of the households containing more than 9 members each are of the Gonds. Further, none of the minor communities (comprising less than 20 households each) have large households containing more than 9 members.

The following table gives the distribution of the households by type of family, communitywise:

TABLE 27

Types of families

Caste/Tribe	Total no. of households	Types of families living in the households			
		Simple	Intermediate	Joint	Other
1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Kharia ..	117	61	4	51	1
2. Mahar ..	55	44	1	6	4
3. Gond ..	54	22	..	30	2
4. Bhogta ..	43	28	..	14	1
5. Chik Baraik	19	12	1	6	..
6. Turi ..	15	7	..	8	..
7. Lohra ..	14	12	..	2	..
8. Naik ..	13	6	..	7	..
9. Munda ..	2	1	..	1	..
10. Kumhar ..	2	2	..	..	..
11. Brahmin ..	2	1	..	1	..
12. Malar ..	1	1	..	..	..
Total ..	**337**	**197**	**6**	**126**	**8**

It is seen that simple families (consisting of husband and wife and unmarried children) constitute almost two-thirds of the total.

Next in importance is the joint family (consisting of married couple with married children or married siblings). It is observed that among the Gonds, Turis and Doms there are more joint families than of simple families.

Normally, the sons, on getting married separate from their fathers. All the communities in the village are patrilineal and patrilocal.

9. *Intra-family relationship*

The father, as the head of the family and bread winner wields full authority. The children look to him for guidance and advice even after they themselves have settled down in life. The mother also receives due respect and love from her children. Since the women actively participate in the economic pursuits of the family, husband and wife relationships never tend to be that of a provider and dependent. They are on equal terms in all family matters.

The Gond women, however, are not held in the same esteem as the women of other communities. They are not allowed to participate in religious observances. Widows are considered inauspicious, and are not permitted to cook foods meant for sacrificial offerings.

10. *Inheritance*

Not one in the village was aware of the recent changes in the Hindu Law of Succession and Adoption. The sons inherit father's property to the exclusion of all other relatives. They share the property equally. Daughters are not given any share, nor did any of the persons interviewed agree that daughters should be given any share. Widows and unmarried daughters have to be maintained by the sons. Usually the widows and daughters indicate their preference for living with one of the sons. Whilst partitioning the property a share is kept for the mother and daughters depending on their number. After the widow dies and the daughters have been married off, their share reverts to the sons. Frequently, in case of a lone widow, a decision is taken to provide her with specified quantities of grains every year.

If a person does not have a son, he may adopt a son-in-law, who then succeeds to his property. If there are no sons nor an adopted son-in-law, the property passes on to the brothers of the deceased.

Self-acquired property can be willed to any persons one desires.

In the village itself, two Gonds who did not have sons, had adopted their sons-in-law. The latter succeeded to the property.

11. *Leisure and recreation*

The game of hockey has been introduced by the Christians and is proving popular among the young boys. Largely self-sufficient in meeting their requirement as the villagers are, they engage themselves in various pursuits when agricultural operations cease to make a great demand on their time. Houses have to be repaired and kept trim. The agricultural and other implements have to be kept in shape. Fishing during the rains blends an economic activity with pleasurable recreation. Seasonal migration takes place in the period January to May, when some males go to work as labourers in tea gardens in Assam. The places they go to are not fixed.

12. *Religion*

The bulk of the villagers have returned themselves as Hindus. Yet the characteristics of their religious beliefs and practices are largely tribal. All households of Kharias and Mundas are Christian as also one Chik Baraik household. The following table gives the distribution of the communities, households and persons by religion:

TABLE 28
Religion

Religion	Caste/Tribe	Total no. of households	Total no. of persons
1. Hindu ..	Mahar ..	55	244
	Gond	54	343
	Bhogta ..	43	199
	Chik Baraik ..	18	92
	Turi	15	79
	Lohra ..	14	66
	Naik ..	13	86
	Kumhar ..	2	9
	Brahmin ..	2	11
	Malar	1	8
2. Christian ..	Kharia ..	117	678
	Munda.. ..	2	12
	Chik Baraik ..	1	6

Although all households of Kharias are Christian, two of them still follow their traditional faith. One of them is the Kharia *Pahan* (religious priest). He preferred to continue his old faith since adoption of Christianity would have necessitated his losing the *Pahnai* land which he holds by virtue of his office. The other person was willing to adopt Christianity but his affection for the *teek* (pigtail) over-rode his religious fervour. Rather than sacrifice his *teek,* he preferred to remain a non-Christian.

There are two sects of Christians in the village, viz., Roman Catholic and Lutheran. Out of 120 households, 37 are Roman Catholic and the remaining Lutheran. It was recounted that Christianity reached the village towards the closing years of the last century. Father Lucas had settled at Simdega in 1889. He visited Meromdega some time thereafter. Stephenson Kharia of the village was the first to be converted, and gradually, the advantages of adopting Christianity resulted in the entire Kharia community getting converted to that faith. One of the informants, a Kharia Christian of some standing in the village, gave the following reasons for his community's ready acceptance of Chistianity :

(*i*) Forced labour was extracted from the Kharias at that time. It was told to them that if they became Christians they would no longer be compelled to give free labour.

(*ii*) Those who became Christians were helped in times of need by the Missionaries and supplied with food and clothings.

There are two Churches in the village for either sect of Christians. Services are held regularly on Sundays. But the major sacramental ceremonies like baptism and confirmation are held at the bigger churches situated in Simdega.

There are no religious institutions for the Hindus other than the two *Sarnas* (primaeval groves). That at *Kashbahar toli* used to be the Kharia *Sarna,* and is now almost derelict, though the Kharia *Pahan* yet continues. The other *Sarna* is the Gond *Sarna* at *Tanger toli* to which a Gond *Pahan* is attached.

The following chart gives the ceremonial calendar of festivals of the village :

Calendar of festivals

Month	Festival
1. *Phagun* (February-March) ..	Phagua (Holi).
2. *Chait* (March-April)	Sarhul.
3. *Baisakh* (April-May)	Pat Puja, Easter (for Christians).
4. *Jestha* (May-June)	Thelapuja (Swargarohan and Panticost).
5. *Asarh* (June-July)	Rathyatra.
6. *Srawan* (July-August)	Raksha Bandhan.
7. *Bhado* (August-September) ..	Nawakhani, Karma.
8. *Aswin* (September-October) ..	Jitia, Dusherra.
9. *Kartik* (October-November) ..	Dewali.
10. *Aghan* (November-December) ..	X'mas (for Christians).
11. *Paus* (December-January) ..	Chauth Pakh.
12. *Magh* (January-February) ..	..

It is obvious that strictly Hindu festivals find place side by side with the traditional tribal ones.

The festivals are briefly recounted below :

1. *Phagua*—This is celebrated in the month of *Phagun* on the day of the full moon. The *Pahan* collects a fowl from each Gond and such other houses as may participate. Usually, those that can do so among the Bhogtas, Lohras and Chik Baraiks also contribute. The *Pahan* fixes a branch of the *semar* tree on some high-level land, and covers it with straw. According to some villagers, this symbolises the Hindu mythical demon Ravana. Others are unable to give it any name. The branch is ignited. The fowls are sacrificed at the spot and distributed among the participants. Songs and dances ensue to the accompaniment of rice beer. Next day the people play with coloured water and powder.

2. *Sarhul*—This is celebrated in the month of *Chait* (March-April). The Bhogtas join the two unconverted Kharias in the Kharia *Sarna* whilst the Gond and others celebrate the festival under the aegis of the Gond *Pahan.*

The people raise subscriptions for the sacrificial offers of fowls. After the sacrifice the *Pahan* takes two pots of water and sal flowers. He goes round with these throughout the village and sprinkles the holy water on the members of each house.

3. *Rathyatra festival*—This festival is not held at the village proper but many of villagers join in the procession at village Tukupani situated three miles away.

4. *Karma*—This festival is observed in the month of *Bhado* (August-September) on the 11th day of the second fortnight. It is the harbinger of wealth and prosperity. The unmarried girls and the boys remain on fast on the day and go to the jungle for bringing branches of the *Karam* tree. The boys cut the branches and the girls carry them to the ceremonial place to the accompaniment of songs. Care is always taken to prevent the branches from falling on the ground.

The *Karam* branches are fixed to the ground at a place near which there is adequate space for dancing. The village *Pahan* or village elder officiates at the function by narrating the story of Karam Raja. Home-made sweetmeats and other things of worship are brought by the each family.

When the worship is over, the persons both males and females sing songs and dance round the *Karam* branch. This continues for the whole night, people taking turns. Early in the next morning the branches are thrown away into the stream.

The story of *Karma* is more or less similar among the various tribes. In the bygone days there were two brothers, Karma and Dharma. Dharma always worshiped 'Karamraja' but his brother never did so as he had declared himself to be Karamraja. Once upon a time he was working in the field of his brother. But his brother did not entertain him, being busy in the performance of *Karma* puja. He became angry and began to ruin the paddy plants of his brother, but he saw that some strange man was again transplanting the same. The strange man narrated to him the story of Karamraja. Dharma who was very much hungry, set out in search of Karamraja. At last he reached the bank of a river in which some *Karam* branches, thrown away after worship, were floating. He jumped into the river and after a great effort he could manage to take one out. From that day he began to worship 'Karamraja' regularly and within no time he became wealthy and prosperous.

Karma brings a feeling of joy to the village which continues some days before and after the festival.

5. *Nawakhani*—Nawakhani is, literally, 'eating of new corn'. It is celebrated on the occasion of harvesting of *Bhadai* crops. The new rice (produced from *Gora dhan*) is specially cooked in milk and molasses added. This is eaten after offerings have been made to the spirits. The Gonds offer sacrifices of fowls to their ancestral spirits. The day is also marked by fixing of *Bhelwa* branches in the *Aghani* paddy fields. The fixation of branch is believed to ensure the well-being of the crop and to result in good harvests.

6. *Jitia*—This is celebrated only by the Mahars in the month of *Aswin* on the 8th day of the dark fortnight. On the day, branches of the *Jitia* tree (*Ficus religiosa*) are brought and fixed in the courtyard for worship. Only women participate in this festival. They fast for two days, including the day preceding the festival. This worship is believed to result in the well-being of one's children. The practice in the village amongst the Mahar is quite different to the usual tribal manner of observing the festival, according to which the *Pahan* officiates and worship is followed by revelries.

7. *Sohrai or Dewali*—This is celebrated in the month of *Kartik* (October-November) on the last day of the dark fortnight. This festival is observed in honour of Goddess Laxmi. Houses are cleaned and plastered with mud or cow-dung. The walls are sometimes decorated with rough representations of animals. *Sohrai* is also associated with the bestowing of special care on the cattle, giving recognition to their part played in the economic activities of the people. Since some days earlier they are properly bathed and anointed with oil. On *Sohrai* day, the horns are anointed with oil, vermilion applied, and the animals given boiled cereals like *Urid* and *Kurthi* to eat. Illumination with earthen lamps is done in the evening.

8. *Chauth Pakh*—The 4th day of the dark fortnight in the month of *Magh* (January-February) heralds the new year for labourers kept on annual contract basis. The labourers, known as *Dhangars,* are appointed on this date. They are given good food and oil for massaging on that day. The observance is naturally restricted to such households as keep *Dhangars.*

9. *Pat Puja*—It is celebrated in the *Sarna* on the 3rd day of fortnight of *Baisakh* (April-May) under the guidance of the Gond *Pahan.* Sacrifices of fowls are made in addition to offerings of Sandal wood, coconuts, milk and sweets. This worship is believed to ward off diseases amongst the villagers and their live-stock.

10. *Dewadakha or Mahdan Puja*—This is the chief religious festival of the Gonds. It is not an annual festival but celebrated once in six years. A buffalo is sacrificed to *Dewadakha* or the Sun God at *Tangin Pahar* (The Sun God is the supreme deity of the Gonds). The sacrificed

animal is given to the Doms or Turis. In addition goats and sheep sacrificed which are partaken of by the persons present.

The Christians have their own cycle of festivals. The most peculiar among them is the annual celebration held on the 10th July every year in commemoration of the date on which the churches became economically self-sufficient. It is said that from 10th of July, 1919 no financial help has been received from Mission authorities.

Easter is celebrated in April. Good Friday is the day on which Christ was crucified and Easter Sunday the day of resurrection. The day of ascension is celebrated next month and known locally as *Swarg Rohan*. Christmas is celebrated in December and is most joyous among the Christian festivals.

Amongst the festivals recounted for the Hindu, only *Nawakhani* is celebrated by the Christian Kharia as well.

As mentioned earlier there are two *Pahans* in the village. They own lands by virtue of their office. The Gond *Pahan* has 10 acres and the Kharia *Pahan* 4 acres.

The Brahmins act as priest when the occasion so demands. Their participation at birth, marriage and death ceremonies of the various communities have been described earlier.

Each of the two sects of Christian has its own religious head who is known as the *Prachar* (literally one who propagates).

13. *Panchayat*

A statutory *Gram Panchayat* was established in 1952, with Meromdega as its headquarters. Until the first elections towards the beginning of 1960, the *Panchayat* was managed by nominated officials. It has its own building constructed out of grants made by the Community Development Block. The Mukhia of the *Panchayat* is a Mahar. He wielded authority earlier as a nominated *Mukhia* and had also worked as the storekeeper of the ex-landlord of the village. His influence with the villagers, therefore, paid dividends when he was able to defeat his contestants in the election.

The following list gives the names, offices, places of residence and caste of the different members of the *Panchayat* :

Name of the person	Post	Tola	Village	Tribe/Caste	Nominated or elected
1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Phirangi Mahar	*Mukhia*	Meromdega	Meromdega	Mahar	Elected.
2. Markus Kerketa	*Up-Mukhia*	Purab *toli*	Ditto	Kharia	Nominated.
3. Barta Manjhi	*Sarpanch*	Tangar *toli*	Ditto	Gond	Elected.
4. Poulus Kharia	*Up-Sarpanch*	Bar *toli*	Ditto	Kharia	Nominated.
Executive Panch					
5. Eayara Kharia	*Panch*	Purab *toli*	Ditto	Ditto	Ditto.
6. Sudhu Manjhi	Do.	Mahua *toli*	Ditto	Ditto	Ditto.
7. Bhawara Naik	Do.	Meromdega	Ditto	Dom	Ditto.
8. Amus Kharia	Do.	Tapudega	Tapudega	Kharia	Elected.
9. Tenya Kharia	Do.	Kahupani	Meromdega	Ditto	Ditto.
10. Junas Kharia	Do.	Girja *toli*	Ditto	Ditto	Ditto.
11. Jhakhan Pradhan	Do.	Kashbahar	Ditto	Bhogta	Ditto.
Judicial Panch					
12. Jagat Mahar	Do.	Meromdega	Ditto	Mahar	Nominated.
13. Anmad Maohi Kharia	Do.	Kahupani	Ditto	Kharia	Ditto.
14. Markus Kharia	Do.	Tapudega	Tapudega	Ditto	Ditto.
15. Samel Kharia	Do.	Girja *toli*	Meromdega	Ditto	Elected.
16. Matru Kharia	Do.	Tapudega	Tapudega	Ditto	Ditto.
17. Grugu Pradhan	Do.	Kashbahar	Meromdega	Bhogta	Ditto.
18. Bitna Manjhi	Do.	Meromdega	Ditto	Gond	Ditto.

It is seen that most of the officials belong to Meromdega which is the main village in the constituted Panchayat. Communitywise, the Kharias predominate.

The *Panchayat Sewak* assists the *Mukhia* and *Sarpanch* in the discharge of their duties. The *Panchayat* has been collecting land revenue since 1961, for which a commission is paid to it. However, the *Panchayat* had not executed any of the development schemes sponsored by the Community Development Block.

Each caste has its own *Panchayat* in which social disputes are settled. Violation of the taboo on eating with other castes, family disputes, allegations of unauthorised sex behaviour are matters dealt with by the informal *Panchayats.*

Only one case was brought up before the Mahar Caste *Panchayat* in 1961. A Mahar young man of the village had brought a married Mahar woman from another village and was keeping her as his wife. The Caste *Panchayat* met and summoned the first husband of the woman. The decision of the *Panchayat* was that the first husband should be paid Rs. 60 by way of compensation which was done. In addition a fine consisting of a goat and half a seer rice for each Mahar of the village was imposed. This was duly paid and a feast ensued. The young man could thus keep the woman he had brought and also obtained social approval for his action.

The Christian Kharias also have their caste *Panchayat.* However, their religious leaders are often approached for guidance in settling disputes.

The leaders of the caste *Panchayats* at the time of survey were as follows :

Kharia—Pyara Kerketta.

Munda—Thomas Jojo.

Gond—Sudhu Gond.

Naik—Dodo Naik.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Meromdega is a large village with a variegated communal representation. The most shoking impact is that of the comparative prosperity of the Christians of the village—mostly Kharias. Literacy is high; again because of the Christian. Yet the immunity of the socially low castes of the village from Christian influences is unique.

The people have various traditional household industries which are all decadent. Efforts for providing capital and channelized marketing through Co-operative Societies are, however, under way and these may yet revive and sustain the industrial endeavours of the populace. The advantages of State help have been realised ever by the Doms and Turis who now want a Co operative Society of their own.

The people are well aware of the place o the village in the administrative set-up and al heads of families know the names of the adminis trative headquarters.

In spite of its multi-communal composition Meromdega is not torn by internal strife. There is no evidence of longstanding communal anti pathy.

[CONFIDENTIAL]

APPENDIX I

CENSUS, 1961

SOCIO-ECONOMIC SURVEY

OF

VILLAGE.....

Household no. .....

PART I

HOUSEHOLD SCHEDULE

1. Head of Household :

(*a*) Name .....

(*b*) Caste or tribe.....

(*c*) Sub-caste or sub-tribe.....

(*d*) Religion .....

(*e*) Sect.....

2. (*a*) Composition of household including Head:

Serial no.	Name	Sex	Relationship to Head	Age last birth-day	Marital status	Age at first marriage
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Serial no.	Description of work		Language or dialect	Any other language	Literacy and education
	Principal	Subsidiary, if any			
1	8	9	10	11	12

(*b*) Workers at cultivation or household industry :

Members including Head of family working, and hired workers, if any, kept wholetime or during current or last season	Members of the family working				
	Head	Other males	Other females	Total	Hired workers
1	2	3	4	5	6
(*i*) Household cultivation only					
(*ii*) Household industry only					
(*iii*) Both in household cultivation and household industry					

A. DURATION OF RESIDENCE

3. (*a*) For how many generations counting from the head of the household backwards, has the household been residing in the village ?

(*b*) If the head of the household has migrated to this village together with the household,

(*i*) when was it ?

(*ii*) what were the reasons for it ?

(*iii*) where was the ancestral home ?

(Give the name of the village, district and State.)

B. RELIGION

4. (*a*) Is there a diety or object of worship or a sacred plant in the house ? (Answer Yes/No .)

(*b*) If 'Yes' where is the deity or object of worship located in the house ?

(*c*) What is the name of the deity or object of worship or sacred plant and what is the form of worship ?

5. Do you know that untouchability in any form has been prohibited under law ? (Answer Yes/No .)

6. (*a*) Do you observe any restriction in taking food or water with members of other castes, tribes or religions ? If yes, indicate the nature of restrictions.

(*b*) Do you believe in the caste system ? If yes, what are your reasons for it ? If no, do you think it can be eradicated ? If so, how ?

C. MARRIAGE

7. (*a*) Has any marriage in contraventior of caste or tribal law taken place in this household? (Answer Yes/No.)

(*b*) If such a marriage has taken place give details of such marriage.

(*c*) With what other castes or tribes other than the caste or tribe of the household is marriage permissible ?

(*d*) With which of such castes or tribes would marriage be desirable ?

(*e*) Was dowry given or taken on the occasion of the marriage of the son ? (Answer Yes/No.) If 'Yes' mention amount of both cash and kind separately, and also indicate whether the dowry was given or taken.

(*f*) Was dowry given or taken on the occasion of the marriage of the daughter ? (Answer Yes/No.) If 'Yes' mention the amount of both cash and kind separately, and also indicate whether the dowry was given or taken.

8. Do you know that there have been changes in recent years in Hindu Marriage Act ? (Answer Yes/No.) If 'Yes' what do you think of the salient features of the Hindu Marriage Act ?

9. Have you any objection to contract marriage of persons of your household with persons of same social and economic status as yours but belonging to other castes, tribes or religions?

10. Has there been any consanguineous marriage in the household ? If so, what was the relationship between the parties to the marriage ?

11. Has there been any polygamous or polyandrous marriage in the household ? If so, state how many wives or husbands.

D. INHERITANCE

12. (*a*) Do you know that there have been changes in recent years in the Hindu Adoption Act ? (Answer Yes/No.)

(*b*) If Yes, what do you think are the salient features of recent changes ?

13. (*a*) Do you know that there have been changes in recent years in the Hindu Succession Act ? (Answer Yes/No).

(*b*) If Yes, what do you think are the salient features of such changes ?

14. (*a*) Which relatives, including male members and widows and daughters, married and unmarried, inherit property on the death of a married male person belonging to the same caste or tribe as your household ?

(*b*) What is the share of each such member ?

15. Are you in favour of inheritance of property by daughters equally with sons ?

E. PROPERTY

16. (*a*) If the household possesses land, give the following details :

A. Land under cultivation by the household	Local name of right on land	Area in acres
(*i*) Owned or held from Government		
(*ii*) Held from private persons or institutions for payment in money, kind or share.		
(*iii*) Total of items (*i*) and (*ii*)		
B. Land given to private persons for cultivation for payment in money, kind or share.		

(*b*) Also furnish the following particulars :

Total land possessed by the household	Area irrigated	Area not irrigated	One cropped area	Two cropped area	More than two cropped area
A	C	R	E	S	

(*c*) Area comprising homestead :

Name of crop	Quantity obtained last year	Quantity sold
1	2	3
(*i*) Paddy		
(*ii*) Wheat		
(*iii*) Maize, Jowar or Bajra		
(*iv*) Pulses, including gram		
(*v*) Sugarcane		
(*vi*) Barley		
(*vii*) Vegetables		
(*viii*) Jute		
(*ix*) Chillies		
(*x*) Tobacco		
(*xi*) Oilseeds		
(*xii*) Cotton		
(*xiii*) Ginger		
(*xiv*) Fodder or bamboo or cane		
(*xv*) Fruits		
(*xvi*) Other agricultural crops (specify)		

(*d*) What is the organic manure used ?

(*e*) Do you use chemical fertilisers ?

(*f*) Do you use any new agricultural implement which has been taught to you for the first time in the last five years ?

(*g*) Do you borrow agricultural implements from others at the time of cultivation ?

(*h*) Do you take help of neighbours at the time of sowing or harvesting ?

(*i*) Do you assist your neighbours and receive help at the time of cultivation in the shape of manual labour ?

(*j*) Have you adopted any land improvement measures like reclamation, soil conservation, consolidation, etc. ?

(*k*) Has there been any increase in the irrigated area during the last five years ?

(*l*) What improved seeds for crops did you use during the last agricultural year ? Give quantities and sources of supply.

(*m*) Did you use any pesticides ? If so, for what crops ?

(*n*) Have you adopted any improved methods of cultivation, like Japanese method of paddy cultivation during the last five years ?

17. How much did your father own at the time of his death :

(*a*) Land in acres

(*b*) Houses and other landed property

18. (*a*) Do you own any cattle or poultry ? (Give numbers) :

(*i*) Milch cattle

(*ii*) Draught cattle

(*iii*) Cows, buffaloes, goats, sheep, pigs, duck, geese and fowl

(*b*) How much milk or milk products do you get per day :

(*i*) for consumption in the household

(*ii*) for sale in the market or to others

(*c*) If you keep poultry or rear goats/sheep/pigs, etc., indicate the amount of average income per year from these sources.

19. Fishery :

(*a*) Does the household own or hold on lease any tank or river ?

(*b*) If fish is reared, was any quantity sold last year ? (Answer Yes/No. If 'Yes' mention quantity.)

F. INDUSTRY

20. Do you or any one else in the household conduct any industry ? If yes—

(*a*) What are the products ?

(*b*) Which of them do you sell to neighbours or in the market?

(*c*) Do you sell the products through a co-operative society or a Vikas Mandal ?

(*d*) Do you feel any difficulty due to unorganised market ?

(*e*) Have you taken up this industry for the first time in the course of last five years ?

(*f*) Have you adopted any new tools or instruments for running this industry ? If so, name the details of the tools and instruments.

21. Name the art or craft in which you have earned proficiency.

22. When and how did you learn the art or craft concerned ?

(*a*) Do you consider further training necessary ? (Answer Yes/No.)

(*b*) If Yes, describe the kind of training you desire.

23. (*a*) What was your father's occupation ?

(*b*) If you have changed your father's occupation, why have you done so ?

(*c*) Were you forced for lack of choice into this occupation ? (Answer Yes/No.)

(*d*) If you were not forced for lack of choice, why did you choose this occupation ?

24. (*a*) Have you yourself changed your occupation from another kind to this one ? (Answer Yes/No.)

(*b*) If Yes, explain why you have changed your own occupation ?

25. What kind of work would you like your son to do ?

26. (*a*) If you are engaged in trade or business, mention the commodities dealt in.

(*b*) How do you get your finance ?

(*c*) What is your approximate profit ?

27. (*a*) Is the industry run on own capital ?

(*b*) Is the capital loaned by the Mahajan who takes the products in repayment of loan or any other source ?

G. INDEBTEDNESS

If the head of household is in debt :

28. (*a*) Mention the amount of debt outstanding

(*b*) Source of credit

(*c*) Rate of interest

(*d*) Security given

(*e*) Year in which the loan was taken

(*f*) Purpose for which the loan was taken

29. (*a*) Are you content with the present occupation ? (Answer Yes/No.)

(*b*) If No, what other work you want to do ?

H. EDUCATION

30. (*a*) How much did you spend last year on the education of your children ?

(*b*) How many of your children are reading at school or college ?

School : Male/Female

College : Male/Female

(*c*) Does any member of the household :

(*i*) Regularly read a newspaper/magazine ?

(*ii*) Listen to news broadcasts through radio ?

(*d*) If there is an adult literacy centre in the village, how many members of this household have become literate through this centre ? (If no centre, put a cross here.)

(*e*) Are you a member of any library in the village or in a neighbouring village ? (Answer Yes/No.)

I. COMMUNITY

31. Do you regularly get inoculated against cholera and vaccinated against smallpox ?

32. (*a*) Does the head of the household know the name of the essential administration units in which his village is situated ?

District/Subdivision/Police Station/Anchal/Panchayat/Thana no. of the village.

(Tick for 'Yes', Cross for 'No').

(*b*) Does the head of the household know names of the principal rivers flowing through the district ?

33. (*a*) Do you think that abolition of Zamindari and intermediary rights has resulted in any good to you ? (Answer Yes/No.)

(*b*) If Yes, indicate how you have been benefited.

(*c*) If No, why have you not been benefited ?

34. If you are a Bataidar :

(*a*) Could you get yourself recorded as a Bataidar in the revisional settlement ? (Answer Yes/No.)

(*b*) Have you been evicted from your land as a result of recent land legislation ? (Answer Yes/No.) (If Yes, give particulars.)

35. (*a*) Have you benefited from any scheme of land reclamation or land improvement or irrigation ? (Answer Yes/No.)

(*b*) If Yes, explain how have you benefited.

36. (To be answered if there is a co-operative society in the village or in the neighbouring village.)

(*a*) Are you a member of the co-operative society ? (Answer Yes/No.)

(*b*) If Yes, have you derived any benefit ? Give details, if you have.

(*c*) If No, why are you not a member ?

37. Is there a C.D. Block in your area ?

(The following questions will be answered only if reply to the above question is in the affirmative.)

(*a*) Do you know what are the functions of V.L.W.? (Answer Yes/No.)

(*b*) If Yes, describe his functions.

(*c*) Has the Village Level Worker ever come and talked to you ?

(*d*) Has he demonstrated any of the improved agricultural practices mentioned above ? If so, did you follow his advice ? If not, why not ?

38. (*a*) Have you benefited from the C.D. Block ? (Answer Yes/No.)

(*b*) If Yes, how have you benefited ?

39. (*a*) What are the main functions of the Panchayat ?

(*b*) Has there been any improvement in your village since the Panchayat was established ? (Answer Yes/No.)

(*c*) If yes, what has been the improvement ?

(*d*) Did you participate in these (by contributing land, labour, cash or material, etc.) ? If not, why not ?

(*e*) Have you benefited from the work/activity ?

(*f*) Do you think that collection of rent should be given to the Gram Panchayat ?

40. (*a*) Has any caste or tribe of your village got a separate Panchayat of its own ? (Answer Yes/No.)

(*b*) If Yes, what are the main functions of this caste or tribal Panchayat ?

(*c*) Since the statutory Panchayats are functioning, why do you think these caste or tribal Panchayats should still continue ?

41. (*a*) Is there a family planning centre in your area ? (Answer Yes/No.)

(*b*) Do you know that man and wife can prevent conception of a child by deliberate means, if they wish to do so ?

(*c*) Does the head of the household wish that no more children were born to him ?

(*d*) Have you ever been benefited from the family planning centre ? (Answer Yes/No.)

(*e*) Has any member of your family ever been contacted by the lady worker in this connection ? (Answer Yes/No.)

J. DIET

42. (*a*) How many times a day do the members of the household take their meals ?

(*b*) What are the foods or drinks prohibited ?

(*c*) What are the usual items of diet at each meal ?

(*d*) Does the household regularly take :

(*i*) Tea,
(*ii*) Sugar,
(*iii*) Milk,
(*iv*) Butter,
(*v*) Ghee,
(*vi*) Fruits,
(*vii*) Vegetables ?

(*e*) Name commonly used oil/fat

(*f*) How many times a month is meat, fish, egg, consumed ?

(*g*) How many members of the household take :

(*i*) Tobacco,
(*ii*) Khaini,
(*iii*) Ganja,
(*iv*) Pan,
(*v*) Betelnut (Kasaili),
(*vi*) Bidi,
(*vii*) Cigarette,
(*viii*) Toddy,
(*ix*) Bhang, or
x) other drinks ?

K. UTENSILS

43. (*a*) Name the utensils used for preparing food and for storage of drinking water.

(*b*) Of what materials are important utensils made ?

L. FUEL

44. What fuel is ordinarily used for cooking ?

M. FURNITURE AND ORNAMENTS

45. (*a*) Does the household possess a Bed-stead/Khatia/Chauki/Chair/Table/Mirror/Bench/Stool/Machia/Wall-shelf ? (Cross out those not found).

(*b*) Is the household using any new kind of furniture for the first time in the last five years ?

(*c*) Does the household use mosquito net ?

46. List all the ornaments used by (*a*) men and (*b*) women. Give the local names and mention whether gold or silver or brass or any other material is mainly used. Give drawings.

N. HOUSES

47. Give a plan of the house and compound showing the main places, the material of the roof, walls and doors and the measurements of the bed-room.

NOTE : Give sketches and photographs wherever possible.

48. Is there a latrine in the house ?

If yes, indicate its type, e.g., Sandas, Service, Borehole, Trench, Septic.

49. Is there provision for a bathroom in the house ? If so, is it used by women only or by men only, or by both ?

50. Does the house have a separate well or tube-well ? Is it used for bathing only or for drinking only or for both ? Is the well Pukka/Katcha ?

O. CONSUMER GOODS

51. (*a*) Does the household possess lantern/petromax or Hazak/battery torchlight/kerosene stove/wall clock or time-piece/gramophone/radio set ? (Cross out those which do not apply.)

(*b*) Has any of the items been acquired for the first time in the last five years ? If yes, which are these articles ?

(*c*) Does the household use toilet soap/washing soap ?

(*d*) Does the household purchase cloth or use home spun cloth ?

(*e*) Are clothes sent to washerman to be cleaned ?

(*f*) Are shoes worn ? If so, of what material and, by how many members ? (Give figures separately for males/females.)

P. TRANSPORT FACILITIES

52. Does the household possess bullock cart/horse/elephant/tom-tom/bicycle/rickshaw/motor cycle/motor-car/tractor ? (Give the number of each item possessed. Cross out those which are not possessed.)

SUPPLEMENT TO HOUSEHOLD SCHEDULE

SOCIO-ECONOMIC SURVEY, BIHAR

Household Expenditure :

(A) Food—

1. What is the expenditure of the household on the following:

	Monthly	Annual
Vegetables—		
(1) Potatoes		
(2) Onions		
(3) Other vegetables		
2. Meat, etc. —		
(1) Beef		
(2) Mutton		
(3) Chicken, Duck, Bacon and other kinds of meat		
(4) Fish		
3. Condiments—		
(1) Chillies		
(2) Tamarind		
(3) Others		
4. Ghee and oils		
5. Salt		
6. Sugar		
7. Coffee and Tea		
8. Liquor		
9. Tobacco—		
(1) Smoking		
(2) Chewing		
10. Other Foods—		
(1) Refreshments		
(2) Pansupari		
(3) Others		
Total annual expenditure		

(B) Clothing—

1. What is the annual expenditure on clothing ?

(C) Housing, etc.—

What is the expenditure on the following :

	Monthly	Annual
1. Housing (Rent)		
2. Fuel		
3. Light		
Total annual expenditure		

(D) Miscellaneous expenditure—

What is the annual expenditure on the following :

1. Education	
2. Dhobi or soap	
3. Barber	
4. Travelling	
5. Medical fees and medicines	
6. Religious observances	
7. Amusements	
8. Provident Fund, Insurance and other compulsory savings	
9. Payment of debts	
10. Remittance to dependants living elsewhere	
11. Any other item	
Total annual expenditure	

(E) Expenditure on cultivation, industry, etc.—

What is the annual expenditure of the household on :

1. Cultivation run by the household	
2. Industry run by the household	
3. Business run by the household	
Total annual expenditure	

(F) GRAND TOTAL OF (A) TO (E)

XIV. Income of the household—

1. What is the annual income of the household under the following items:

(*a*) Salary or wages

(*b*) Industry run by the household

(*c*) Business run by the household

(*d*) Rent from land

(*e*) Rent of houses

(*f*) Pension

(*g*) Dividends

(*h*) Gifts and presents

(*i*) Help from relatives, etc

(*j*) Other sources

TOTAL

XV. Is the annual income of the household sufficient to cover the expenditure ?

XVI. How is the expenditure not covered by the income met ?

(To be answered only in respect of households the income of which is less than the expenditure)

XVII. Indebtedness :

1. Is the household in debt ? If so, what is the extent of debt ? How much of this was incurred during the last ten years ?

2. What is the extent of debt incurred for the following purposes :

(*a*) Purchase of land

(*b*) House construction or repairs to the existing building

(*c*) Marriages

(*d*) Funerals

(*e*) To give dowry

(*f*) To clear old outstanding debts

(*g*) Sickness

(*h*) Ordinary wants

(*i*) Household cultivation

(*j*) Industry run by the household

(*k*) Business run by the household

3. (*a*) Has the household cleared any debt which existed prior to 10 years and, if so, how much ?

(*b*) How was the debt cleared ? Is it from the income of any property or by borrowing or from any other source ?

SOCIO-ECONOMIC SURVEY

PART II

VILLAGE SCHEDULE

Name of district ....., Subdivision....., Police Station.....,
Anchal....., Village.....,
Thana number of village....., Area of village.....,
Number of Households....., What is the religion which majority of the villagers profess.....

1. Topography of the village—

(*a*) Is the village situated on a plain/on an undulating surface/on a plateau/on a hillock or at the bottom of a depression ?

(*b*) The system of grouping of houses—average distance between two clusters of houses—reasons for such grouping, e.g., whether on account of special custom or on account of the nature of the surface of land.

(*c*) Internal roads—tanks—village common—any stream or other extensive source of water—proximity or otherwise of any jungle—approximate number of shade bearing trees and how they are arranged ?

2. What is the local legend about the village ?

3. Detailed description of average house of the members of each caste/tribe, religious group, occupational group in the village.

4. Name and distance of the nearest Railway Station and Bus route.

5. Name and distance of Hat or Hats to which surplus produce of the village is taken for sale.

6. Distance by road from Thana and Subdivisional Headquarters.

7. (*a*) Distance of the Post Office from the village.

(*b*) Distance of the Telegraph Office from the village.

(*c*) Can money be sent through that Post Office ?

8. (*a*) Name and distance of the nearest hospital or dispensary (giving details of facilities available).

(*b*) Name of the diseases from which the villagers commonly suffer.

9. (*a*) Name and distance of the nearest veterinary hospital.

(*b*) Name of the disease from which cattle usually suffer and the measures taken for their prevention and treatment.

(*c*) Is there an Artificial Insemination Centre in or near the village ? Is the centre fully utilised by the villagers ?

(*d*) Is there any improved breed bull in the village ?

10. Religious practice followed by members of each caste, tribe and religious group in the village. The description of the religious practice in each case should begin with the name or names under which the Supreme Being is known and then proceed from ceremonies that might be observed in respect of a person from some time before he is born and end with the funeral rites after his death.

11. Give details of places of common religious worship, if any.

12. Describe community festivals if held in the village.

13. Dress commonly worn by the villagers with special reference to peculiarities on account of caste, tribe or religious sanction or economic status. (Give photographs and illustrations, wherever possible.)

14. Number and types of institutions in the village:

(*i*) School

(*ii*) Adult Literacy Centre

(*iii*) Library

(*iv*) Co-operative Society

(*v*) Panchayat

(*vi*) Mahila Mandal

(*vii*) Farmers' Club

(*viii*) Youths' Club

(*ix*) Gram Raksha Dal

(*x*) Kirtan Mandal

(*xi*) Akhara

(*xii*) Other institutions, if any

15. Describe social recreation centres, if any.

16. Give a brief account of Co-operative movement in the village, if there is a co-operative society. (Give number and names of co-operatives.)

17. Give a similar account of the working of the Panchayat, if the village has a statutory Panchayat.

For Tribal villages only.

18. (*a*) Describe in detail the physical characteristic (like colour of the skin, stature, head, hair style, nose, etc.) and psychological traits and the bearings of the members of the tribe with special emphasis on dress commonly worn by the villagers (describe apparent peculiarities on account of tribes, sub-tribes and/or economic status, etc.) (Photo)

(*b*) Does the tribe tattoo, if yes (1) whether males or females or both tattoo, and (2) at what part of the body; and (3) at what age ? Any customs/beliefs connected with tattooing ? What are the ceremonies performed at the time of tattooing ?

(*c*) Give the sketches of designs of tattooes. (Photo.)

(*d*) (*i*) At what age, marriages are contracted ? Write about marriage ceremonies and ceremonies that follow. (Give photographs of bride and bridegroom and ornaments, wherever possible.)

(*ii*) Describe ornaments.

(*iii*) Is polyandry practised in the village, Yes/No. If Yes, give a note.

(*iv*) Is polygamy practised in the village, Yes/No. If Yes, give a note.

(*v*) Is premarital sexual freedom allowed by the tribe ? Yes/No. If Yes, give a note about it. (This question should not be asked, but observation method is to be followed.)

(*vi*) Is widow marriage allowed ? If yes, describe in detail the rules and social customs connected with widow marriage, and is there any special name for such a marriage ?

(*e*) Describe in detail the village rites and customs connected with conception, pregnancy and birth. What ceremonies are associated with conception and different methods of pregnancy ? Describe birth ceremonies connected with a male and female child separately.

(*f*) Write notes on sacrifices made on different occasions like (1) Pregnancy, (2) Child birth, (3) Marriage, (4) Death, (5) Crops—(*a*)Sowing, (*b*) Harvesting, (*c*) Opening of a new Jhum land, (6) Construction of house, (7) Selection of a new site for the village and (8) in honour of V.I.Ps./Chiefs.

(*g*) How a dead body is disposed ? Describe funeral rites and customs, death effigies, etc. ? Do the customs vary for male and female deceased ?

CULTURAL LIFE OF THE VILLAGE

I	II	III		IV					V	VI	VII
Names of clubs, libraries, drama parties, or other cultural organisations in the village	When established	Rough proportion of members belonging to—		Office bearers					Brief note on basis of membership (subscription, signing, or pledge, etc.)	Brief note on objective of the organisation	Brief note on activities of the organisation
		Different castes	Different occupation groups	Name	Caste	Occupation	Age	Education			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

RECREATIONAL AND ARTISTIC ACTIVITIES ENJOYED BY THE VILLAGES

I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII		VIII	IX
Type of activity	*Brief description	Where room placed (if outside the village, name and distance of the place)	Frequency and duration (specify whether daily, monthly seasonal, etc.)	Extent of active participation of people of the main castes and communities in performance (many, few, some).	Extent of participation by people of main castes or communities as audience (many, few, some).	If activity is in village do visitors from other villages participate ?		What agency sponsors, promotes or finances	Who trains players, etc. (his name, address, caste, occupations)
						Approximate no.	Role (player, audience otherwise)		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Sports and Games.									
2. Drama, Music, Dancing, etc.									
3. Cinema									
4. Films—Trip, Puppets Show, etc.									
5. Fairs ..									
6. Festivals ..									
7. Other entertainments.									

*Indicates nature and reason of celebration.

VILLAGE LEADERS, MEMBERS OF PANCHAYAT, PRIESTS AND OTHER OFFICE BEARERS

I	II								III
	Members								
Name of organisation	Name	Caste	Occupation	Age	Since when holding the office	How gained position	Remuneration, if any	Other office held inside or outside the village	Remarks
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Statutory Panchayat ..									
Caste Panchayat (Name of Caste) ..									
Others									
Leaders									
Members of Board of Directors of Co-operative Society									

NATURE OF SOCIAL DISABILITIES SUFFERED BY DIFFERENT CASTES IN THE VILLAGE

I	II				III			IV			V
	Access to				Disability regarding services			Avoided by caste Hindu in regard to			
Name of caste	Shop, Hotel, Restaurant	Temple or place of worship	Drinking water well or tanks	Any other place of public interests	Brahman priest	Washerman	Barber	Touch	Serving cooked food	Serving water	Remarks
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

APPENDIX II

LIST OF VILLAGES ON WHICH MONOGRAPHS ARE PROPOSED TO BE PUBLISHED

Serial no.	Name of village	Anchal/Block	Subdivision	District	Special groups in the village
1	2	3	4	5	6
*1	Jojohatu	Khunti	Khunti	Ranchi	Munda Tribe
2	Kujam	Bishunpur	Gumla	Ditto	Asur Tribe
3	Harup	Ditto	Ditto	Ditto	Birjia Tribe
4	Bara Ghaggra	Khijri	Ranchi Sadar	Ditto	Lohra Tribe
5	Bergari	Mandar	Ditto	Ditto	Oraon Tribe
6	Humta Bundu	Bundu	Ditto	Ditto	Birhor Tribe
7	Kathgaon	Dumri	Gumla	Ditto	Korwa Tribe
8	Parba	Kolebira	Simdega	Ditto	Binjhia Tribe
†9	Meromdega	Thethai-Tangar	Ditto	Ditto	Gond and Kharia Tribes
‡10	Orea	Latehar	Latehar	Palamau	Kharwar Tribe
‡11	Ghutua	Ditto	Ditto	Ditto	Chero Tribe
‡12	Naresgarh	Ditto	Ditto	Ditto	Parhaiya Tribe
13	Orsapat	Mahuadar	Ditto	Ditto	Kisan Tribe
14	Hesla	Ramgarh	Hazaribagh Sadar	Hazaribagh	Bedia and Karmali Tribes
15	Upersole	Dhalbhumgarh	Dhalbhum	Singhbhum	Bhumij Tribe
16	Bharbharia	Manjhari	Singhbhum Sadar	Ditto	Ho Tribe
*17	Jamkanali	Amrapara	Pakur	Santal Parganas	Santal Tribe
*18	Batbanga	Taljhari	Rajmahal	Ditto	Sauria Paharia Tribe
*19	Kumarbhaja	Litipara	Pakur	Ditto	Mal Paharia Tribe
20	Palasi	Jama	Dumka Sadar	Ditto	Mahli Tribe
21	Khaspur	Patna Sadar	Patna Sadar	Patna	Milkmen
22	Naipura	Rajgir	Bihar	Do.	Tassar Producers
23	Pareo	Bihta	Dinapur	Do.	Variegated population
24	Manjhauli	Dumaria	Gaya Sadar	Gaya	Toddy Tappers and Potters
25	Maneri Bigha	Arwal	Jehanabad	Do.	Weavers
26	Hathauri	Hussainganj	Siwan	Saran	Potters
27	Dokhni	Ramnagar	Bettiah	Champaran	Dhangar (Oraon) Tribe
28	Jamunia	Gaunaha	Ditto	Ditto	Tharu
29	Asauta	Shambhuganj	Banka	Bhagalpur	Variegated population
30	Sabal Bigha	Sikandra	Jamui	Monghyr	Ditto
31	Manikpur	Bakhri	Begusarai	Ditto	Ditto
32	Hill Block	Surajgarha	Monghyr Sadar	Ditto	Kora Tribe

OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR GENERAL, INDIA
23362
LIBRARY
NEW DELHI

* Already printed. † The present volume. ‡ In Press.

B.S.P. (Census) 7—Lino—750—2-12-1968—S. Pd.

ERRATA

Description	For	Read
1. Page 4, 1st para, 5th line ...	A well and a *dori* are.....	A well and a *dari* are.....
2. Page 7, Kharia, 2nd para, last line.	totemestic	totemistic .....
3. Page 7, Kharia, 3rd para, 6th line.	Thus, nine totemestic.....	Thus, nine totemistic.....
4. Page 9, Right column, Language, 2nd para, 3rd line.	*Gond* is a Dravidian.....	*Gondi* is a Dravidian.....
5. Page 46, 1st para, 2nd line ...	In addition goats and sheep sacrificed.....	In addition goats and sheep are sacrificed.....