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THE SAVAR
A SCHEDULED TRIBE IN WEST BENGAL

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FOREWORD

The Constitution lays down that "the State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interest of the weaker sections of the people and in particular of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation."

To assist States in fulfilling their responsibility in this regard, the 1961 Census provided a series of special tabulations of the social and economic data on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

The Lists of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are notified by the President under the Constitution and Parliament is empowered to include in or exclude from the lists, any caste or tribe. During the Census operations, the enumerators frequently face the problem of identifying the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. In the President's notification, though in some cases, the names of the sub-castes and sub-tribes and synonyms are given, there are many cases where such names have not been provided in the list. The Census enumerators, therefore, require guidance about the acceptance or rejection of claims that they come across during the operations of some communities to be treated as sub-castes or sub-tribes of the notified Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes. For this purpose, the Census Organisation has thought it wise to undertake detailed ethnographic studies in respect of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of India. This is also in conformity with the past Census tradition of presenting authentic ethnographic account of Indian communities.

For conducting the ethnographic studies, a number of ancillary operations are undertaken by the Social Studies Unit of the Office of the Registrar General, India, as well as the staff of the Superintendents of Census Operations in the various States. These ancillary operations include: (i) compilation of available information on each Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe and preparation of bibliography in respect of them; (ii) preparation and interpretation of maps showing distribution of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes over time and space and (iii) special studies on cultural, technological and economic changes taking place among the various tribal communities.

Dr. B. K. Roy Burman, Deputy Registrar General, Social Studies Unit, assisted by Shri N. G. Nag, Officer on Special Duty and Shri A. M. Kurup, Research Officer is coordinating all these studies at the central level. I avail of this opportunity to extend my warm thanks to all my colleagues who have undertaken various studies on different aspects of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of India.

Shri N. Dutta, Investigator of the Office of the Director of Census Operations, West Bengal conducted the field Investigation at the first Stage. Supplementary field data were collected by Shri Subhas Ranjan Choudhury of the Office of the Director of Census Operations, West Bengal, under the guidance of Shri N. G. Nag, Officer on Special Duty, of the Office of the Registrar General, India who also personally visited the field. I am happy to record my acknowledgements to the above colleagues as well as to the members of the Editorial Board consisting of Shri S. Sinha, Shri N. G. Nag and Dr. B. K. Roy Burman.

New Delhi,
November, 1970

A. CHANDRA SEKHAR
Registrar General, India

PREFACE

As an adjunct of 1961 Census, preparation of ethnographic monographs on a number of selected Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and ethnic groups with special status and ethnographic glossaries on all Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes have been taken up by the Census Organisation.

In India the Census Organisation has a long tradition of undertaking ethnographic studies. Besides, there are certain reasons why, for its own operational purposes, it is necessary for the Census Organisation to take up such studies. During census operation, the Census Organisation is required to make a complete enumeration of all the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the country. The ethnographic studies are required to establish the identity of the various communities including their segments. The social boundaries of various communities are not always rigid, they are in a state of flux. Ethnographic studies are required to keep track of these changes as well as otherwise comparison of consecutive census figures would give altogether wrong picture in respect of them. There is another aspect for study in respect of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in which the Census Organisation as well as the welfare and planning agencies are interested—it is ethno-demography. In 1961 Census, separate tables were prepared in respect of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes on the following items:

(i) Industrial classification of persons at work and non-workers by sex,

(ii) age and marital status,

(iii) education,

(iv) religion,

(v) persons not at work classified by sex and type of activity for Scheduled Castes,

(vi) persons not at work classified by sex and type of activity for Scheduled Tribes,

(vii) mother-tongue and bilingualism for Scheduled Tribes.

The data available in these tables are to be analysed in respect of each Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe so that the historical and cultural factors responsible for the demographic pattern can be identified and the impact of the emergent demographic pattern on the social structure can be determined.

The insight gained by the Census Organisation, through ethnographic studies of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, will be useful for interpretation of the demographic pattern for the country as a whole. Recent studies show that in India, even now, it is difficult to correctly appreciate the various social and economic processes without reference to caste. On the other hand, in the interest of ultimate national goal, caste is not being recorded in Census, except in case of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The insight gained through ethno-demographic studies of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is, therefore, of invaluable help for Census.

At the same time, such study is very much useful for planning of development activities among the castes or tribes concerned. For instance, if the Census shows that great deal of diversification of occupation has taken place among the Parayans of Kerala, it is important for the planners to know whether the community consists of a number of disconnected segments or whether it means that a great deal of individual mobility is taking place where the main focus of community is other than traditional occupation. Again, when among the Bauris of Orissa, it is found that a very high proportion of the population is engaged in agricultural labour and next to them a high proportion is found in cultivation and also that there is considerable diversification of occupation, the following questions on sociological and practical importance arise:

(a) What is the historical relation between the agricultural labourers and the cultivators among the Bauris of Orissa? The Census data suggest one of the two possible developments, namely (1) Bulk of the Bauris were cultivators and by a process of degeneration of their economy have become agricultural labourers, (2) on the other hand, it is also possible that the bulk of them were agricultural labourers and through a process of improvement of their economic condition, many of them have become cultivators.

(b) The fact that a considerable diversification of occupation has taken place, suggests that the economy has not remained in a stagnant condition. Here, it is to be examined whether the diversification is the result of upward mobility, or downward mobility, or even horizontal mobility, and what is the actual process by which the diversification has taken place.

(c) The social dimensions corresponding to the diversification in economic life have to be examined. It is also to be examined whether inspite of diversification of occupation, the ethos of particular occupation, for instance agriculture continues to be dominant. In that case, diversification might have created problem of adjustment in values and attitudes.

Instances can be multiplied, but it is not necessary. What have been stated above, are enough to bring out the significance of ethno-demographic studies for planners.

The above dimensions of ethno-demographic studies have evolved through stages. In 1960 at the instance of Shri Mitra, Registrar General of India, a questionnaire for collection of ethnographic data was circulated among the Census Superintendents. In October, 1961, the Handicrafts and Social Studies Unit was set up in the Office of the Registrar General of India, to coordinate the ethnographic studies and a few other ancillary studies, like village surveys handicrafts surveys. In December 1961, a Study Camp was organised in Delhi, where the personnel engaged in ethnographic studies, handicrafts studies and other social investigations in the Office of the Census Superintendents, participated. In the Study Camp, it was considered that the ethnographic notes would mainly aim at making an objective assessment of the state of development of the different Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the context of the changes taking place in technology, economic organisation and total culture pattern of the country. It was further suggested that the primary focus of the study should not be on the exotic elements of the cultures of the different castes and tribes. It should be on the efforts of the communities concerned, to adjust to the modern conditions of life. In the light of the above decisions of the Study Camp, rapid ethnographic studies have been carried on by the staff of the Superintendents of Census Operations as well as by the Handicrafts and Social Studies Unit of the Offices of the Registrar General of India, in different parts of the country. These rapid surveys have brought out a number of methodological and operational problems. In May and June, 1966 two Ethnographic Study Camps were held at Kurseong and Hyderabad, where personnel from the Office of the Registrar General of India as well as from the Offices of the Census Superintendents participated. In the Study Camp held at Kurseong, the Secretary, Tribal Welfare West Bengal, and Director, Tribal Welfare, West Bengal, also participated. In this study Camp, an integrated frame for preparation of ethnographic notes was discussed and adopted. A copy of the same may be seen at Annexure. In addition to the studies in respect of each Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe separately, a number of subsidiary studies were undertaken by the Handicrafts and Social Studies Unit of the Office of the Registrar General of India, for gaining insight into a number of problems of general nature, which have bearing on the different aspects of the lives of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of the country. These subsidiary studies are as follows :

1. Shifting cultivation in Santal Parganas of Bihar and Garo Hills of Assam.
2. Pattern of Rehabilitation of displaced tribals of Rourkela.
3. Socio-economic survey of the Scheduled Areas of Rajasthan.
4. Socio-economic developments among the hillmen of North-East India.
5. Social structure and cultural orientation of Christians converted from Scheduled Castes.
6. Traditional rights of scavenging as claimed by scavengers in urban areas.
7. Grouping of castes and tribes with reference to occupation and inter-group and intra-group comparative study on the basis of the data available in earlier censuses.
8. Social mobility movements among the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

On the basis of each of the subsidiary studies indicated above, a separate monograph is under preparation. It is also proposed to prepare separate monographs on a few Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and ethnic groups with special status in each State. Besides, ethnographic glossaries are proposed to be prepared in respect of all Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. For this purpose about one lakh references have been indexed. The present report on Savars of West Bengal is one of the monographs included in the series of ethnographic studies

The field investigation was carried out in two stages. At the first stage, it was done by Shri N. Dutta of the Office of the Director of Census Operations, West Bengal. The data were consolidated under the guidance of Shri S. Sinha, Deputy Director of Census Operations, West Bengal. This helped to bring into focus some problems which required further investigations. At the second stage, Shri N. G. Nag, Officer on Special Duty, Office of the

Registrar General, India accompanied by Shri Subhas Ranjan Choudhury of the Office of the Director of Census Operations, West Bengal, visited the field and carried out further studies. In the light of this study in the field, the first draft was revised by Shri N. G. Nag himself and at the stage of final editing, I shared the responsibility. Shri Sinha's contribution to the project has also been quite considerable.

I take this opportunity to express my thanks to all the colleagues who collaborated in this project.

Shri H. L. Harit, Investigator (now Research Officer) who is looking after the compilation of information from published sources in respect of all Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and other special ethnic groups of India deserves mention.

Shri A. Mitra, Registrar General of India for 1961 Census, whose farsighted initiative is responsible for social investigations in a large number of fields including ethnography, deserves thanks of all students of Indology. I have been benefitted not only by his inspiration, but also by his valuable suggestions in connection with the ethnographic studies as well as the other studies, conducted by the Handicrafts and Social Studies Unit.

The tradition built by Shri Mitra, has been continued by Shri A. Chandra Sekhar, the present Registrar General of India. Under his guidance, the scope of the Social Studies by the Census Organisation has been further expanded. Inspite of his other pre-occupations, he has gone through the final drafts of the ethnographic notes and given a number of valuable suggestions. I avail of this opportunity to express my gratefulness to him.

B. K. ROY BURMAN

THE SAVAR OF WEST BENGAL

Name and Identity

The Savars are an ancient community which find frequent references in the Hindu mythology and Hindu classics. They are spread all over the Central India comprising Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Orissa. Sections affiliated to them are also found as far south as Andhra Pradesh and in the east in West Bengal. Some have even migrated to Tripura as tea plantation labourers. Some sources give Savars a still wider distribution in the north and west, as according to them, Saharias or Saheriyas, notified as a separate Scheduled Caste in U.P. and as a Scheduled Tribe in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan belong to the Savar group (C.I. 31, Bhopal, Vol. VII: p. 116 and C.I. 31, C.I.A., Vol. XX, Part I, p. 217). In West Bengal, however, they constitute a minor Scheduled Tribe, being notified so in only Purulia District and the territories transferred from the Purnea District of Bihar. From the earlier census reports (C.I., Bengal, 1911, Vol. V, Part II, p. 186) and other published literature (Risley; 1891, Vol. II, p. 190) it, however, appears that communities claiming to be Savars are found in other parts of West Bengal, specially in Midnapur and Bankura districts.

According to Cunningham (1884, Vol. XVII, p. 113) the origin of the name of Savar must be sought for outside the language of the Aryas. In Sanskrit 'Savara', simply means a "corpse", while the Scythian word 'Sagaris' stands for an axe. He is of the view that Savars derive their name from their habit of carrying axes, and that the Scythian word *Sagari* has been distorted into Savari and then Savar. S. N. Roy, however, does not agree with Cunningham. According to him, "looking to the root meaning of the word in Sanskrit we find that it has been derived from verb 'roye', to carry with a prefix 'saba', a dead body or carcasses. So the word means a carrier of carcasses. This root meaning fits in with the primitive occupation of the tribe, which lived entirely on the spoils of chase. The Savars had the habit of taking the flesh of dead animals, specially those that were thrown on the out-skirts of the villages". (Roy, *Man in India*, Vol. VII, No. 4, 1927, p. 17).

The phonetic expression of the community name, however, varies. In fact, in the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Lists (Modification) Order, 1956, it is differently spelt in different areas. Thus, it is notified as 'Savaras', including Kapu Savaras, etc., in Andhra Pradesh, as 'Savar' in Bihar and West Bengal, 'Sawar' (same pronounciation as Savar in Vernacular) and 'Sawara' in Maharashtra and certain parts of Madhya Pradesh, 'Sour' and 'Sonr' in Vindhya Pradesh region of Madhya Pradesh; "Saora, Savar, Saura or Sahara" in Orissa and "Sabar" in Tripura. Various authors have also spelt the community name differently and mentioned the various phonetic expressions in vogue in different areas. Risley (*op. cit.* p. 241) has adopted the name 'Savar' but has mentioned Sabar, Saur, Sar, Sayar, Suir and Swiri as variations of Savar. He has also identified them with the Suari and Sabari of Pliny and Ptolemy. Russel, like Risley, has also adopted the name 'Savar' while giving the variations, Savara, Sawara, Saonr and Sahra. According to him they are known as Saonrs in Bundelkhand where they use the honorific title 'Rawat' (Russel, Vol. II, 1906, pp. 500-508). Thurston (Vol. VI, 1909) also adopted almost similar phonetic expression and referred to them as 'Savara'. Cunningham (*op. cit.* p. 112) has discussed them as 'Sauras' or 'Savaras' but has given Shriva, Sabariya, Sairi, Suira, Surai, Suari, Seories, Swirie, Sarhia as synonyms in various regions. The word 'Saora', according to Roy, (*op. cit.* p. 16) may be spelt as Savars, Sabaras, Saurs or Saonrs. He has further mentioned that in Orissa they are known as Saurs and in Central Provinces as Saonr. In the Census of India, 1931, (Vol. I, Part III, B. p. 200) Yeates adopted the spelling 'Saora' which had been used long before by Fawcett. Elwin (1955, p. XX) also adopted the spellings 'Saora' in his reports on the tribe residing in Orissa. He also gave an exhaustive list of variations which in addition to almost all the variations mentioned by other authors included a few more. He has noted the following :—Sabar, Sabara, Sahara, Sahra, Saonr, Saora, Saoura, Sar, Saur, Saura, Saurah, Savar, Savara. Savaralu, Savra, Sawara, Sayar, Sobor, Soeri, Soiri, Sora, Soro, Soira, Sourah, Sowra, Sowrah, Suir, Swiri. Patnaik (1955, p. 7) has claimed that the correct pronounciation of the tribe is 'Saora' but is pronounced as 'Savar' in Telugu and 'Saura' in Oriya. In Purulia district of West Bengal where the community was studied in the villages Latpada and Phuljhora in Bara Bazar police station and the villages Doledanria and Jobla in Manbazar police station the members of the community prefer to refer to themselves as Savar, but their neighbours generally refer to them as Kheria.

Affinity

From the many, though somewhat confused, references in ancient literature of India as well as historical accounts, it appears that in addition to a distinct ethnic group—as the recent anthropological research indicates—the word 'Savar', or its phonetic variations has been used for a wider generic group. In fact, it appears to have still wider connotation. Thus, Elwin, (*op. cit.* p. 1) mentioned that it is possible that the word 'Saora' (Sabara or Savara) was used in ancient times much as people in India today use the words 'aboriginal', 'Bhumijan' or 'Adivasi' for it seemed to have been synonymous with such names as 'Matanga' 'Kirata', 'Jannagana', 'Pulinda' and 'Bhilla'. He concluded that the word could have hardly been employed in an ethnographical sense.

Several scholars have tried to establish the relationship of Savara with other Kolarians or Dravidians in general, on linguistic grounds or other reasons, as well as with distinct contemporary tribes. Thus, Cunningham (*op. cit.* p. 139) and Majumdar (1927, p. 13) regarded Savaras as the mainstock of Kolarians (Kolids of Eicksted); "all the Kolarians are but branches of the Sabara people", thus opines Majumdar (*ibid*). Cunningham (*op. cit.* p. 139) concluded, "that in early times, where the name of Savara is used it probably covers all the different divisions of the Kols, as they are now called, including Korkus and Bhils in the west, with Santals and Bhuiyas, Mundas and Hos, Bhumij and Juangs in the east. In the latter times, when Som Deo wrote the *Katha Sarit Sagra,* the name of Savara is used synonymous with Pulinda and Bhilla and, therefore, means only a man of an aboriginal tribe of whom the writer knew nothing except by hearsay."

But Elwin (*op. cit.*) was of the view that the persistence with which the name recurred suggested that the Saoras were an important and widely scattered tribe and perhaps the confusion about the name was due to the fact that from the earliest period the Saoras were broken up into different sections; certainly today, according to him, many of them have lost their language and have assimilated in culture and religion of their neighbours. "There seems good reason to believe", Cunningham mentioned, "that the Savaras were formerly the dominant branch of the great Kolarian family, and that their power lasted down to a comparatively late period when they were pushed aside by other Kolarian tribes in the north and east and by Gonds in the South", (*op. cit*). Roy also subscribed to the view of Kolarian origin of the Savars and in support mentioned the fact that Kolarian Santals are called Savara by the Male Paharias (Roy, 1912, p. 52 f.). According to the same author the Kharias originally formed a branch of the great Savara people. The tradition of the Mayurbhanj Kharias that they are descendants of Basu Savara lends further support to this conjecture (S. C. Roy and R. C. Roy, Vol. I, 1937, p. 30). According to Risley the Parna-Savaras mentioned by Varaha Mihira (about A.D. 550) were supposed to be the leaf-clad Juangs, another tribe of the same group, though they might equally well be the leaf-clad Savaras (Risley, *op. cit.* p. 243). He also considered that the Bendkars, living between Singbhum and Keonjhar were included under Savara in the Census of 1872. He further mentioned that the Malayas of Rajmahal Hills call, or used to call themselves, Savar-Paharias or Saurias (*ibid*). He was, however, of the opinion that, the Savars were of Dravidian origin. Dalton (1872, p. 149) also classified the Savars as Dravidians and regarded them as members of the great Bhuiya family. Hutton was of the view that the Savars of Orissa Maliahs and of Chhattisgarh, the Saoras of Saugar, Damoh, and Bundelkhand, and Saharia caste of Malwa and Gwalior (Saharia is notified as a separate Scheduled Tribe in parts of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan and as a Scheduled Caste in U.P.) all belonged to the same original stock (Hutton, edited O'Malley, 1941, p. 436). Crooke connected Musahars with the Savaras as well as the Cheros (Crooke, 1896, Vol. IV, p. 16 f). Now-a-days, some sections of the Lodhas of Midnapore in West Bengal also claim themselves to be Savars (Bhowmick, *Vanyajati,* Vol. III, No. 2, 1955, p. 61).

Origin and History

As mentioned elsewhere, there are many references to Savars in Hindu mythology, as well as in ancient and mediaeval literature. The Aitareya Brahmana has described the Savars as the elder sons of Visvamitra. According to a recorded legend, "the Rishi Visvamitra adopted as his son a Brahmana boy who had been offered as a victim in a sacrifice to appease a deity. Fifty elder sons of the Sage expressed disapproval of the act and were consequently cursed by their father, 'your offspring', said the offended parent, 'shall inherit the ends of earth'. They came to be known as the Andhras, Pundras, Sabaras, Pulindas, and Mutibas, who lived in large numbers beyond the borders of Aryandom, and ranked as *Dasyus* or outlandish barbarians. An echo of this legend is found in the thirteenth book of the Mahabharata" (Majumdar, Vol. I, 1963, pp. 35-36). The Puranas described them as *Dakshina-Patha-Vasinah* and *Vindhyamaulika* (Matsya Purana, p. 1/4), quoted by (Elwin, *op. cit.* p. 6). In the Mahabharta, they are said to have been created by Kamadhenu. Vasishtha's wonder working cow, in order to repel the aggression of Visvamitra (Russel, *op. cit.*). According to Muir's Sanskrit Texts II, 62, quoted by Cunningham (*op. cit.*) at the time of the Mahabharata the Sabaras or Savars, were a well known aboriginal people who had a dialect of their own called *Sabari.* There is also the celebrated reference in Ramayana to Sabari or Seori, an aged ascetic Savar woman, who offered hospitality to Rama during his wanderings in the jungles (Elwin, *op. cit.* 21). References to Savars are also found in the writings of Pliny and Ptolemy and it appears from their account that the Savars were a well known tribe in the beginning of the Christian era (Cunningham, *op. cit.*).

At a later period, between 500 to 600 A.D., Amara Sinha classed the Savars with such 'barbarians' as Kiratas and Pulindas, and Varah Mihara spoke of the 'naked Sabaras' and the 'Parna Sabaras' as living with the Purikas and Dasamas in the south east, and the Sauris and Kirnas as living in the south (Elwin, *op. cit.*).

Dalton (*op. cit.*) referred to a local tradition according to which the Cheros were expelled from Sahabad by the Savars. Thereafter, the Savars are said to have ruled in Kikta from 421 to 911 of the Salivahana or A.D. 500 to 990, until their King, Raja Phudi Chandra, was expelled by Jaidev, an outstanding Raja of Bhojpur dynasty or by Bhoja Raja, the founder of Bhojpur. According to Risley, a number of ancient monuments in the Shahabad district are

still put down to Suirs or Savars (Risley. *op. cit.*, p. 242). But S.C. Roy differed from this point of view as, according to him, not a single remnant of the supposed Savar conquest of Cheros is to be found in Sahabad at present. Besides, Saora, as the name of a particular tribe is unknown in the district and, on the other hand, a number of Cheros still live there. There are also other evidences of a later Chero predominance in Sahabad district, besides another tradition ascribes the expulsion of the Cheros from Sahabad to the ascendancy of another tribe of Hurihobans, and not the Savaras (S. C. Roy, *op. cit.* p. 53).

The poet Bana has narrated how Harshavardhna, immediately after his accession in A.D. 607, went in search of his sister, Rajyasri, in the wild forests of the Vindhyan mountains and was helped by a Savara chief in his mission (Elwin, *op. cit.* p. 16). Another poet, Kavi Vakpti, who flourished in the last half of the 7th century A.D., has described a shrine at Vindhyachal, near the present Mirzapur, which had a Sabara goddess to whom Savars clad in leaves offered human sacrifice. (Majumdar, B.C., *op. cit.* p. 10).

According to Korni copperplate grant, Karmavarna, the founder of the Kalinga-Ganga dynasty defeated and killed the previous ruler, Sabaraditya, somewhere to the east of Mount Mahindra in about A.D. 720. "In the Udayendiram plates of the twenty-first year of the reign of the Pallava King Nandivarman Pallavamalla, he is said to have defeated the Saora King Udanaya and captured his mirror banner made of peacock feathers. This was A.D. 736" (Elwin, *op. cit.* p. 18).

"The Savaras are frequently referred to in literature associated with Bengal, and probably figure in Paharpur sculptures ..... The Savaras lived in hills. Their women folk wore ear-rings and decorated themselves with peacock tail, and garlands of Gunja seeds". (Majumdar, *op. cit.*). Further, a reference to Savars in Burdwan district of Bengal is found in the Naihati grant of Vellalsena dated about 1100, which declared that the children of the kings who were Vellalsena's enemies had been reduced to living in the houses of Savaras. (Epigraphica Indica, Vol. V, p. 176, as quoted by Elwin, 1955, p. 19).

It would appear that the territories of the Swiris or Savars once covered a large tract. According to Garrick, their domination extended as far as the present districts of Azamgarh and Ghazipur, and near the present Ghazipur town there still exist ruins which are supposed to mark the site of an ancient Swiri town. Further, in and around Vaidyanath, Garrick discovered many remains which are attributed to Savar origin (Elwin, *op. cit.* p. 25). There are many references to the principalities and states held by Savars in and around Orissa. The former princely State of Dhenkanal in Orissa is said to have derived its name from a Savar, named, Dhenka, and, it is said, in the middle of the 17th century the area was conquered by Singh Bidyadhar who captured Dhenka Savar. Similarly, the principality of the Pal Lahara is associated with Savars. The Savars are also associated with the worship of Jagannath, the famous deity of Puri and it is said that the original image of the deity was discovered in the land of Savars where its priest was a Savar, named Basu or Vishwabasu (O'Malley, Census of India, 1911, Vol. V, Part I, pp. 504-506). In fact, there are many local legends with slight variations which associate the Savars with the worship of Jagannath of Puri.

Thus, it would be seen that the Savars are an ancient aboriginal community which had a widespread distribution in middle and south eastern India during the period 800 B. C. to 1200 A. D. According to Cunningham (*op. cit.* p. 139) in none of the authorities, either native or classical, there is any mention of Gonds or Kols or Bhils but only of the Andhras, Pulindas, Kiratas, Pundras, Barbaras and Savars. In the middle ages there are repeated references of Savar chiefs and generals who appear to have held good positions in that part of Central India which was conquered by the Gonds.

It is in the context of this general appraisal of the historical Savar tribe or tribal constellation, that the ethnography of the Savars of Purulia district is proposed to be discussed. Here it is worth mentioning that the Savars of Purulia claim that they are the descendants of the ancient Savar priest of the deity of Jagannath of Puri, which originally belonged to them and was worshipped by them.

Distribution and Population

The Savars have been notified as a Scheduled Tribe with slight variations in spellings in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and West Bengal. They are, also, notified as a Scheduled Caste in Tripura where they appear to be migrants in tea plantations. The following table gives the population of Savars in the various States and Union Territories as per 1961 Census:

Sl. No.	Name of the State	Population
1	Andhra Pradesh	68,185
2	Bihar	1,561
3	Madhya Pradesh	48,506
4	Orissa	3,11,614
5	West Bengal	2,181
6	Tripura	2,150

It will be seen from the above figures that they have largest concentration in Orissa followed by Andhra Pradesh. As mentioned earlier, though certain communities in some other parts of West Bengal, such as Midnapore and Bankura Districts, claim their affi-

nity with Savar, at present the Savaras have been included in the list of Scheduled Tribes only in Purulia district which previously formed part of Bihar and was transferred to West Bengal only in 1956. Hence, during 1961 Census they were enumerated only in Purulia district.

The numerical strength of the Savaras in relation to the total population and total tribal population of West Bengal is indicated in the statement that follows :

Total population of West Bengal	Total tribal population of West Bengal	Total Savar population	Percentage of Savar population to the total population of West Bengal	Percentage of Savar population to the total tribal population of West Bengal
1	2	3	4	5
34,926,279	2,054,081	2,181	0·006	0.1

In West Bengal the Savar, therefore, comprise a small Scheduled Tribe, numbering 2,181 only which constitutes 0.006% of the total population and 0.1% of the total tribal population of West Bengal. In so far as the population of Purulia district is concerned, the Savar comprise 0.2% of the total population and 0.8% of the total tribal population of the district. As regards their distribution in various parts of Purulia district, they are found to have their main concentration in Manbazar police station followed by Barabazar police station. The following table gives their distribution in the various police stations of the district.

Sl. No.	Name of the P. S.	Males	Females	Total
1	Barabazar . . .	275	283	558
2	Banduan . . .	34	23	57
3	Manbazar . . .	1,353	51	1,404
4	Para	4	—	4
5	Pancha . . .	—	122	122
6	Purulia . . .	36	—	36
	Total .	1,702	479	2,181

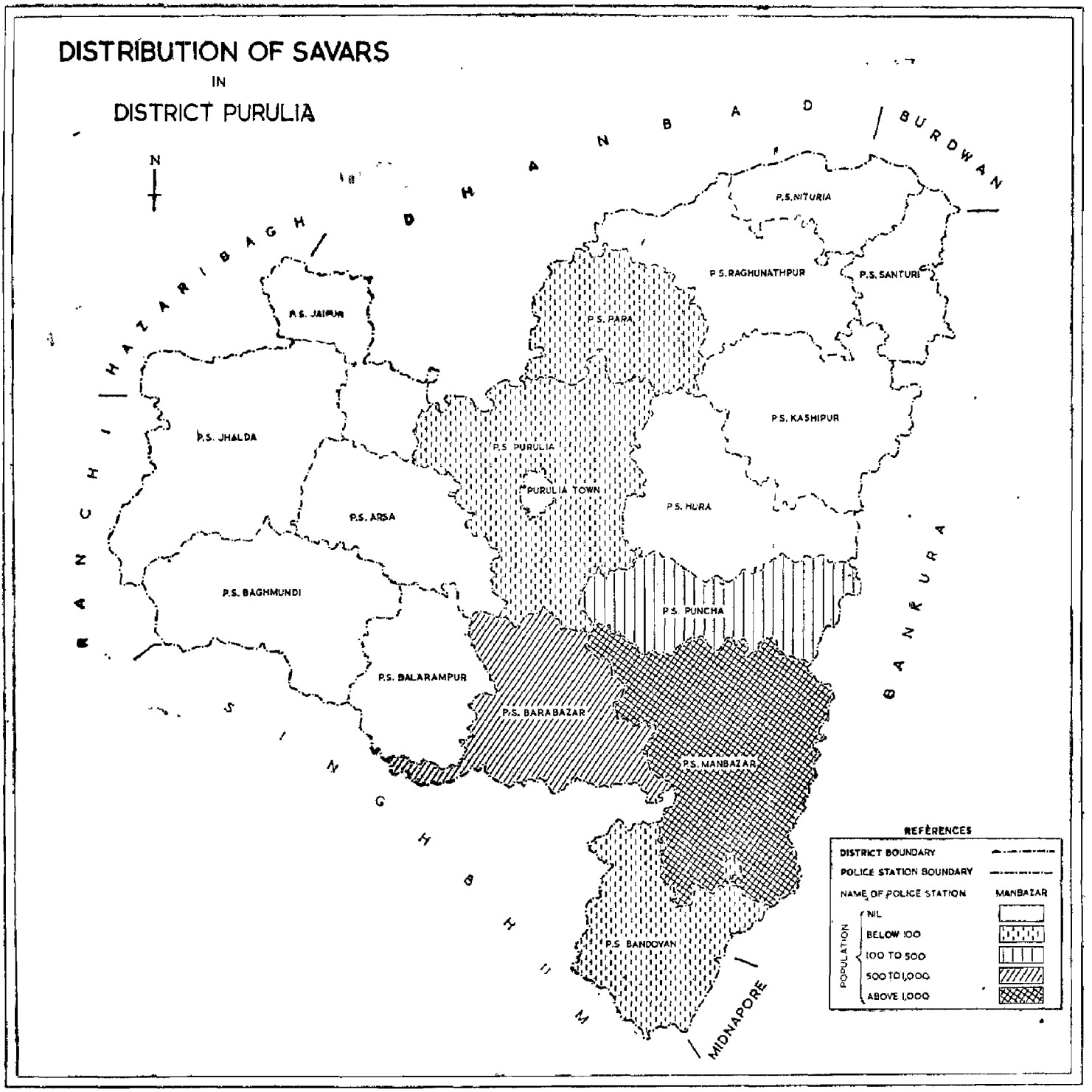
Population Trend

The following table gives the population of Savars in West Bengal as returned in the different censuses.

Sl. No.	Year	Population
1	1891	3,077
2	1901	3,566
3	1911	4,960
4	1961	2,181

From the above table it can be seen that there has been a steady and almost uniform increase in the population of Savars of West Bengal between the years 1891 and 1911. The figures for subsequent Census years from 1921 to 1951 are not available. It is also seen that in the 1961 Census there was an apparent decrease in the population of the Savaras when compared with the 1911 Census figure. However, these figures are hardly comparable for the purpose of studying demographic characteristics and population trend of the community, as the population figures for the years 1891-1911 and 1961 relate to altogether different areas. The population returns upto 1911 mainly relate to Burdwan Division (Midnapore and Bankura districts) and to a small extent 24-Parganas, Calcutta and Jalpaiguri districts. During 1961, however, the Savars were not separately enumerated in the above areas as they were not treated as a Scheduled Tribe therein.

In the President's Order of 1956 they were notified as a Scheduled Tribe in those parts of West Bengal which were mainly transferred from Manbhum district of Bihar after the reorganisation of States. Therefore, a meaningful comparison of Savar population as returned in 1961 Census can be made in respect of figures for previous years of the areas which formed parts of Manbhum district of Bihar. However, it is difficult to make an accurate comparison of the population of the erstwhile Manbhum district with the present Purulia district as some of the areas of the former district, such as the area falling in police stations Chas and Chandankiari have been attached to Dhanbad district, while Patamda, Ichagarh and Chandil police stations transferred to Singbhum district of Bihar. Thus, the erstwhile Manbhum district, in addition to complete Purulia district of West Bengal, also covered parts of two more districts of Bihar, namely Dhanbad and Singbhum of Bihar; the breakup of Savar population residing in these police stations is not always available, with the result it is difficult


DISTRIBUTION OF SAVARS
IN
DISTRICT PURULIA
N
BANDHAN BAD
BURDWAN
HAZARIBAGH
BANCHI
BANKURA
SINGHBHUM
MIDNAPORE
P.S. NITURIA
P.S. RAGHUNATHPUR
P.S. SANTURI
P.S. PARA
P.S. JAIPUR
P.S. KASHIPUR
P.S. JHALDA
P.S. PURULIA
PURULIA TOWN
P.S. HURA
P.S. ARSA
P.S. BAGHMUNDI
P.S. PUNCHA
P.S. BALARAMPUR
P.S. BARABAZAR
P.S. MANBAZAR
P.S. BANDOVAN
REFERENCES
DISTRICT BOUNDARY
POLICE STATION BOUNDARY
NAME OF POLICE STATION
MANBAZAR
POPULATION
NIL
BELOW 100
100 TO 500
500 TO 1,000
ABOVE 1,000

to adjust the population figures for the purpose of comparison. However, an estimate can be arrived at by adjustment of the figures upto the police station level. The same is given in the table below :

Sl. No.	Year	Population
1	1901	6 (C.I., 1901, Bengal).
2	1911	117 (C.I., 1911, Bihar and Orissa, Vol. I, Pt. II, 1930, p. 120).
3	1921	N.A.
4	1931	762 (C.I. Bihar and Orissa, Vol. VII, Pt. II, 1932, p. 160).
5	1941	1752 — 643 = 1109 (C.I. 1941, Bihar, Vol. II, Tables, pp. 85—86).
6	1961	2181(C.I. India, Vol. I, Part, V (ii), p. 44).

The figures in respect of the years 1901 and 1911 are too meagre to be taken into consideration for studying the population trend. However, some idea about the population trend of the community can be had if the figures from the year 1931 onwards are considered. During the 1931-41 decade, the population of Savars increased by 990 from 762 in 1931 to 1752 in 1941. The population for 1951 is not available as no tribe-wise enumeration was done during that year. Their population increased from 1752 in 1941 to 2181 in 1961. But for comparison between 1941-1961, the figures for 1941 may be taken at 1109 instead of 1752 as 643 Savars were enumerated in Palamda police station which has been merged with Singbhum district after the reorganisation in 1956 and no longer forms part of present Purulia district of West Bengal.

The above figures are too inadequate to throw light on the demographic characteristics; but these do indicate that the Savara population has been steadily increasing over the last two decades in the Purulia district.

Other Demographic Characteristics

Rural-urban distribution

The 1961 Census data interestingly reveals that the entire Savara population of 2181 persons reside in rural areas as nobody has been returned from urban areas.

Sex ratio : The distribution of Savars population by sex shows that out of the total population of 2181, 1702 (78%) are males while only 479 (22%) are females. This gives a very low sex ratio of 281 per thousand males. When the sex ratio is examined on the basis of broad age groups it is seen that out of 1247 persons in the age group 0-14, 1129 are males and only 118 are females, while in the age group 15 and above, out of the total 934 persons in that age group 573 are males and 361 females. Thus, the sex ratio is 630 among adult population while it is only 105 among the children falling in the age group 0-14. This is certainly a most disproportionate, rather abnormal, sex ratio. From the above sex ratios it seems that probably either there was a temporary influx of male population due to unknown reasons at the time of enumeration during 1961 Census, or there was an error in the enumeration itself. The latter appears to be a more plausible factor for the obvious imbalance in the sex ratio, when the sex ratio of the various police stations is taken into consideration. Thus, while the sex ratio is almost normal in the Barabazar and Banduan police stations, it is fantastically low in some other areas. For instance, in Manbazar police station, where more than 50% of the Savars population reside, out of 1404 persons as many as 1353 are males and only 51 are females. But while on the one hand, in Purulia police station the entire Savar population is male in Pancha police station on the other the entire population of 122 persons is female. This is rather inconceiveable. Though one can imagine that all the 36 persons in Purulia police station might be male migrants in search of livelihood, etc., there is absolutely no reason why the entire population in Puncha police station should belong to the fair sex.

The micro-study in two villages, Doledanaria and Phuljhora, do not provide any plausible reason for the abnormal sex ratio indicated above. The break-up of the Savar population by sex and age-groups in these two villages is furnished below :

Name of the village	Children (0—14)			Adult (15 & above)			Total population		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Doledanaria	20	15	35	8	10	18	28	25	53
Phuljhora	18	17	35	27	22	49	45	39	84

From the above table it can be seen that the sex ratios of Savar in villages Doledanaria and Phuljhora is within the range of normalcy. The number of males is 28 and that of females 25 in a total population of 53 Savars in Doledanaria, while the number of males is 45 and that of females 39 out of the total population of 84 persons covered in 20 households of Savars in village Phuljhora. The sex ratios in the village Doledanaria and Phuljhora come to 880 and 867 respectively. The age-wise sex ratio in these two villages has also been examined to check whether there is further imbalance in sex ratio among the children. It is seen that in Doledanaria out of 35 children in the age group 0-14, 20 are males and 15 are females giving a sex ratio of 750. But in the village Phuljhora the number of children in the same age group is 35 of which 18 are males and 17 are females, showing almost equal distribution of the sexes in this age group. In fact, the sex ratio is higher among the children in comparison to the adult Savar population of the village.

Racial Affinity and Physical Characteristics

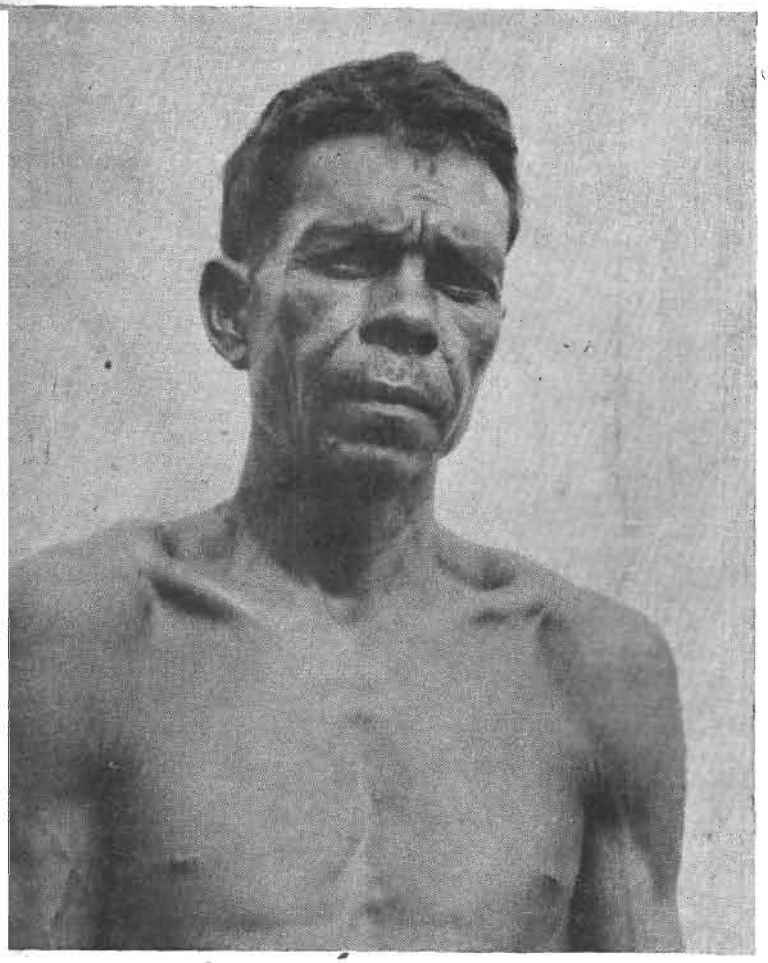
As the Savars are spread over a large area, covering many States, it is not unexpected that their physical features vary to some extent. The observations of earlier scholars in respect of physical characteristics of the community in various States, including Orissa and Andhra Pradesh where it has its largest concentration, indicates that basically they belong to Proto-australoid racial stock. In fact, some of them, such as Majumdar, have categorically stated that they are Proto-australoids (Majumdar, 1950, pp. 18-42). Hutton (C.I. 1931, Vol. I, Part III, 1935, p. 34) has, however, interestingly mentioned that their "..... .....features sometimes slightly negroid, are Mongolian ....." Similarly, Thurston has quoted Fawcet, according to whom their, "face is distinctly Mongolian, the obliquity of the eyes being sometimes very marked and inner corners of the eyes are generally very oblique" (Thurston, *op. cit.*, pp. 304-347).

The Mongoloid ethnic characteristics of Savars is, however, not substantiated by other scholars. Thus, Majumdar, who conducted Anthropometric investigations among 100 Savars in Ganjam in Orissa, denies that there is any Mongoloid element in the racial composition of the community (*op. cit.*, p. 32). The only physical traits which are associated with Mongoloid element, observed among the Savaras by some scholars are slight to medium obliquity of the eyes and somewhat high cheek bones, possessed by a few persons. It may be mentioned here that among the Savars of Purulia the only Mongoloid trait discernable was slight obliquity of the eyes. However, on the basis of this characteristic alone the tribe cannot be said to belong to Mongoloid stock.

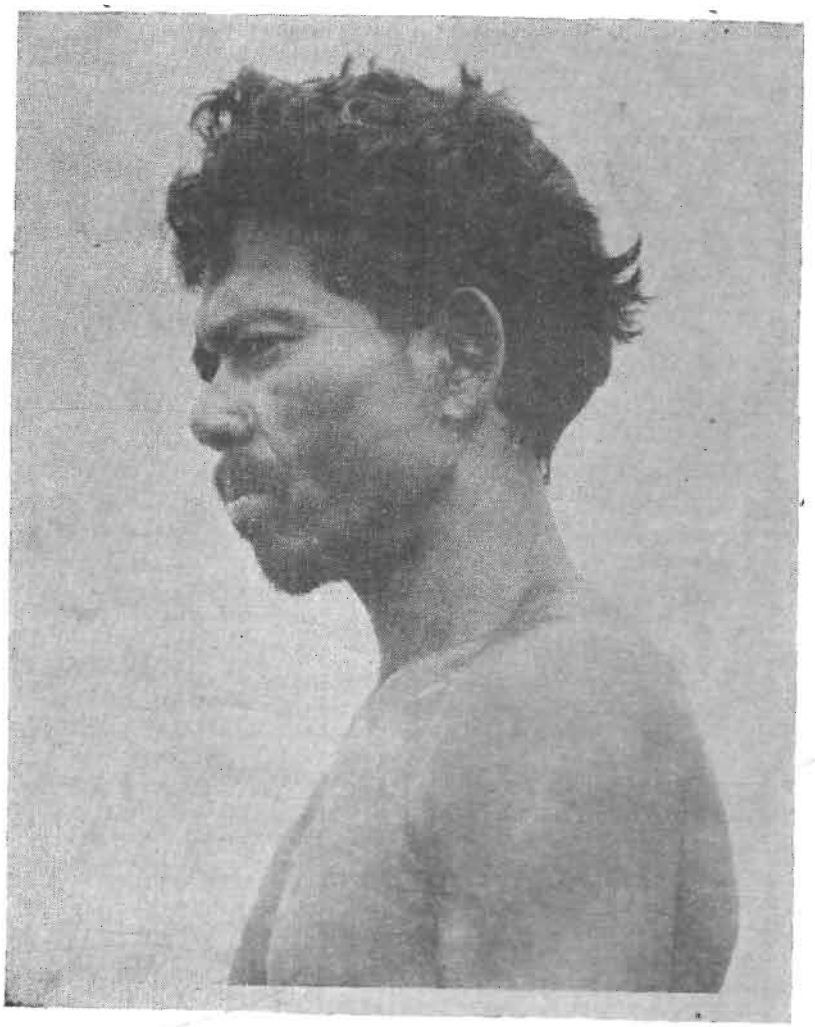
It will not be out of place here to briefly summarise their salient physical features as reported by various authors. They have generally, short to below medium stature; a few of them, however, are medium statured. The complexion of their face varies from medium brown to very dark brown, approaching black in some cases. The lighter shades, such as medium brown and yellow brown, are generally found in conjunction with medium stature. By and large, they have broad and flatish nose, with somewhat flared alae or nostrils, and medium to deep depression at the root of the nose. Their lips are generally thick and slightly everted. The hair on the head is wavy to curly. In some cases, the eyes are slightly to moderately oblique, but not accompanied by epicanthic fold. However, in connection with the present study somatoscopic observations have been recorded in respect of 25 adult unrelated male Savara. Also, out of the above 25, height vertex in respect of 20 persons has also been recorded. The tallest individual covered in the sample is 170.2 cms. in height and the shortest 147.3 cms. They are thus, 'short' to 'below medium' statured as their mean height comes to 159·2 cms., which is slightly (0·9 cms.) less than the range of 'below medium' stature. This compares favourably with the average height vertex of 160.4 cms, recorded by Irawati Karve among the Savara of Orissa (Karve, 1954, pp. 45-75). The mean height vertex of 157:7 cms, among the Savara of Bihar, and 157:2 cms, among those of Orissa, as reported by Prasad (1955: p. 231) and Majumdar (*op. cit.*), respectively is slightly less but then these values also fall in the category of short stature, in which the present sample is included.

The skin colour on the exposed portion, such as the face, ranges from dark brown to brown colour, as out of 25 individuals observed, 5(20%) are dark brown, 11(44%) chocolate, 1(4%) yellow brown, and 8(32%) brown in colour. The hair on the head is generally wavy to curly. 80% of the persons included in the sample having wavy hair of different categories; 5(20%) each have hair with low waves and medium waves and 10 (40%) have hair with deep waves. 4 persons (16%) have curly hair. It is interesting to note that one individual (4% of the sample) has frizzly hair, which is generally associated with Negroid type. Noteworthy as it may be, this, is not the only case; presence of frizzly hair among the Savars has also been reported by authors such as Risley and Sitapati who have made a mention of "frizzled shocks" and "frizzly hair" among them (Risley, *op. cit.* pp. 241-46 and ii—Munro and Sitapati, C. I. 1931, Vol. I, Pt. II, 1935, pp. 3-4). It is presumably on the basis of the presence of frizzly hair that Hutton has referred to, "slightly negroid" features among the Savar (*ibid*).

Further, nearly half, 48% have broad noses with flared alae or wings of these, 12% have slight flaring of nostrils and the remaining 36% pronounced flaring. More than half of the individuals (68%) from the present sample have depression at the root of the nose which can be termed as 'medium'; the remaining (32%) have only shallow depression. Their lips show



1. Front view of a Savar male



2. Profile of a Savar male



3. Front view of a Savar woman



4. Profile view of a Savar woman

a tendency for thickness; as many as 24%, having thick lips and the remaining 76% have medium thick lips. In majority of cases, 84% the eye slits are straight; slight to medium obliquity of the eyes is discernible among the remaining 16%. None of these, however, betray the presence of epicanthic fold. They have mostly round to oval face, 64% and 36% respectively. Slight prognathism (projection of jaws) is noticeable in 40% cases. In case of one individual prognathism is somewhat more pronounced and can be termed as medium. The remaining 60% have no prognathism at all. Their chin is mostly 'medium' in development, as 16 (64%) have moderately developed chins, the remaining 9 (36%) have somewhat weak chins with a tendency to recede. As regards development of cheek bones, 5 persons (20%) have somewhat weak cheek bones, 18 (72%) have 'medium' cheek bones and the remaining 2 (8%) have prominent and somewhat high cheek bones.

Structure and Function of Family among the Savars :

The Savars reckon descent along the male line. They are patrilineal, patrynymic and patripotestal. The residence is patrilocal but as after the marriage the couple generally sets up a separate household, therefore, it is neo-local though patrivicinal. There are, however, special cases where patriliny is not associated with virilocality or neo-locality as in the case of *Gharjamain,* when a man comes to stay in the house of his father-in-law.

The sons inherit the property of their father in equal shares; the eldest son, however, receives a slightly larger share. In the absence of a son, property goes to brother's son or, in his absence, to the closest male kin. Generally, a man having no son invites his son-in-law to stay with him as *Gharjamain* and the latter is entitled to enjoy the property. Adoption of a son, generally brothers' son or near male kin is also practised but the custom of *Gharjamain* seems to be more preferred. Unmarried sisters and widows are entitled to maintenance but generally they live with one of the sons or the brothers, as the case may be. The latter is given an extra share of the ancestral property to meet the expenses incurred for the maintenance of the widow.

A statement giving the distribution of 20 Savar households at Phuljhora by their composition is furnished below

Sl. No.	Composition of the household	Number
1	Husband and wife and their unmarried children	1
2	Husband and wife	2
3	Single male	1
4	Father and unmarried daughter . . .	1
5	Husband and wife and widowed mother of the former	1
6	Husband and wife and a married son and his wife (no issue) and other unmarried children .	1
7	Husband and wife with their unmarried children, widowed mother and unmarried sister of the former	1
8	Husband and wife with unmarried children, husband's sister's widowed husband and his unmarried children	1
9	Three brothers (two with their wives and unmarried children, one issueless widower), their widowed mother and unmarried sister .	1

The statement shows that out of the 20 households only two are extended families, one is a broken nuclear family, two are incomplete nuclear families, one is a single-member household and three are nuclear families with adhesion and eleven are nuclear families. In the absence of a representative sample survey, it is difficult to say whether the ratios indicated above would hold good for the Savar community as a whole of West Bengal. However, from the group discussions, as well as the impressions gained during the visits to the different places inhabited by the Savars, it appears that nuclear family is the predominant type among them. But when considered along with nuclear families with adhesion, which seem to indicate a transitional phase in the domestic cycle, the extended family type, appears to have not an inconsequential niche in the community life of the Savars.

If again the concept of family is considered in its wider connotation and is not confined to household only, the orientation towards extended family, if not, actual incidence, is likely to be considerably high.

In this connection, it would be worthwhile to take a note of some of the recently developed concepts relating to family. According to one view, family is an identical concept with household group. Another view equates family with property holding group. According to still another view, family is to be considered as a functional unit, that is to say, a ritual and ceremonial group. According to the first definition nuclear household is obviously the most common type among the Savars. If the second definition is considered, a slightly different picture emerges out. In Phuljhora village itself, it has been found that though in some cases, the agnates are living in separate residential and commensal units, they are holding property in common and carrying on joint economic activities and participating in common ceremonies and rituals. As regards the third definition, it would be difficult to draw a line. Just as an exercise in

methodology, Ringdu, an intelligent Savar, was asked whether all the persons who participate along with him in common rituals and ceremonies stand to him in closer relations than other kins. He stated that normally all the members of his lineage would have some common ritual roles, for instance, observation of mourning period in the case of death of one of the members of the lineage; but in economic and other matters even some of the affinal kins may be closer to him. He, therefore, thought that it would be wrong to consider all the members of the same lineage with the same ritual roles, to fit into the structure of joint family, as is ordinarily conceived.

There is much force in the view of Ringdu. In Phuljhora all the persons who can trace their origin from a common ancestor on the fatrher's side constitute the maximal lineage; but it would be of little sociological import, if the extended family is considered to be identical with the maximal lineage. But at the same time it is to be visualised that though the maximal lineage cannot be identified with extended family the members of a maximal lineage are expected to stand by one another in the common affairs of the village. In between the maximal lineage and the household consisting of a nuclear family, there is another intermediate category which is the group of agnates holding property in common and carrying on economic activities jointly. The illustration of such an intermediate group is provided by Ringdu and his brothers.

Ringdu has three brothers, he being the eldest. Two of the other brothers, namely Mangal and Moti live with him in the same household alongwith their wives and children. Besides, their widowed mother and unmarried sister live with them. They take food from the same hearth and have common household fund. Ringdu and Moti carry on agricultural activities together; Mangal is at present employed in a different place but his wife and child live with Ringdu. He sends remittances to Ringdu and contributes to the common fund of the household. The fourth brother Phago is also married and has three children, but he lives in a separate house in the same village and forms a separate household. He however, cultivates ancestral common land alongwith his three brothers and after the harvest, takes the share of produce for meeting the expenses of his household.

Besides, he performs the family worship in common and during important festive occasions, passes the day in the ancestral household along with his wife and children. Though he had set up a separate household because his wife could not pull on well with the wives of his brothers, she actually spends most of her leisure time in the ancestral house.

In so far as families are considered as moral categories, binding the members to particular types of behaviour pattern, the special role of the intermediate groups described above, would require a thorough probe. Apparently it appears that they stand at almost the same footing as extended families based on co-residence and shares of common hearth.

This intermediate group has not only an area of functional jointness, but also of sentimental jointness which is of great sociological significance. While considering the incidence of different types of families, it is also to be considered whether this inter-household jointness among siblings is a moral category, as sanctified by the ethos of the community or whether it reflects an ecological response to the organisational needs of agricultural operations, in immitation of the pattern which traditionally prevails among the Hindu castes of the region. During the rapid survey, for obvious reasons no attempt has been made to find answer to the question; but the question appears to be of great relevance in view of the fact that where the brothers were living separtely, they did not appear to have any sense of guilt about it. . On the other hand, where the brothers were living together, they tended more to harp on the advantages of such jointness; rather than on the moral aspect of it. It is quite possible that under the impact of the forces of modernisation, multichannel thinking has come to be associated with family structure and family organisation in the minds of the people. Joint family may be simultaneously considered to belong to the amoral category as well as moral category; similarly nuclear household may simultaneously be considered to belong to both these categories. It is, however, safe to assume that even in this framework of multichannel thinking, extended family is never looked upon as an immoral category.

In view of the fact that detailed studies with adequate research protocols could not be undertaken during the rapid survey of the Savars, it is not proposed to go beyond the formulation of these operational concepts for analytical purposes in the present monograph.

The size of households among the Savars is rather small. Usually, 4 to 5 persons are found living in one household. The 13 households in Doledanaria and 20 households in Phuljhora covered during the present study give as average of 4.1 and 4.2 persons respectively.

It would be of some interest to have an idea about the nature of personal relations among the members of the joint family among the Savars. Here again, the household of Ringdu was taken for detailed study as it is largest and provides various configurations of social relationship. Thus, there is the extension of relationship between different married brothers, between the different brother's wives, between the married brother and his younger brother's wife, between the mother and sons, between the mother and her sons' wives, between unmarried sister and her brothers' wives, etc. It was reported that barring occasional emotional outbursts of minor nature and tiffs, the relations between various members were

extremely cordial and happy. The head of the household Ringdu, manages the family purse. He is respected and obeyed by other brothers and their wives and children. He is an issueless widower and regards his brother's children as his own. Ringdu has made matters easy by not acting as a "patriarch" by insisting upon a rigid and highly disciplined code of behaviour from his younger brothers and their wives. He does not throw about his weight in the family. He least interferes in personal matters of the different members of the household. Similarly, his widowed mother does not meddle in the personal affairs of her daughters-in-law.

As mentioned earlier relations of the separated brother Phagu and his family with the members of Ringdu's household, are quite good, though not as among the members living in the same household. There is no resentment among his brothers that he has set up a separate household. He not only cultivates the agricultural land jointly with other brothers but also takes interest in their family matters.

Attitude towards joint family

An attempt was made to enquire from the head of the households, covered during the survey, their attitude towards joint family. Out of the 20 households, 11(55%) were not in favour of joint family at all and the remaining 9(45%) were in its favour with certain reservations, *viz.*, that all the adult members in the households should be willing and such an arrangement should not result in quarrels and differences among the members of joint family, and whenever stresses and strains developed they might set up separate households. Thus, they do not favour unconditional jointness. It may, however, be mentioned that even those who do not believe in joint families are in favour of including widowed mother or aged widowed father in the household. This would appear to indicate that in their familial norms, favouring nuclear families, aged widowed mother or father finds a place in the household of a married son and his children.

Clan organisation and totemism

The Savars discussed in this monograph have a fairly strong clan organisation of totemistic nature which forms an important aspect of the social organisation of the community in the area. A few of the clans reported by them are given below:

1. Tesa (a bird called Neelkantha in vernacular)
2. Dhar-Bhuiya
3. Neat-Bhuiya
4. Dunra Bhuiya

(2–4: varieties of fish resembling snakes.)

5. Gurai (a variety of fish)
6. Hans (Gander)
7. Kisukari (a local variety of grass having long blades).
8. Gulgu (Sal fish)
9. Barda (Totem not known).

It may be mentioned that some of the above totemic clans are also found among other tribal communities. For instance, Bhuiya, Tesa and Gulgu are also reported among the Hill Kharias (Prasad, *op. cit.* p. 119). There is no hierarchy of status among the above clans and all of them rank equally. As mentioned, these are totemistic in nature and named after specific *fauna and flora* which are considered as the totem of the particular clan. There is a vague idea in the community that there is some sort of mystic relationship between the totem and the associated clan members. Anyhow, there appears to be no doubt that a special association exists between the members of a clan and its totem which is reflected in certain attitudes and behaviour—mostly taboos—of the former towards the latter. Thus, they are not supposed to kill or harm and, in some cases, even touch their respective totems which are looked upon with veneration, though not actually worshipped in one form or the other. The persons belonging to 'Hans' clan and 'Gurai' clan will not eat, kill or harm their respective totems. Similarly, the members belonging to 'Kisukari' clan—Kisukari being a local variety of grass used in thatching in construction of huts—will not cut this variety of grass or use it in the construction of a hut. It was, however, reported that the members of Dhar-Bhuiya clan have no objection to eat their totem, which is a variety of fish, while the Neat-Bhuiya clan which has the same totem will not even touch it. The Dunra-Bhuiya will touch the totem but will not eat it. It may be observed here that, just as in the case of other Indian totemic tribes, it is the social aspect of the totemism which is more operative and the religious aspect is not so significant.

The Savars in other parts of West Bengal, such as Bankura district etc., which have been discussed by Risley (*op. cit.* p. 241) are reported to have exogamous and totemic septs, and so also those of Madhya Pradesh described by Russell (*op. cit.*). But from a survey of the literature on the different communities, passing as Savar in different parts of the country, it appears that their social organisation, even their clan organisation, differs from area to area. Thus, while in some areas, such as Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal, they have totemic exogamous clans, in others, such as Ganjam and Koraput in Orissa, it is reported that they (Hill Saoras) lack clan organisation. According to Elwin, "the most remarkable thing about the organisation of Saora society is its lack of organisation, its endogamous divisions are vague and often disregarded and in sharp contrast to all the neighbouring tribes, it has no exogamous totemic clans, no pharatries, no moieties" (Elwin, *op. cit.*, p. 50). Prasad (*op. cit.* p. 233) also reported the absence of clan organisation—totemic or otherwise—among the Savars of Dhalbhum. The presence of totemic clan organisation among the Savars in some areas and and absence of the same in others, have prompted some scholars to offer a few theories and conjectures. Thus, according to Risley, the Savars of Bankura

(West Bengal) may have picked up their totemic septs locally; the more primitive Savars of Orissa have no septs (Risley, *op. cit.*). Though he is not so categorical Elwin also seems to follow the same line of reasoning as, according to him, the Hill Saoras (Savars) living in the interior of Ganjam and Koraput districts of Orissa, who are more backward, comparatively isolated and less acculturated, have no totemic exoagmous divisions, while the Savars in other areas have assimilated themselves to the local population adopting its language, its dress, its manners and its gods (Elwin, *op. cit.*, p. 6). He, thus, implies that Savars in other areas have adopted, like other cultural traits, the clan organisation of their neighbours. However, this appears to be more or less conjectural and ignores other aspects of the problem which need to be looked into. For instance, wherever the Savars have been influenced locally, it is to be examined as to which communities served as cultural models for them, from whom they adopted the specific social and cultural practices. Now, despite the alleged antagonism of Savars towards the Brahmins in some areas, it is mostly the neighbouring Brahmins and other caste Hindus who have served as cultural models for Savars and that is why the Savars of Bankura and Midnapore have patterned their customs after them and Hinduised their pantheon and invite Brahmin priests to preside over their religious and social ceremonies, such as marriages, etc. The caste Hindus in the area as a rule do not possess totemic clan organisation and as such the question of adopting the same by the Savars from them does not arise. Actually, in some of the recent works on the subject also the decline of totemism is attributed to acculturation from higher Hindu castes. "This decline", Ferreira states, "is evidently the result of a long process of Hinduization (or Sanskritization), coupled in more recent times with what may be called, for want of a better term, Westernization" (Ferreira, 1865, p. 122).

In this connection, a duality, if not duplicity in the Savar behaviour pattern deserves special attention. On the one hand, they try to emulate the cultural traits including the rites and ritual practices of the neighbouring Hindus, on the other they have a manifest antagonism towards the Brahmins, who are at the apex of the ritual order of Hindu society. What is the structural significance of this emulation-antagonism? Is it a dimension of continuity and change? In that case what is continued and what is changed?

Before answering this question it is to be noted that emulation-antagonism syndrome is found not only among the Savar group of tribes, but also among others—the Banjaras for instance. All these tribes have the tradition of being once the masters of their own affairs; also they have the tradition that either they themselves or their dear ones were cheated by the Brahmins. One would be tempted to relate this myth of shifts in power and prestige structure involving these communities. It is quite likely that in a world-view marked by the pervasive character of ritual order, the throw-outs of history would ascribe their misfortune to the power of the Brahmins to manage the supernatural; to "steal" as it were the sources of their goodluck. These are against the Brahmins, again, tantamounts to the cultural superiority of the intruders in the arena of power and prestige. Naturally there would be the craving to adopt the culture and ritual system; but at the same time, the memory of old glory of self would continue to stick on. One way to resolve the dilemma is to institutionalise vociferous antogonism and at the same time practise imitation in a quite way. This situational analysis should not be misunderstood as a reconstruction of a hypothetical history; it is only an exercise to logically formulate the psycho-dynamics of a culturally and perhaps socio-politically vanquished community, which, however, is not prepared to surrender on its hours.

In the context of this logical frame of psychodynamics the question of relating to totemic clan organisations among the Savars can be formulated as follows—(a) Had all the ethnic groups passing as Savara today a uniform type of social organisation before coming into contact with the Brahmanistic Hindus? (b) Did those Savars who do not have totemic clans today have it in the past and did they lose the same in the process of Hinduization? (c) Is it possible that in their pristine condition, in all the Savar groups totemic clan organisation was absent and that they adopted the same under the influence of their neighbours?

Some of the earlier authors were also seized of the problem, although in a somewhat different manner and tried to provide their own answers. For instance, Roy (*op. cit.* p. 122) considered that the Kharias of Mayurbhanj, who unlike the Dudh and Dhelki Kharias of Singbhum and Manbhum did not have totemic clans at the time of his studies, were having it in the past and had probably lost it, just as they had lost their own language (Roy, *op. cit.* 1937, p. 122). On the other hand, Risley (*op. cit.*) opined that the Savar had adopted totemic clan organisations from their neighbour on a scrutiny of the ethnographic data of the Savara group of tribes as well as the neighbouring tribal and non-tribal communities, arguments can be given for and against both the points of view. For instance, it can be stated that totemic organisation is found even among very primitive basically Proto-austroloid tribes like the Birhors hence there is no reason to think that the Savara group of tribes could not have it. It may also be argued that Brahmanistic Hindus could hardly be a source from propagation of totemic clan, as gotra division among the Brahmintistic Hindus, though superficially endogamous is not homologus. On the other hand, the tribes like Santals, who are one of the dominant neighbours of the Savars, could not serve as model for this purpose, as the Savars do not accept their cultural or social superiority in any field. But it may be argued from the other side, that the erratic distribution of presence of totemic clan organisation among

the Savars, can only be explained in terms of adopting the system as a culture trait in various contact situations.

It, however, appears that there is a snag in the argument on both sides. All seem to have started with the assumption of pristine uniformity of social organisation. But this assumption remains to be proved. It is also quite possible, that the different tribes passing as Savar in different parts of the country, were heterogenous in origin, were at different levels of technology and culture, and that presence or absence of totemic clans among them should be explained with reference to the specific ecology and culture history of the tribes included in the Savar group rather than with reference to those for the Savar tribe as a whole. Further, it may be stated that the duality of world view mentioned earlier would provide a congenial climate for the diversity to persist inspite of a broad consensus of kind among the diverse Savar tribes.

Settlement and Dwellings

As mentioned earlier, the Savar settlements are located in rural areas, mostly in Manbazar and Barabazar police stations in Purulia district. Though they lead a settled life with permanent abodes their settlements and villages are mostly located in inaccessible interior areas, on the outskirts of forests. The villages Doledanaria and Jobla in Manbazar are located at a distance of 5-6 kms. from any motorable road. Similarly, the village Phuljhora is located at a distance of 9-10 kms. from Barabazar, the nearest market and headquarter of the police station. There is no regular road beyond 3 kms. of Barabazar. The village is actually surrounded by forests on two sides and can be approached only after crossing small streams which are difficult to cross during the monsoon. The Savars also live in colonies established by the Tribal Welfare Department of the State Government. These have compartively better communication, though still located in the interior areas. One such colony is located at Latpada, 7-8 kms. from Barabazar. These are, however, discussed in greater details in a subsequent section.

The Savars in the aforesaid villages have no idea about their earlier settlements, but they believe that their original home was in the forests. They do not know when and why their forefathers came to live in their present settlements. They mentioned that they have been living in these settlements since time immemorial. They prefer to settle down at places near the jungles as they still depend on the forest for their livelihood to a considerable extent. They build their huts after clearing the jungle.

The Savars perform a simple ceremony for selection of the site for their settlement. An earthen pot, full of water, and a *Paila* (sacred basket), full of *atap* (rice of unboiled paddy) are kept in the evening of a particular day at the proposed site of the village. The next morning, if the level of water in the pot and the quantity of rice in the *Paila* remain the same, the *Laja* or the priest of the Savars sacrifices a red fowl, after smearing it with mustard oil and vermilion, to *Basumata* (mother-earth). The site is then considered suitable for settlement. But, if water or rice is reduced in volume or quantity, the ritual is repeated at some other site.

The Savars mostly live in villages of their own as in the case of Phuljhora where out of a total number of 40 to 42 houses about 35 houses belong to them and the remaining are occupied by others, mostly Santals. They also live in composite villages occupied by other castes and tribes as in Doledanaria where they live in a Santal village and are having only 13 households. However, in this case they form a separate hamlet of their own on the outskirts of the main village occupied by Santals. In another village, Jobla, there are only four houses of Savars on the outskirts of the main village, mostly inhabited by Hindu castes. The Savars in these two cases pay rent or lease for the house sites occupied by them to the landlord. In Doledanaria they are paying lease to a Santal landlord of the village.

No definite pattern was observed in the arrangement of huts in any of the villages investigated; these are not arranged in rows or any other order. The huts are spaced apart from each other and generally surrounded by small kitchen garden or yards as in the case of Phuljhora.

It is reported that the traditional housetype of the Savars was a *Kumba*, like the dwellings of Birhors, a food gathering tribe who live in the jungles. The *Kumba* comprises a small hut having sloped roof, thatched with leaves and branches of trees, with walls made of the same materials as that of roof with a coating of mud.

At present, the Savars are found to be living in low and small single-roomed huts with rectangular ground plan and low plinth. They do not take elaborate measures in the construction of huts. The walls of the huts are mostly made of mud and without any window or any other arrangement for ventilation. Not a single hut having a window was seen in the villages studied; the space between the roof and the wall seems to serve as a ventilator. The roof, which is four-sloped, is thatched with straw. It is so low that one has to bend down on the knees before entering the hut. Generally, there is only one entrance to the hut through a passage but it is generally devoid of any fixed door. The entrance is barred at night by means of a portable door made of a bamboo frame, straw or twigs and leaves. Only a few huts are provided with fixed wooden doors. Some huts also have a covered verandah in the front as in the case of houses of Santals and Hindus of the area. The single tenement of a Savar, which is very dark and unhygienic is used as bed room, kitchen, store-room and for all other purposes including hous-

ing poultry birds. In some houses, husking levers are also found in the same room. Sometimes, they construct wooden racks, for keeping household goods. An oven or hearth is raised in one corner. Though there is no separate *Vedi* (altar) for ancestral deity in the hut, the souls of the ancestors are offered drinks by the side of the oven, situated at one corner. In some houses both parents and sons lead their conjugal lives within the same room with only formal separations of walls, erected two or three feet high.

Generally, there is an open courtyard or an open space in front of every Savar house where a *Tulsi Than* (altar) is provided for family worship on a raised platform made of earth and plastered with a paste of cowdung and water. In many cases a few terracotta horses are seen lying scattered before the altar.

The Savars construct the houses themselves with the materials collected from the jungles and other locally available sources. These materials are *Sal, Kend, Mahua* and other wood, a variety of long blade grass, and mud. Their own labour is the primary capital invested in the construction of their huts.

They observe two ceremonies in connection with the construction of a hut. First, just before the roof is laid the head of the household smears the top cross-beam, where the two main slopes of the roof meet, with mustard oil and vermilion. Later, after the completion of the roof, one mango twig and a *tagar* flower are suspended from each side of the top cross-beam. But no animal is sacrificed.

The Savars cleanse their huts on different ceremonial occasions with a paste of cowdung and water. They do not have any decoration on the walls, either inside or outside the hut.

Dress, Ornaments and Personal Decoration

The Savars believe that their traditional dress in the past consisted of barks of trees which covered the lower part of the body; the upper part remained bare, in the case of males as well as females.

At present, the common items of dress in use in the daily life reveals no feature characteristic of the Savar community only. The males generally wear a small mill-made *dhoti* or *gamcha* (country-napkin) from the waist up to the knees. The upper part remains most of the time bare or sometimes covered with a vest. While engaged in work, they generally wear only a *gamcha* or a small piece of cloth. Occasionally, they are found only in an underwear or a *lungi* (an unsewn piece of cloth of a length of two yards wrapped round the loin). During visit to the market, they cover their upper part of the body with a vest or a shirt with half sleeves, while they put on a *dhoti* to cover the lower part of the body. During festivals or ceremonial occasions, they wear clean shirts and *dhutis;* some, who can afford, wear new shirts and *dhutis.* But they do not use any headgear.

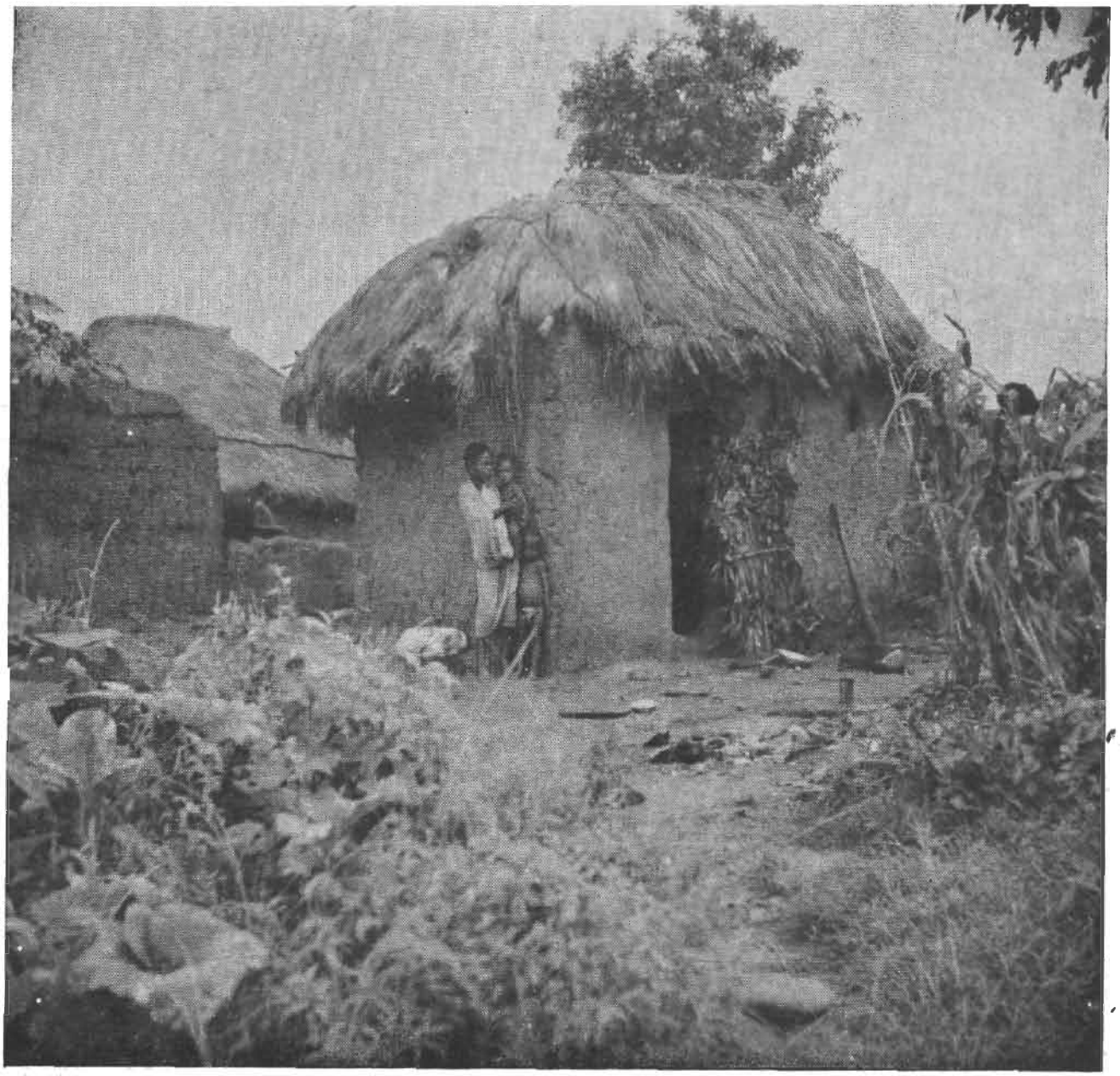
The old women generally wear a saree of short length and attempt to cover the body as much as possible. But the younger women-folk use mill-made sarees of full length—5 metres with which they cover their body. Ordinarily, they do not put on blouses; the saree is so tied as to cover the breasts fully. On special ceremonial occasions or on visit to markets or towns, however, some women and specially the younger ones wear blouses and petticoats under the sari.

During winter, those who can afford put on a cotton *chaddar* (wrapper) which is used irrespective of age and sex.

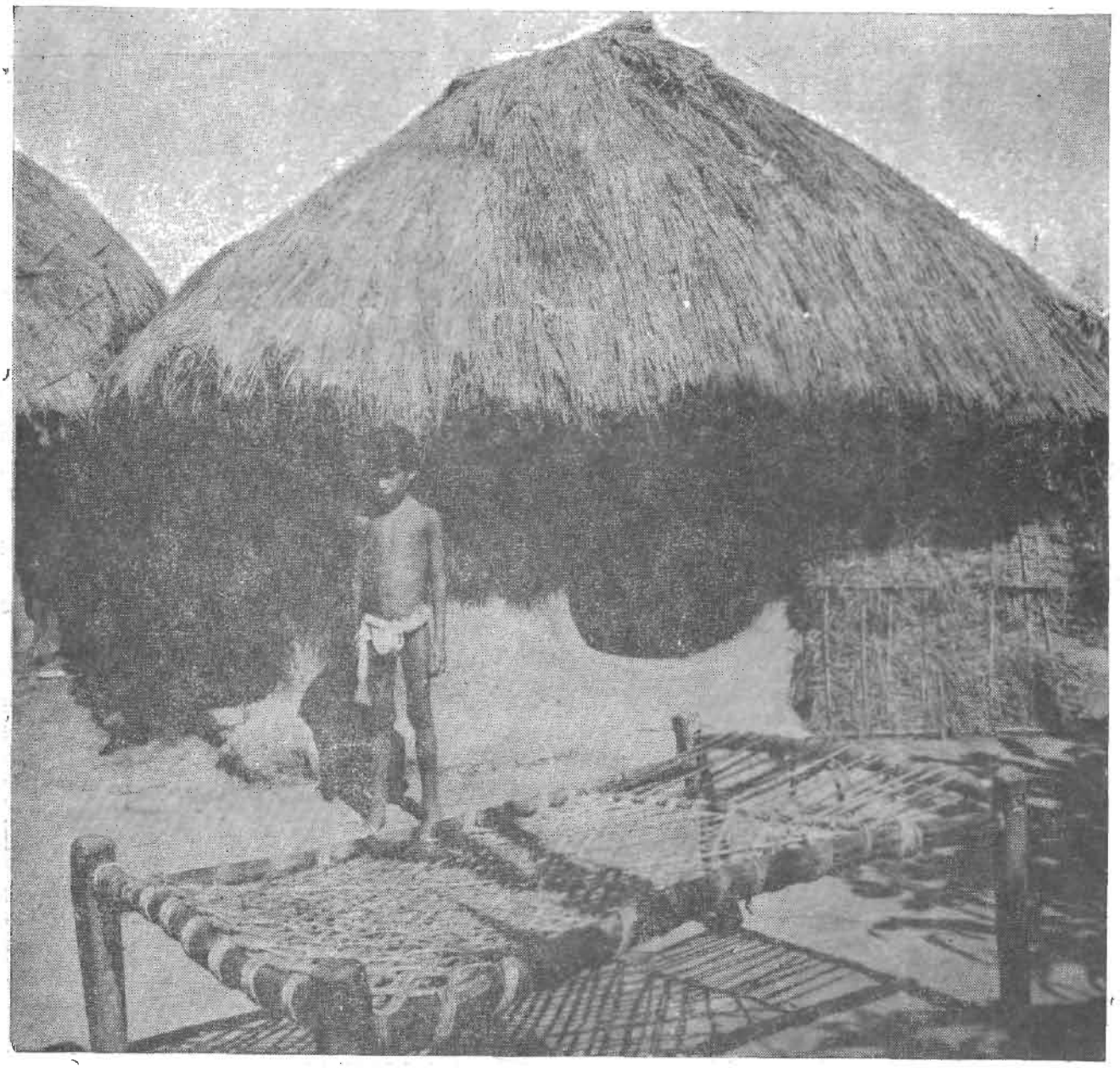
The children, both males and females, are dressed in small pieces of rags to cover only the private parts of the body; the upper part generally remains uncovered. During ceremonial occasions, those who can afford, dress their children in shirts and shorts.

Ornaments: Ordinarily, the majority of Savar women do not use any ornaments at all excepting bangles of glass and synthetic chemicals. Some women, however, put on bangles made of alloy of silver and zinc. Still fewer put on silver ornaments. However, it is customary for a married woman to put on a *Loha* (iron bangle) on her wrist as a mark of her marital status. The other ornaments commonly met with among them are *Nak-chabi* (nose ring) and *Pagra* (ear-ring), both made of zinc and *Bel-mala* (a kind of necklace) made from the shell of wood apple. Excepting the *Loha* and the bangles of glass or synthetic chemicals, most of these ornaments are used on ceremonial occasions. The females as well as males sometimes put on finger rings made of zinc. Occasionally, the children put on *Sankh-mala* (necklace made of conch-shells); however, they are always found to have a *taga* (few rounds of threads) round the waist. The ornaments are mostly purchased from the markets, such as the one at Barabazar or Purulia town.

Hair Style: The mode of hair dressing among the Savars is not at all elaborate. Generally, the women-folk tie their hair into a tight top-knot behind the head. But the younger women dress their hair into different types of chignon, following the style of neighbouring women folk of other communities. Use of hair pins, made of steel or zinc wire, and designed hair-nets of cotton threads is also observed. These materials are purchased from the nearby market. Males generally keep short hair but some keep long hair which hang up to the shoulder. Both males and females use comb made of wood or bamboo. Now, plastic and rubber combs are also gaining popularity among them. Generally, they besmear their hair with mustard oil once a week. A few, who can afford, use cocoanut oil instead.



5. A part of a Savar settlement



6. A view of a Savar hutment.



7. Savar women in their day-to-day dress



8. A group of Savar children in their usual dress

Ear boring: Though there is no religious significance or special rite or ritual associated with regard to ear boring, it is almost imperative that all the members of the community must have the lobes of their ears bored. Females also get their noses bored in addition to the ears for putting on ornaments. Parents generally get the ears and noses of their children bored at the tender age of 8 years or so. The ears are pierced by means of a needle by any member of the family who has some experience in the matter and no professional expert is called for the purpose.

Cicatrization: Generally adult male members possess a few *chika* (scar marks) on either right or left arm. Roundish in shape and more or less resembling the imprint of coins, the marks are made by boys themselves at the age of 8 to 10. They twine a rag like a rope and light one of its end in fire and press the same against the skin of the arm till it is burnt. After the inflamation of burn is cured, a clear scar mark is left. This practice of cicatrization is rooted in a religious belief which contends that after death when the soul of a Savar man goes to *Jamapuri* (hades), he is required to show the scar marks before entry within. These marks, like the currency of coins of the living world, enable the dead to purchase the right of admission into the *Jamapuri*. It also helps their ancestors to recognise them by the marks The females do not have any such marks imprinted on their persons; the reason for the same could not be explained by the informants.

Tattooing: As mentioned above, though the females do not bear scar marks on their body they generally characterise themselves by having tattoo marks on their person. They believe that every woman must possess tattoo marks which are but the substitutes for the scar marks of the males having the same import. It appears that such mystic beliefs are fairly widespread. A similar belief was found among the Mallahs of Delhi (C.I., 1961, Vol. I. Part V (iv), 1969, p. 9). The tattoo marks are also regarded as marks of feminine beauty, though some males also carry tattoo marks. There is no hard and fast rule for tattoo marks to be made on a particular part of the body. Generally, these are made on the hands, upper arms, forearms, in the region between the breast and the neck, on the back, cheeks and the forehead. Objects like flowers, creepers, fish, birds and fowls are the common tattoo designs. It is also said that sometimes certain tattoo marks, such as a dot or a mark on the joint of the leg, act as a cure for certain diseases, like arthritis or rheumatism. The tattooing is generally done in winter by professional women of Ghasi caste who regularly ply their trade of tattooing. They are locally called *Bedeni* (gypsy women) and visit homes as pedlars or ply their trade in the local markets. It is said that they make tattoo marks by a paste of soot or lamp dust and human milk employing a steel needle. The *Bedeni* is generally given Rs 1.25 for her services.

Food and Drink

The Savars are traditionally non-vegetarians who have no compunction to taking mutton, fish and egg. Though they generally deny taking buffalo meat or beef, according to their neighbours, Savars are traditional beef eaters. They, however, do not kill a cow; they take beef if a carcass of a cow or buffaloe is available. The other non-vegeterian food comprises non-poisonous varieties of snakes, toads and frogs, *gosap* (a variety of Iguana) and other locally available birds and animals. Occasionally, they take the meat of fowl and mutton if they can afford it. They, however, do not take meat of sheep and boar, which, it is said, is taboo for the whole community.

The traditional food of the Savars consisted of varieties of fruits or tubers collected from the jungle. Meat of animals hunted and killed in the forest also contributed to their food. But in the course of time probably due to the shrinkage in the forest areas, tightening restrictions on the use of forest produce and non-availability of the jungle produce and hunting games, they have changed their food habits quite remarkably. At present, their main food comprises different cereals and pulses though edible roots and tubers still contribute to the menu. In addition they take vegetables generally grown in the kitchen gardens or the homesteads.

Ordinarily, there is no restriction on certain food items for the Savars of different age and sex. But on certain occasions such as when a woman is menstruating she is not allowed to take anything for three days except fried rice, parched rice and flattened rice. The same food items are prescribed to an expectant mother. Non-vegetarian items are also restricted; though not altogether prohibited during pregnancy. After delivery, during the period of pollution, the mother is allowed to take only boiled *arum*, *arhar* pulse and *Kurthi-kalai* (a variety of pulse). The Savars ordinarily take rice and maize by retaining its *Mar* (gruel). This ensures less expense as the consumption of rice is less when the gruel is present but during ceremonial occasions they take *Pej* (rice separated from the gruel) along with meat of fowl or mutton. On other special occasions their dish comprises gruels of rice, maize or pulses, *besari* (curry of vegetables or fish) and roasted fish or meat of animals. Curry is prepared by boiling vegetables with salt, chillies, turmeric and onion in water. Now-a-days some of them use mustard oil and spices as medium to make the curry more delicious. Parched rice, fried rice and flattened rice with jaggery mark the diet on the day of *Paus-Sankranti* (the last day of the Bengali month *Paus* corresponding to January-February).

One major meal a day, generally taken in the evening at sun set, is the general rule. Daily menu consists of only *Mar* and one or two of the above items depending upon the household's ability to purchase and availability of the items locally. During the day,

they take tea with salt two or three times which is enjoyed by all, irrespective of age and sex. It is said that *Mahua* flower, made edible by frying, comprised an important item of their food in the past but the flowers do not appear in their menu on account of rapid deforestation. They now observe a ceremony symbolising first eating of this flower. On the day of *Chait Sankranti* (the last day of the Bengali month a *Chaitra* corresponding with March-April), a *Mahua* flower is kept on a post and pierced with an arrow, shot from a distance. The pierced flower is eaten later.

They also consume alcoholic drinks. Their main drink, *handia* (rice beer), brewed at home, is prepared by fermenting boiled rice mixed with some herbs and roots brought from the jungle. Though the traditional liquor is the intoxicant brewed from *Mahua*, its use at present is restricted to a few occasions due to the scarcity of *Mahua* tree. The Savars are also used to distilled country liquors available in the market but these are taken infrequently, once a week or two, as they are quite costly for them. It is said that formerly Savars used to drink more regularly; they have been forced to change their habit partly because of the scarcity of the liquor from the *Mahua* and partly due to the high cost of production of *handia* at home. Ordinarily women and children do not drink *handia* but on ceremonial occasions and during festivals drinks are taken by all except the children. Apart from an alcoholic drink or a beverage, *handia* also plays a role in the socio-religious rites. It is offered to the souls of the deceased ancestors during the festivals and other religious ceremonies observed by the Savars. Moreover, whenever *handia* is brought in the house a small quantity is offered to the souls of the ancestors.

Narcotics: They smoke *Chuti*, a kind of indigenous *bidi* similar to that used by the neighbouring Santals, and prepared at home from the tobacco grown in small quantity in kitchen gardens and occasionally purchased from the market, and *Sal* leaf collected from the jungle. They are also addicted to *Khaini*, which is prepared with dry leaf of tobacco and lime. However, only the adult males indulge in this habit. They occasionally smoke *bidi* purchased from the market and are very happy if any visitor offer them cigarettes.

Fire and Fuel: The Savars at present use matchsticks to produce *Agi* (fire). But their traditional method of producing fire was by striking stones, called, *Chakmaki* or by friction of wood. This method is still practised by them to some extent. They use dry leaves and branches of trees collected from the jungles as fuel. Specially during the agricultural seasons, when they go to the fields for work, they preserve fire in lighted straw and ropes to enable them to smoke a *Chuti*.

The hearth or the oven in the Savar hut is made of mud and situated in one corner. Oven is considered sacred by them because offerings are made to the souls of their deceased ancestors by the side of the oven. A ceremony of the oven called *Orhan-Puja* is observed on the day of *Pous-Sankranti* when cakes or rice are prepared on the oven, after it is plastered with cowdung and water. The first cake is offered to the oven.

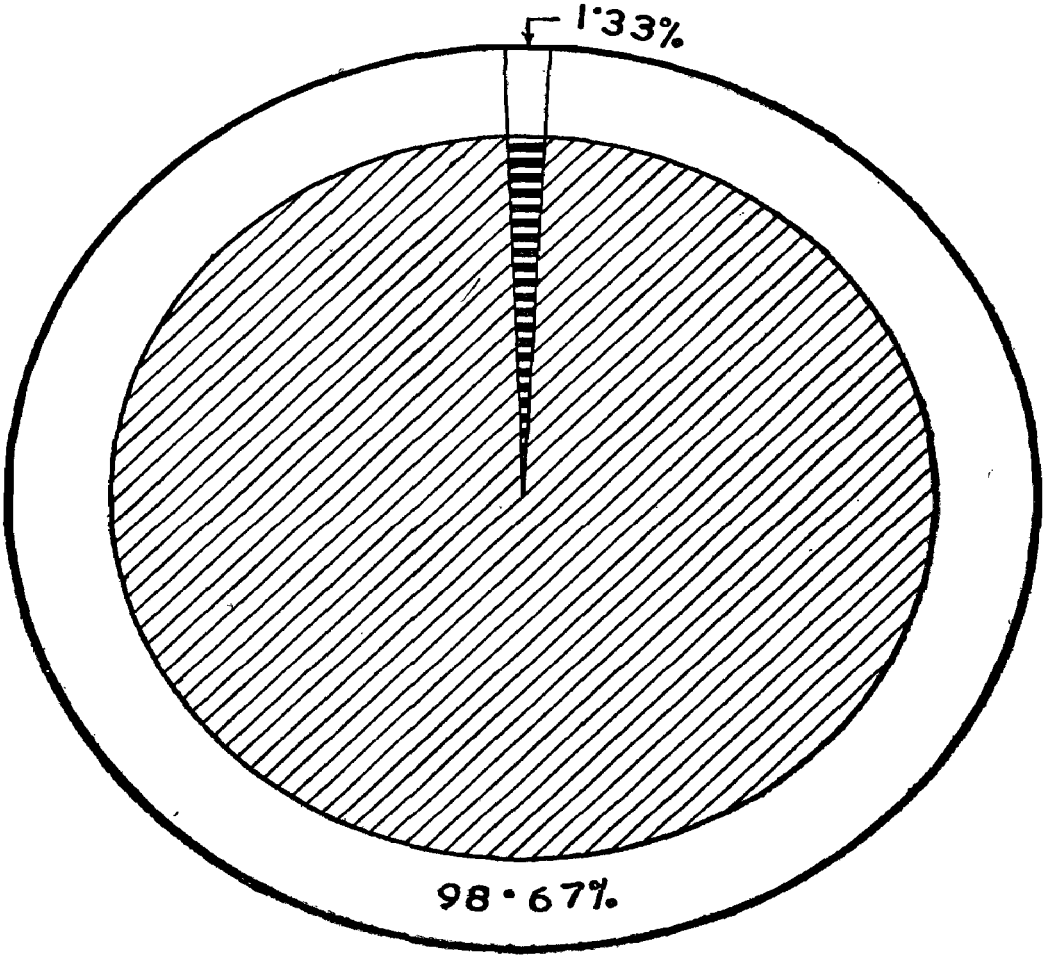
Domestic Utensils: The Savars of Purulia do not have many utensils in their homes. The common utensils are *Handi* (earthen vessel) for cooking rice or gruel, *Khapri* (earthen pot) for cooking curry, *Kalsi* (earthen vessel) for fetching and storing water, a few pots, plates and glasses of aluminium for taking food and water and one or two *Ghatas* (pots of brass) for storing water. Besides, a few ladles and spoons of aluminium may be found in some households. The utensils are purchased from the nearby markets. It is said that in the past they used to have utensils made of stone. These are now almost completely given up.

Environmental Sanitation and Hygienic Habits, Diseases and Treatment

Sanitary habits: The Savars of Purulia do not appear to care much for hygienic habits and cleanliness. Their huts look very unclean in comparison to those of their neighbours, the Santals. The floors of their huts are plastered with cowdung and water, only during some ceremonial occasions. Similarly, the walls, inside as well as outside, are plastered only once a year before *Kali-Puja*, (worship of the goddess Kali). They also do not take the pain of decorating the walls of huts as their neighbours, the Santals do. The dress of the Savars also look dirty for it is washed irregularly and that too by simply dipping it in plain water. Only on special occasions they try to clean their dress with soap or soda if they can obtain the same. As regards personal hygiene it is reported that most of them hardly take regular baths. A few, however, take bath more than once a week. The interval of taking baths increases in winter. They generally rub their body and hair with mustard oil before taking bath. Those who cannot provide any oil take *Rukshashan* (bath without oil). A handful of well-to-do Savars take bath with cocoanut oil and some apply soap on special occasions, like marriage in the family or the village.

Diseases and treatment: The common diseases in the area are skin diseases and infection of stomach and intestines causing dysentry and diarrhoea. Leprosy has also a fairly high incidence in the area but it is not known whether the Savars also show a high incidence of this disease. The Savars believe that diseases are caused mainly by the machination or wrath of evil spirits. Any negligence in the worship of village deities may also invite diseases. In every Savar village there are *Ojhas* (medicine man or magician) The *Laya* (priest) also sometimes acts as a medicine man. A medicine man is supposed to know the diagnosis of the diseases and their treatment. He applies various herbs and roots to cure the disease. When herbal

LITERACY AMONG THE SAVARS
(PERSONS)

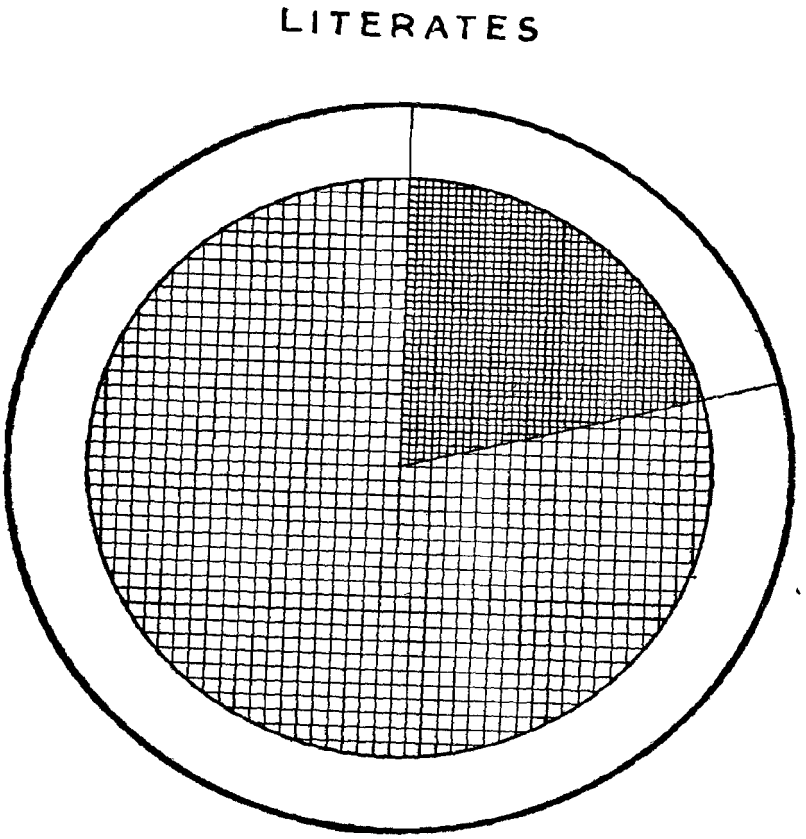


LEGENDS

Literate

Illiterate

SEXWISE DISTRIBUTION OF LITERATES AMONG THE SAVARS



medicine fails to cure a disease, the magician tries to ascertain by divination, if it is caused by any spirit. For divination a magical rite, called *Tel-Khari,* is performed by the medicine-man, who takes a *Sal* leaf, puts a few drops of mustard oil on it and rubs the oil on another leaf of *Sal.* After sometime the magician examines the oil to read the signs which establishes the link of spirits with the disease. If such a sign is found, the medicine-man performs *Tel-Khari* again in like manner to identify the spirit responsible for the disease so as to exorcise it from the body of the patient. For this purpose, a fowl of a particular colour, may be red, black, white or multi-coloured as required, is prescribed by the magician. The same is brought by the father of the patient or the head of the household. The magician then draws the sketch of a man in dust (from a piece of burnt earth of the oven) on the ground on which the patient is laid. Thereafter, some *Atap* (sun-dried) rice and vermilion is placed on the sketch and incense is burnt. The fowl smeared with vermilion marks is fed with the *Atap* rice. The magician then takes the fowl to the jungle and leaves it there. It is believed that through the medium of the fowl the spirit causing the disease leaves the patient and his home.

Another method is applied by the medicine-man to exorcise the evil spirit out of the body of the patient, if the cause of the disease is found to be ingress of some malevolent spirit. First, the spirit is identified as in the above case, then the medicine-man takes blood from twenty one parts of his own body by means of a thorn, mixes it with a few grains of *Atap* rice and feeds it to a fowl. It is believed that the magician sacrifices himself to the *Bhoot* (sprit) through the fowl which is then left in the jungle. The magician can also detect the evil eye or evil looks of spirits on small children by reading the beat of the pulse. *Baram Bhoot* is believed by the Savars to be responsible for *Najar laga* (evil eye). In such case, the magician performs certain magico-religious rites and chants incantations for relief. The father of the child also promises offering of terracotta horses and other offerings to *Rangahari Garam.* The promised articles are offered to the deity during the festival of *Akhan Yatra.* In case of serious disease or illness in the family the head of the family also vows before the *Tulsi-Than* (Altar represented by the Basil plant) in the house to offer terracotta horses to all the important deities during the festival of *Akhan Yatra* provided the ailing member recovers. In case of an epidemic or any other calamity in the society, the Savars of the village as a whole take vow before the village deity that they would offer mustard oil, vermilion and terracotta horses to the *Ranghari Garam* at its *than* (altar) at the time of *Akkhan Yatra* festival.

Only few Savars take recourse to modern methods of treatment available in the nearby towns or markets but that too only when indigenous roots and herbs or the magical rites fail. It may be mentioned here that the continued dependence of the Savars on the magical and religious rites for treatment of disease is also due to the lack of locally available allopathic or other medicines. Generally speaking, such facilities are available to the Savars at a long distance from their habitations. In none of the villages investigated there was a local dispensary or health centre.

Language and Education

Language: As mentioned earlier, the Savars have been classified as Dravidians by Dalton and Risley (*op. cit.*), while others, such as Cunningham (*op. cit.*) considers them as Kolarians on linguistic grounds. Grierson (1906, Vol. IV, p. 217) also includes the Savar language in the Munda branch of the Austo-Asiatic sub-family of Austric family of languages. It, however, appears that Savars of West Bengal have practically forgotton their ancestral language as according to the 1961 Census data most of them have returned Bengali as their mother tongue and a few others, Adibhasha Munda or Santhali. Majority of them, however, speak in Bengali as it is the mother tongue of 2,002 persons (91·8%). That Bengali is the most popular language among the Savars is seen from the fact that of the 8·1% speakers who have returned Santali or Adibhasha Munda as their mother tongue, 113 or 5.2% speak Bengali as a subsidiary language. Thus, 97% speak Bengali either as a mother tongue or as a subsidiary language. To put it in other words, only 173 or 7·9% of the total Savar population speak Santali as their mother tongue, while only a fraction *viz.*, 6 persons (0.3%) have returned Adibhasha Munda as their mother tongue. The Savars who have returned Adibhasha Munda or Bengali as their mother tongue do not know any other subsidiary language and of the 173 Savars who speak Santali as their mother tongue, 123 (5·7%) speak a subsidiary language as well which is mostly Bengali-spoken by 113 (5.2%) persons. English is spoken as a subsidiary language by 8 persons (0.4%) and Hindi by only 2 persons (0·1%). However, during the field investigations it came to light that all the 53 Savar inhabitants of the village Doledanaria speak Adibhasha Munda among themselves though with outsiders they speak in Bengali or Santali.

Literacy and educational standard: The Savars of West Bengal are educationally very much backward as according to 1961 Census data only 1.3% persons among them are literates against 6.6% tribal literates of West Bengal as a whole. As is to be expected, the percentage of literacy among the Savars is slightly higher among the males than among the females. There are only 6 (1:3%) female literates and that too without achieving any educational level and all confined to Barabazar police station. The following table gives a comparative picture of the literacy among the Savars of West Bengal and tribal population of the State as a whole as indicated by 1961 Census data on education and literacy.

Table

	Total Population			Literates					
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Percentage to total males	Females	Percentage to total Females.	Total	Percentage to total population
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
All tribes (rural and urban)	1,043,042	1,011,039	2,054,081	116,827	11·2	17,795	1·8	134,622	6.6
All tribes (rural) . .	1,015,479	990,486	2,005,965	110,003	10·8	15,828	1·6	125,831	6.3
Savar (all rural) . .	1,702	479	2,181	23	1·4	6	1 3	29	1 3

When only 1.3% of the Savars are literates the standard and level of education is bound to be low. None of the Savar has gone beyond the matriculation stage. There are only 6 Savars—all males—who have read up to the matriculation or equivalent standard. These constitute only 0:4% of the total male population; 11 (0.6%) Savar males have read upto the primary level or junior basic standard and the remaining 6 (0.4%) have not attained any educational level.

The percentage of literacy is comparatively higher in Bandwan police station where 7% of the Savars are literates. Since all the literate Savars of the police station are males, the percentage of literacy among the males comes to 11.8%. Of these, 3% each have achieved primary or junior basic and matriculation standard. Otherwise, Manbazar police station stands at the apex of educational advancement among the Savar males as 5 persons have gone up to the matriculation level and 10 persons up to the primary or junior basic standard. The Savars of Para, Puncha and Purulia police stations are all illiterates. The empirical data collected from the village Doledanaria also paints a gloomy picture. In the whole village only one male among 53 Savars has learnt to write his name in Bengali. He is otherwise not acquainted with the Bengali alphabets. In the primary school located in the village there are students of the Santal community of the village but none from amongst the Savars. In Phuljhora village there is no school and hardly one or two boys go to the school located at a distance of 3 to 4 kms. From the 1961 Census data in respect of persons not at work classified by type of activity, it is seen that out of 1,334 persons there are only 45 (3.4%) full time students who are attending schools.

From a few Savar individuals who were interviewed to ascertain their views in regard to education of their children. It appears that they are rather indifferent to this aspect. They just do not know what possible role education can play in the life of their children as, according to them they are to help their parents in agricultural operations and assist the family by working as wage labourers. There was hardly any who showed any aspiration for better jobs.

Occupation and Economic Life

The Savars are reported to be traditionally food gatherers and hunters who managed their livelihood by collecting edible roots, tubers, herbs and fruits and hunting and killing animals in the forests and jungles. They narrate the following legend associated with their traditional occupation as well as that of the Bhumij tribe.

"One day after both the Savar and the Bhumij came to this world, *Bhagaban* (God) summoned both and offered them two dishes, one large dish containing large yams and the other smaller dish containing cooked rice. The Savar became greedy and quickly took the big dish containing yams but the Bhumij took the small dish containing rice. God then gave the Savar a straight stick which later turned into *Khonta* (digging stick) for collecting jungle roots and tubers. The Bhumij got a curved stick which later turned into plough for cultivating rice. Since then, the Bhumij are cultivators and the Savars are food-gatherers."

This legend appears to be suggestive of the attitude of the Savars towards their occupation. It seems that they acknowledge the inferior nature of their traditional occupation of food gathering as compared to cultivation carried out by progressive tribes in the neighbourhood. They also seem to blame themselves for the choice of their traditional occupation.

Working force: During the course of time the Savars slowly took to other occupations, such as agriculture, which now appears to be the main plank of their livelihood as is suggested by their working force. According to 1961 Census out of 2.181 Savars in West Bengal only 847 persons are workers, or in other words. 38.8% of the total Savar population constitute the working force. That males and females in the

INDUSTRIAL CLASSIFICATION OF THE SAVARS AS PER 1961 CENSUS



9. Savars displaying reptile hides for sale

Savar society participate almost equally in economic life is evident from the fact that 658 males, constituting 38.7% of the total male Savar population and 189 females, comprising 39.5% of the total female Savar population are workers. However, the workers among the males are in majority as they contribute 77.7% of the total working force of the community by virtue of their high proportion among the Savars population of Purulia, the sex-ratio being 220 only.

As mentioned elsewhere, out of 1334 non-workers, there are 45 full-time students or children attending school and there is only one person, a male, who is seeking employment either for the first time or was employed before and is now out of employment; the remaining 1288 persons including 248 females, are idle.

Industrial classification: The following table gives the distribution of working force of the Savars of Purulia district in different industrial categories as given in the 1961 Census.

Table

Industrial Classification of Savar Workers

Occupation	Males	Females	Total
1. Cultivation . . .	362	49	411
2. Agricultural Labourer .	202	105	307
3. Mining, Quarrying, Live-stock, Hunting, Fishing, Forestry etc. . . .	2	—	2
4. Household Industry .	8	30	38
5. Transport and Communication	—	5	5
6. Other Services . .	84	—	84
TOTAL .	658	189	847

From the above table it would appear that the Savars have more or less stabilised their position in agriculture as their chosen field of livelihood: the majority of Savar workers—84.7% are engaged in agriculture, either as cultivators or agricultural labourers. In the district of Purulia as a whole, 411 persons or 48·5% of the Savar workers are cultivators, while 307 persons or 36.3 are agricultural labourers. It will also be seen that cultivation is mainly followed by the males and only about 25% of the female workers are engaged as cultivators. 202 males or 30·7% of the male workers are agricultural labourers, while 105 females, constituting 55.6% of the female working force, are agricultural labourers. Only 2 males are reported to be living mainly on the occupation of hunting, fishing, forestry, etc., while 38 persons, which include 30 females, are dependents on household industries and 5 persons all females are carrying on the business of transport or communication; 84 persons, all males, are engaged in "other services".

In order to gain some insight about the livelihood pattern of the Savars in Purulia district somewhat more detailed investigations were carried out in Doledanaria and Phuljhora villages. These indicate that in conformity with the census data for the district as a whole agriculture is the main occupation of the majority of Savars in these villages. There they practise cultivation and also work as agricultural labourers. In the latter case they generally work in the paddy fields of the Santals or Hindu castes of the area.

The agricultural land occupied by Savars is generally rocky and not very fertile. Besides there are hardly any facilities for irrigation and as a result they have to go in for dry cultivation. The main crops of the area is maize and rice. Maize is the principal crop cultivated by the Savars in Doledanaria as well as Phuljhora. In the former village each Savar hut is surrounded by maize fields situated in the high homestead land around their huts. They sometimes also cultivate paddy by cutting out terraces in the rocky soil which is a difficult process. The paddy crop is generally not good due to lack of rainfall and irrigation facilities. The 13 households of Savars in Doledanaria had earlier cleared a jungle for paddy cultivation. The same is jointly held by them for the last few years but every year they are giving the land to the Santals for cultivation by share cropping. The land is not apportioned among themselves and they share the produce equally among themselves after their share of the harvest is handed over to them by their Santal share croppers. Generally all the adult males, females as well as children participate in agricultural activities. The women participate in all the agricultural operations except ploughing. The Savars have generally no agricultural implements of their own excepting the sickle, *Kodal* (hoe) and *Khonta* (digging stick of iron). Some households, however, also possess husking levers for husking paddy and for pounding paddy and rice grains. These implements are purchased from the markets. In Phuljhora, there are very few Savar households who possess plough and bullocks and none in Doledanaria. In the latter village, they generally hire plough and bullocks from their Santal neighbours for starting agricultural operations for raising maize crop. Many of them use hoe and stick instead of the plough in their small homestead plots. Cowdung is generally the only manure used by them. When maize crop is harvested in the months of August-October, some seeds are offered by the head of the household to the *Tulsi-Than*, which is first plastered with a paste of cowdung and water for the ceremony of first eating of the grain. Besides, maize and paddy, the Savars grow pumpkin, gourd, brinjal, *jhunga* (a cucurbetaceous vegetable), bean, lady's finger, chillies and tobacco in their homesteads generally for domestic consumption. In Phuljhora, they also sometimes raise inferior varieties of local pulses, *viz.*, *jhuge*, *sak*, *kumra* for domestic consumption. Sometimes, if they reap a good harvest, they also sell paddy or rice in the nearby markets.

As mentioned elsewhere, they also work as agricultural labourers in the paddy fields of neighbouring Santals and Hindus. While working as agricultural labourers they generally receive payment in kind (paddy) but occasionally, on their insistence, also in cash to enable them to defray expenses on clothes and other necessities.

The investigations in Phuljhora and Doledanaria, however, reveal that the census data do not fully reflect the importance of different occupations in the economic life of the community. The Census data indicates the main occupations of the workers while the survey also attempted to study the main and subsidiary means of livelihood of the different households. It was found that though agriculture is the principal occupation, the role of the subsidiary occupations in the economic life of the Savars is by no means negligible. In many of the households which have returned agriculture as the main occupation, it was found that actually more income was fetched from other sources. There are a few households where the head of the household is having agriculture as primary occupation and other members have other primary occupations, but also undertake agricultural activities during the peak season. Thus, in order to get a true picture about the nature of occupation, it was felt necessary to supplement the data on classification of the workers by industrial categories by information on their subsidiary occupations.

It was found that many of the Savars continue to subsist to a fairly large extent on their traditional occupation of food gathering, hunting or fishing. The others supplement their income by fuel collection in the jungle, earth digging or by working as day-labourers in road construction work of the P. W. D. Some live on cottage or household industries by preparing mats and broom-sticks etc. These are discussed briefly in the following account:

Collection of minor forest produce. Though they do not collect forest produce to the same extent as in the past, still they sometimes collect edible roots and tubers from the jungle to supplement their food. They also collect *Kita-Pata* (leaves of wild date palm trees) for weaving *Talais* (mats). The *Talais* are sold in the markets. They also collect spear grass from the fields and jungles for making broom-sticks which are sold in the market to earn some income. They also prepare *Gugi* (a kind of fishing implement) from split bamboo. This work is mostly done by women, and would account for a fairly large proportion of workers, mostly women, engaged in the industrial category of household industry. The *Sal* leaves are also collected from the jungle for preparing *Chutis* (indigenous cigarettes). *Mahua* flower whenever available, is also collected from the forests and is used for brewing liquor as well as a food item. Savars in the village Doledanaria informed that they also gather paddy from the rat holes in the fields. It is said that in the months of November-December after paddy is harvested, they visit the field with *Khonta* and collect paddy from the holes. It was also mentioned that some holes yield paddy up to 15-20 kgs. For this unusual 'harvest' the rats are treated as benevolent beings and it is claimed that they do not kill a rat which is called a *Mahajan* (a rich banker); but there is no taboo against eating a rat killed by others. It is also mentioned by them that while gathering forest produce in the jungle the custom prevails that nobody should talk when anyone strikes his digging stick into the earth. The reason for the above belief could not be explained by the Savar informants.

Hunting: Hunting no longer occupies the important place in their economy as in the past but still they do hunt small game in the jungles to supplement their food. The hunting at present, is confined to shooting of a few varieties of birds and killing non-poisonous varieties of snakes and lizards, such as *Sona, Dhemna,* and *Gusap* (Iguana) available in the fields and bushes. The Savars eat the meat of these birds and animals and sell the skins and hides of the snakes and the lizards. It is said that itinerant hide merchants visit the Savar localities from time to time and collect these skins on payment of cash. These traders in turn export the skins to places like Calcutta.

Though believed to be traditionally hunters, the Savars do not possess many hunting implements and their only weapon is the bow and arrows or bow and bolts. Hunting is done at individual or family level and no ceremony is performed before going on hunting.

Fishing: They generally catch fish with the home-made *Gugis* (fishing baskets) in the paddy fields and small streamlets. They sometimes also dam water of a stream or water collected in the rice fields by raising a wall and catch fish by *Dobka* (vessel). Varieties of fish traps are also used to catch or trap fishes. The local varieties trapped by them are the *Sol, Maghur, Puti, Lata, Pangra* and *prawns* which are mostly used for domestic consumption; they sometimes also preserve fishes for the future use after these are dried in the sun. Occasionally, however, they sell the fishes in the nearby market.

Domestication of cattle and poultry: Some Savars also keep cows, goats and fowls as well as poultry. Domestication of sheep and pig is, however, a taboo for them. The goats and fowls are used as items of food as well as for sacrifices to the deities. Eggs laid by the hens are generally sold in the market. They observe a ceremony called *Garuja* in connection with domestication of cows the day before *Kali-Puja.*

Earth digging: As mentioned elsewhere, many of the Savars supplement their income by engaging themselves in earth digging. They are generally employed for this purpose by their Santal or Hindu neighbours during the months of *Magh, Phalgun, Chaitra* and *Vaisakh* and are usually paid Rs. 1·50 per day, without any meals.

Fuel collection and labour : Fuel collection provides them a fairly useful subsidiary livelihood, the whole year. The nearby jungles and forests assure them a steady and continuous supply of fuel. They sell the fuel collected by them at the rate of 37 paise per headload. Sometimes, they are also engaged as day-labourers in the road construction carried out by P. W. D. where they are employed as casual labourers at a rate of Rs. 2 per day only.

Division of labour : As mentioned elsewhere, males, females as well as children participate in the economic activity of the household. In agricultural activities and food gathering the more laborious work is generally done by the males, while the females take part in lighter work. However, the women do not plough. Fishing is done by both the males and the females but hunting is almost solely the pursuit of the males. The minor handicrafts, such as broomsticks, mats, etc., are prepared by women mostly. The girls from the age of nine onwards help their mothers in household chores, while the boys from the same age assist their parents in agricultural operations or acting as cow herds. They are also engaged by well-to-do neighbouring Hindu castes as day-labourers for which they are generally paid in kind.

Life Cycle

Birth : The Savars regard barrenness as a matter of misfortune. They generally believe barrenness to be the result of the machination of evil spirits. Sometimes, it is supposed that barrenness is caused by witches in the community. The women believed to be witches have a difficult time and receive a cruel treatment from the community, and sometimes expelled from the village. If no witch is available as a scapegoat they regard barrenness as the wrath of the god. When a woman does not beget a child after a few years of marriage, the priest is requested to perform some rites and rituals to appease the deities.

A few Savars interviewed regarding their attitude towards family planning were ignorant of the family planning measures; none of them has ever used a modern contraceptive nor felt any necessity for the same. According to them, they do not find it necessary to limit their family. Children are always welcomed and regarded as gifts of the god. One or two informants, however, mentioned that a few women, such as *dhai-burhi* (mid-wife) know indigenous methods of checking undesirable pregnancies, such as an illegitimate child. It is said that they also know how to cause abortions by means of drugs prepared from certain herbs or roots. Though a son is always preferred to a daughter, the birth of a daughter in the family is not generally considered to be an unfortunate event.

The Savars of Purulia have reported that they do not observe any pre-natal ceremony of any other special rite or ritual during pregnancy. The expectant mother carries on her household chores, such as cooking, cleaning, fetching water from wells, etc., till the advanced stage of pregnancy is reached. Thereafter, she takes up only lighter work. During this stage she is prescribed a special diet usually consisting of fried rice, flattened rice and parched rice which, it is believed, keeps the body healthy and checks excessive secretions. Generally, some elderly experienced women of the community assist during delivery and no midwife is called for. However, sometimes, as in the village Doledanaria, a *dhai-burhi* (mid-wife) belonging to Hari caste is called, particularly in difficult deliveries. She may, however, be assisted by one or two elderly women of the community. She rubs mustard oil on the abdomen of the parturient which is supposed to be helpful and facilitates delivery. No separate hut or apartment is used for delivery. However, a formal partition is made within the hut with rags or mats of jute in one corner of the room to have some privacy. The *dhai-burhi* cuts the umblical cord by placing it on a copper coin and cutting the same with an iron blade which serves as a knife. The midwife receives the copper coin as a gift after the umbilical cord is cut. She buries the placenta under the floor of the room. The Savars believe that if the placenta is buried outside or thrown away or eaten by animals, the new born child will come to harm. After delivery, the newly born is cleaned with towel, dipped in luke warm water, and anointed with oil and turmeric paste by the *dhai-burhi*. The mother is also cleaned with a towel but not given a full bath. Both the mother and the child are kept warm by applying dry compresses. No other measure is taken or ritual is observed on the day the delivery takes place.

The period of pollution lasts for nine days when the whole household is considered ritually unclean and debarred from participating in social and religious ceremonies within the community. During this period, no worship is performed in the house. In some cases, the father of the child does not shave his head or takes a bath. However, there is no restriction to taking any item of food during pollution period for the father as well as the other members of the family. The mother is, however, allowed only the prescribed food. Generally, she takes boiled *Arhar* pulse, *Kurthi* pulse and boiled *Ol* (Arum). On the 9th day, the purification ceremony is observed in the morning when all articles of use in the house are washed and the floor of the hut is plastered with a paste of cowdung and water. The members of the family take bath with oil and turmeric paste in a nearby stream or tank.

The mother along with her child is taken by the side of a river or tank, as the case may be, by the midwife and the other members of the family. First, the *dhai-burhi* or the elderly Savar woman who assisted in delivery worships *Barani-bhoot* with oil turmeric, vermilion and *Atap* rice, etc. to appease it lest it may cause the death of the mother by drowning her in the river. After the worship, the mother as well as the child are given a bath by the midwife. It is said that all the clothes and linen used during the pollution period are thrown into the river ; but on actual

investigation it came to light that as generally they cannot afford a complete new set of linen and personal clothes, they thoroughly wash the clothes and linen and use them in future also. Though the pollution period of the other members of the household is over on the ninth day and they can resume their normal activities and participate in worship and other ceremonies in the community, the mother herself is considered ritually impure for 21 days. On that day, she takes a ceremonial bath, which marks the end of her pollution period when all the restrictions imposed on her are withdrawn and she starts her normal household activities. Thereafter she can also participate in family worship or social ceremonies and religious functions of the community.

Dukh-Sukh : The Savars perform this ceremony to determine the fate of the child. The *dukh-sukh* ceremony, which can take place on the day of birth itself or on the 3rd, 5th or 7th day after the birth is performed by the midwife or the elderly woman who assisted at delivery. She takes a pot of water containing leaves of *Tulsi* plant (Ocimum sanctum), *Durba* grass, and a copper coin. She puts fourteen grains of *Atap* rice in water, two at a time. If all the grains sink under water the child is believed to be very lucky with a long, healthy life and least bothered by evil spirits. If by any chance all the rice grains float, it portends bad luck for the new born whose life is supposed to be in grave danger, which is difficult to ward off, and the child is considered to have a short span of life. In the later case they offer sacrifices to their deities to help the child.

Name-giving ceremony : The name-giving ceremony is a fairly important event in the family, when relatives and friends are invited to a feast. Sometimes, this ceremony is performed on the same day when *dukh sukh* is observed. In any case, it takes place before the child is one year old. No priest is required to officiate or perform the brief rites and rituals. The child is first smeared with oil and turmeric paste and bathed in water and handed over to his grand-mother or, in her absence, to some other elderly female relative. The grand mother or the elderly relative suggests a suitable name for the child which is generally accepted by all. There is no special method for the selection of names. Generally, a child is given only one name and is not referred to by any nick name. The name may or may not be after the grand father or any other male deceased ancestor in case of a male child, while in case of a female child the name may or may not be after her grand mother or any other deceased female relative. The names traditionally prevailing among the Savars are not ordinarily found among the neighbouring Hindu castes. Some of them are as follows : Rohru, Negi, Sodai, Godai, Srihari, Ponsu, Chura, Rorha, Turu, Sahodor, etc. However, now the names found among the neighbouring Hindu castes are becoming popular among the Savars and one comes across such names as Mahadev, Sahadev, Mangal, Moti, Phagu, Nakul and Gokul, etc. In the past, the women used to have such names as Damni, Susuli, Bari, Sumi, Ajami, etc. Now the fashionable names are Sarla, Nilima, Anna, etc., which again bear the influence of the Hindu neighbours.

After the child is named and the brief rites and rituals are over the kinsmen and the friends participate in a feast which includes rice served with meat or fowl or goat ; but an important item of their menu on this occasion is *handia.* On this occasion, all men and women drink *handia* and sing songs and dance for the whole day. After the feast is over, the midwife takes leave. She is paid for her services rendered on the day of delivery and on other occasions such as purification ceremony or *dukh-sukh.* She is generally given Rs. 5 in case of a female child and Rs. 10 in case of a male child. Sometimes, the entire payment is made in kind with rice or paddy equivalent to the amount paid in cash. But, when paid in cash she also receives gift of small quantity of rice for preparing cakes on the *Paus-Sankranti* day.

Mukh-e-bhat : Mukhe-e-bhat or first eating of rice by the child takes place at the age of 5-7 months, before teething sets in. No rite or ritual is observed by the Savars on this occasion. The child is, however, fed on some rice mixed with jaggery.

Tonsure : The Savars vow before their deities a sacrifice of a goat or a fowl if the hair of the child becomes matted. The sacrifice is generally made on the day of first eating of the rice or sometimes even before. Generally, the head of the household offers the sacrifice and gets the matted hair of the child shaved off by a relative who acts as a barber. He latter floats the cut hair in a nearby river or stream. In case the child does not have matted hair no sacrifice is made. But generally hairs are ceremonially shaved. This is, however, not obligatory, which suggests that it is a somewhat recent trend among the Savars—may be as a result of contact with caste Hindus of the area for whom tonsure ceremony is obligatory.

Puberty : The Savars do not observe any ceremony or perform any puberty rite for either sex. The first *Masik* or menstruation of a Savar girl is, however, an important event as it is considered indicative of her coming to age and capacity for procreation. But, they do not observe any ritual in connection with the first menstruation. But during every period of her menstruation, a woman is considered ritually impure and she has certain restrictions and prohibitions imposed on her. Though there is no separate hut or an apartment for a menstruating woman, she is kept confined in one corner of the hut. During this period she cannot do her household chores or take part in any socio-religious functions in the family or the community. It is said that during this period she does not take bath ; but takes a special diet comprising fried rice, flattened rice and parched rice. After her period is over, she takes a bath after anointing her body with mustard oil and a paste of turmeric; she also washes her dress. The utensils in

the kitchen are also washed and the floor of the hut is purified by plastering the same with a paste of cowdung and water. This, however, appears to be the ideal norm. On further probe, it was found that generally most of the above rituals are not strictly adhered to. But it is obligatory that the menstruating woman confines herself and does not cook food or take part in social or religious functions in the family or community.

Sex life and marriage : In the present rapid survey of the Savars detailed and penetrating studies could not be made regarding their attitude towards sex, especially in matter of extra-marital relations and pre-marital chastity. By and large, the Savar informants discountenance pre-marital sexual relations or existence of adultery in their community. However, according to their neighbours, as well as a few more uninhabited individuals of this community they have a fairly tolerant attitude towards sex. This view appears to be corroborated by Risley (*op. cit.*) who mentions that sexual licence before marriage, though vehemently, condemned is said to be tolerated, and if any unmarried girl becomes pregnant her fault is condoned by marrying her to the father of her child. During the field survey it was also reported that when a case of pre-marital sexual relation comes to the notice of the village elders, they generally bring the same to the notice of the parents of the concerned boy and the girl and see to that they are married off, provided their clans are different. One or two such cases came to light during the field survey. Pre-marital relations between a boy and a girl of the same clan is, however, a serious matter as it amounts to incest. In such cases, the offenders are subjected to severe beating as well as heavy fine compared to ordinary pre-marital relations. In respect of extra-marital relations, the Savars have a somewhat stricter code of discipline. The guilty ones are required to pay heavy fines; sometimes the clandestine relations, if proved, result in break of marriage bond. Illicit connections of a Savar female with a non-Savar male is considered to be a very serious offence. It causes a great tension, not only involving the individuals concerned but also their friends and relations.

Illegitimate children though subjected to whispered calumny, do not suffer from serious disabilities in their day to day life and normal social relations.

From the foregoing discussion it would appear that the Savars have a somewhat ambivalent attitude towards freedom in sexual matters. Traditionally, it seems that their society does not insist upon a very strict and forbidding code of behaviour in the matter of pre-marital and extra-marital relations, especially in case of the former. However, they would like to project the image of their community as one having a fairly high moral standard in term of the norms prevailing among the Hindu high castes.

The Savars being endogamous, marry within their own community. The marital alliances are generally made within Purulia district. In some cases, however, their marital alliances are made even with Savars residing in Bihar. For instance, two or three cases of such marriage came to light during the study in the village Phuljhora. In one case the husband belonged to Phuljhora village and the wife hailed from village Bhumasuran of Police Station Patamda in Singhbhum district of Bihar. They, however, do not have territorial exogamy and there is no objection to marrying within the village itself provided the clans of the spouses are different. But actually, very few marital alliances are made in the same village, as generally a village is occupied by members of only two or three clans, and the residents if all do not belong to the same clan, generally fall within the prohibited degrees of relationship.

It is reported by the Savars that their traditional custom of marriage enjoined the couple to attain adulthood before the marriage. However, in Doledanaria village the usual age at marriage for the boys was reported to be between 18 and 24 while in Phuljhora it was between 16 to 18 years. So far as girls are concerned, the present practice is to marry them between the ages of 8 to 15 in Phuljhora, while in the village Doledanaria the age at marriage for the girls is reported to be between 14 to 18 years. It would appear from the above data that the Savars have a tendency to marry off their daughters at an early age. It was suggested by the informants during the field survey that this is a recent trend as a result of their cultural contacts with the neighbouring castes. The analysis of 1961 Census data on marital status also seems to confirm the above position. It is seen therefrom that out of a total number of 1135 males in the age-group 0-14 there are only 6 married males, while out of 118 females in the same age-group as many as 14 (13.5%) are married. If the data in respect of age-groups 15-45 is examined it is seen that out of 329 males as many as 165 (50%) are unmarried, while interestingly enough, in case of females, out of 256 females in the same age-group only 6 are unmarried. This seem to indicate that while very few females remain unmarried after the age of 15, most of the males marry after attaining adulthood. The above data indicates possibility of sharp differences in the ages of husband and wife. This was corroborated by the data on age at marriage collected during the field investigation for the present study which indicates that the wife in most cases is 7-9 years junior in age to the husband. The Savars explained that the somewhat sharp differences between the ages of spouses are due to the fact that while they marry off their daughters at an early age, they marry their sons when the latter are in a position to support and maintain their families.

There is no special preference in the matter of selection of the mate. As mentioned earlier, marriage is not allowed within the same clan as it is looked upon as incest. It is also reported that they avoid parallel cousin and cross-cousin marriages. This is rather interesting considering that many of the neighbouring tribal communities, such as the Santals.

do practise cross-cousin marriage. Interestingly enough this appears to be a fairly widespread feature among the Savars in various regions. While discussing Saoras (Savars) of Orissa, Elwin (*op. cit.* p. 53) mentions, "..... He cannot marry his mother's brother's daughter or his father's sister's daughter for both have his blood. Here is another remarkable difference between Saoras and other Indian tribesmen: cross-cousin marriage, so popular elsewhere, is not allowed."

Though polygyny is permitted, specially in case of barrenness of the first wife, monogamy is the general rule. No single case of polygyny came to light during the present study. They, however, permit junior sorrorate as well as junior levirate.

The modes of acquiring a mate among the Savars are as follows :—

(i) Marriage by negotiation
(ii) Marriage by elopement
(iii) Marriage by service

(i) *Marriage by negotiation : Sage Biah* or marriage by negotiation is considered more respectful form of marriage. This is accompanied by the payment of bride price.

The initiative for entering into a marital alliance is invariably taken by the boy's side. It is said that if the mother's brother is available, he plays the role of a go-between or match-maker. Otherwise, some other relative or friend who is known to both the parties is chosen for this role. He finds a suitable girl and informs the parents of the boy. While selecting spouses their family condition, status, health and age are taken into consideration. If the girl is liked by the parents of the boy, they make a further move in the matter. However, before formally approaching the girl's parents, the boy is shown the girl by the match-maker from a distance in any fair or market place, if the latter has not already seen the girl. In many cases, however, the boy and the girl may have already seen or met each other and may actually be desirous of marrying each other. Often, the girl's parents are first informally sounded through common friends to know their reaction in the matter, before a formal proposal is made. Generally, the girl is also consulted in the matter if she is of age. But in those cases where a girl is married in infancy, the question of consulting her does not arise. If both the parties are in agreement, a formal proposal is made to the girl's parents and on a fixed day the boy accompanied by some of his kinsmen go to the girl's house. When the boy's party reaches the girl's house, they are asked by the girl's party "Why have you come ? Are you ready to take our daughter ?" As the answer is obviously in the positive, the boy's party is received by the girl's relations. The feet of the members of the party are anointed with oil and turmeric paste and bathed with water on a *Piri* (wooden plank) by the girl's parents. The girl is then formally shown to the boy's party. The same day the bride price is fixed after a lot of bargaining. Bride price is paid the same day, but if some amount remain unpaid, it is paid on the day of marriage ceremony and sometimes even after the marriage. As regards the amount of bride price, it varies a good deal, according to the status of the boy and the accomplishments of the girl. There has been a steep rise in the bride price during the last few decades and it is said that now the Savars usually pay Rs. 50 to Rs. 60 to the father of the girl in cash in addition to presents such as, a saree to the mother of the girl, one *dhuti* each to the maternal uncles and brothers, *dhuti* or saree to the grand mother of the girl besides two sarees, silver bangles and other ornaments given to the girl as presents. In the recent years in some of the villages, such as Phuljhora, an attempt has been made to fix the bride price at Rs. 20 in addition to giving presents to the girl and her relatives as mentioned above. It appears that the efforts of the community to fix a reasonable bride price have by and large failed, as whenever the boy's parents are comparatively affluent and the girl is accomplished, they have no hesitation in raising the bride price.

After the issue of bride price is settled, the boy's party is entertained with a feast of meat and rice as well as *handia*. They also sing and dance on the occasion. After the fesivities are over, the boy's party leaves the girl's village on the same evening. In some cases, before the formal agreement to the marriage is made and bride price is paid by the boy's father, the girl's father along with a few of his relatives reciprocate a visit to the boy's house. They are received in the same manner as the boy's party with a feast, followed by singing and dancing.

Marriage is generally celebrated in the months of *Phagun* (Feb-March) and *Baisakh* (March-April). Marriages are avoided on Saturdays and birth-days of the bride and the groom. The actual day of marriage is fixed by the boy's parents with the consent of the girl's parents through the good offices of the match-maker. Generally, the third or fifth day after the visit of the girl's party to the boy's house is fixed for the ceremony.

Certain rites and rituals are observed on the day of marriage in the houses of the bride and the groom. *Chamratala* (marriage booth to serve as altar) comprising a square platform made of earth and roofed with leaves and branches and supported by four wooden posts at the four corners is erected in the open courtyard in front of the house of the bride and the groom. The *Chamratala* is decorated with mango leaves. Besides a *Mahua* twig is planted in front of the altar and three earthen pots containing water, mango twigs and paddy grains are placed nearby. Actually three to four days before marriage, the boy and the girl start taking bath with mustard oil and turmeric paste. On the actual day of marriage, in the morning and again in the afternoon the groom is anointed with oil and turmeric paste in front of the

Chamratala by his female relatives and bathed in water. A betel nut is taken and a hole is made in the nut and a cotton thread with seven folds is passed through the hole. The thread is put round the neck of the groom by seven of his relatives. Further, a *Kankan*, which comprises a few grains of *Atap* rice and *Durba* grass wrapped in a mango leaf, is tied round the arm of the groom with a thread. After these rites and rituals are over all the relatives and friends invited for the occasion join in a feast. It is said that now in some cases the parents of the groom keep a fast until the son gets married. This was acknowledged as a custom introduced in their society recently in keeping with the fashion among some of the caste Hindus of the area. After completion of the feast, they leave for the bride's village so that they reach there before mid-night. The bridegroom is dressed in a *dhuti*, full shirt and a *chadar*. He does not put on any headgear. The other members of the party are generally dressed in *dhuti* and shirt and a few also put on a chadar. Some of the members, including the bridegroom, decorate their faces with marks of Sandalwood paste. The party travels on foot or bullock-cart.

In the meanwhile, similar preparations go on in the house of the bride. On the day of marriage the bride is rubbed with oil and turmeric paste in front of the marriage booth, as in the case of the groom. She is then carried inside the hut by the wife of her elder brother or any other female relative. A *kankan*, as in the case of the groom, is also tied round her arm. In the evening, she takes a bath and breaks her fast, by taking milk and rice or rice with jaggery. Some decorative marks or designs are also put on her face with a paste of sandalwood.

It is now time to receive the bridegroom's procession. The marriage party includes 40-50 or sometimes more persons including female relations. According to Savars the participation of females is a 'must'. They mentioned that in case a marriage party arrives without women folk, which seldom is the case, the bride-groom's father is fined at the rate of Rs. 5 per woman supplied by the bride's party on their behalf. They say that absence of women in the marriage party is a bad omen and does not augar well for the future well-being of the couple. However, there is hardly any occasion when a marriage party arrives without the women-folk. On arrival at the bride's house, the marriage party is received by the relatives of the bride and the feet of the groom and his other close relations, such as the father and the uncles as well as the elder brothers, are washed.

The marriage ceremony starts immediately after the arrival of the marriage party. The groom is seated on his father's lap and in the latter's absence, on his sister's husband's lap or any other male relative's lap, in front of the *Chamratala*. In the meanwile the bride is brought before the *Chamratala* by her brother's wife and seated on her father's lap. The *kankans* tied on the arm of the bride and groom are then removed. The bride keeps vermilion in her palm. She closes her fist tightly and the boy tries to snatch it. This causes some amusement and is done in good humour. Finally, when the groom is able to snatch it from the bride's hand, he applies the same on her forehead three times one after another. Sometimes, he applies vermilion to the bride's forehead as well as on the parting of her hair by the convex side of a nut cracker, brought from his home for the purpose. After he has applied vermilion for the third time, the remaining vermilion in his hand is thrown on the bride's face in fun. In return the bride applies vermilion on the forehead and parting of the hair of the groom by a *Kajallata* (a spoon like utensil) used for preparing *stibium* for the eyes, which she keeps with her, before coming to the altar. Sometimes, she applies vermilion to the bridegroom's forehead by her little finger only. In some cases, the *Pallu* of the sari of the bride is tied with the *chadar* of the groom. The father of the groom takes his son on his lap and the mother of the bride takes her daughter on her lap and both move round the altar three times. The bride and the bridegroom may also exchange a garland with each other, three times. The bride and the bridegroom are then taken to a room. The female relations of the bride or her friends in the village unite the knot of the bride and bridegroom's dress on the payment of Rs. 0·50 by the bride-groom. It may, however, be mentioned that the above ceremonies which appear to be a recent development are not an essential part of the marriage rites and often dispensed with as in the village Phuljhora.

After the essential rites and rituals are over a feast is arranged which consists of rice, meat and *handia* and all the relatives of the groom as well as those of the bride participate in the feast. After the feast and drinking are over, singing, dancing and merriment go on for the whole night.

Next morning, the bridegroom's party returns to their village along with the bride. On reaching home, the parents of the bridegroom bless the couple and feed them with jaggery and flattened rice. First, the *Gram devata* and departed souls of the ancestors are worshipped, especially Dhar Bru and Marang Bru, with offering of *handia* and water. Next a feast is given. The bride's relatives, who accompany the bride, depart in the evening.

Chamratala is dismantled the next day and the branches and twigs are immersed in a tank or a river. The couple also take bath in a tank or a river. On way home the bridegroom shoots an arrow with a bow to a certain distance and repeats the performance twice or thrice. Every time the arrow is collected by the bride and handed over to her husband. After returning home the bride wears a *Loha* (an iron bangle) on the wrist. After taking meals the couple leave for the bride's house to attend the immersion of *Chamratala* constructed there. The couple return to the bride-groom's village after one or two days.

In case the wife has not attained puberty and is of tender age, the husband is not allowed to cohabit with her and she is brought back to her village after two or three days by some of her relations. After two or three years, when the girl comes to the age, her husband accompanied by some of his close relations goes to her house and brings her back after being entertained to lunch by her father. However, no rites or rituals are performed on this occasion. Marriage is actually consummated after the bride comes to stay with the bridegroom on a permanent basis.

It is interesting to note that the Savars of Purulia do not require the services of any priest for performing marriage ceremony. The various rites and rituals are performed in the presence of Savar village elders without any incantations. The elders of the family on the both sides look after the observance of the necessary rites and rituals.

(ii) *Shikria Biyah* or marriage by elopement is of rare occurrence as generally when the boy and the girl are desirous of marrying each other, the family members of the both acquiesce to their wishes and allow them to marry. It is rare that they have to resort to elopement. The elopement is not viewed favourably by the Savar society. However, they allow the couple to live as husband and wife on payment of fine imposed on the bridegroom by the Savar elders. But in such cases no ceremony is observed and no rites or rituals are performed.

(iii) *Marriage by service*

The Savars may also perform marriage by service. This type of marriage is generally performed when the Savar boy comes from a very poor family and his parents are unable to pay the bride price. Instead the boy serves in the house of his would be father-in-law for one year or more in lieu of bride price. The rites and rituals performed in such cases are, however, the same as in the case of marriage by negotiation. If the bride is the only daughter of her father, as is generally the case in such marriages, the bridegroom generally lives as *ghar-jamai*, if he so desires.

Widow remarriage : The Savars allow widows to remarry. The divorced or separated men and women can also remarry. Such type of marriage is called *Sanga marriage*. This is less expensive as the bridegroom has to pay a nominal bride price of Rs. 5 to Rs. 7 only. The feast to the kinsmen, and elaborate rites associated with marriage by negotiations, are dispensed with in such marriage. In some cases a widow and widower may just start living together as husband and wife with the tacit approval of their society. In case the younger brother of the deceased is unmarried and willing, the widow generally marries him, but it is not at all obligatory for her.

Divorce : Divorce is practised on grounds of wife's barrenness or adultery. Serious misconduct on the part of either the male or female partner is also a valid ground for divorce. No formal ceremony takes place when divorce is effected. When a divorced woman marries another man the latter is not required to pay any compensation to the first husband.

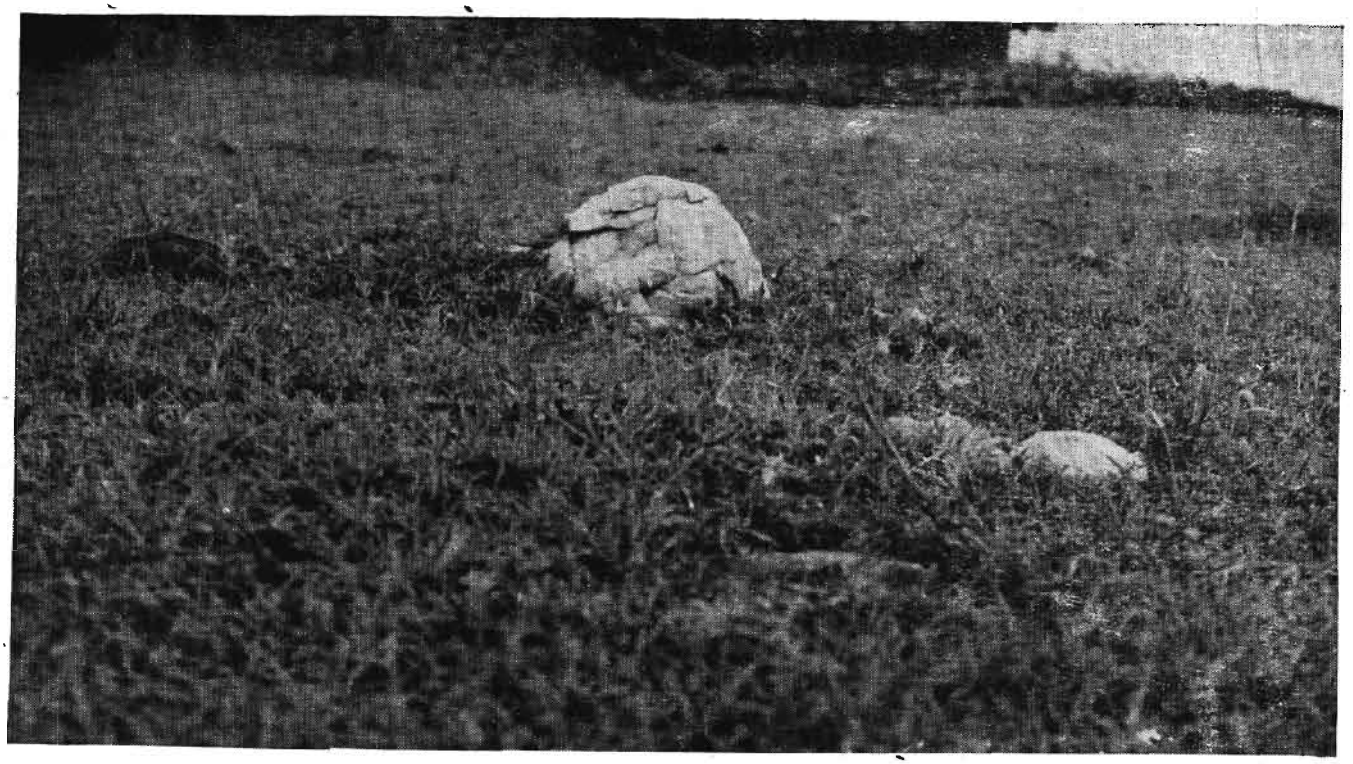
Disposal of dead : The Savars of Purulia either bury or cremate the dead bodies which are both reported to be their traditional modes of disposal of the dead bodies. Cremation is, however, regarded as more respectable than burial, but the former is generally practised by comparatively well-to-do Savars, as it is more expensive than burial. However, generally, infants and small children are buried. In case of death caused by Cholera, Smallpox or Tuberculosis, the Savars usually abandon the dead body in a jungle. They believe that in such cases burial or cremation would make other members of the society susceptible to the same disease. After the death of a person all the relatives and other villagers assemble in the house of the deceased. The dead body is smeared with oil and turmeric; besides vermilion marks are put on the forehead of the body. But, it is not bathed. It is then placed on a *charpai* (cot) for being carried to the burial or cremation ground. Generally, only the adult males accompany the dead body to the place of disposal. The near kith and kin carry the cot on their shoulders. When the dead body is brought out of the hut, some elderly women follow the dead body up to the boundary of the village, sprinkling water and sweeping the ground with a broom-stick. This is supposed to keep off the evil spirit from the house which might be associated with death. The house is plastered with a paste of cowdung and water and after that the household goods are washed with water. All the members of the household and close kins then take a bath.

During the journeys to the burial ground *Khai* (parched rice) is sprinkled all along the route. The Savars generally do not have their separate burial or cremation ground. These are generally located in the jungles outside the village and commonly used by the Savars as well as the Santal and other neighbouring tribal communities. In case of burial, a four feet deep pit is dug by means of a hoe. The dead body is then laid on its back in the pit with the head directed southwards. A one rupee coin is also placed on the lips of the dead body in the belief that it would enable the deceased to purchase the necessities of life in the other world. All the personal effects of the deceased are then put on the body, and the pit is filled up with the soil dug up. *Khai* is scattered all over the site. Some branches of trees are also placed there and stones are laid on them to prevent the dead body being dug up by wild animals such as fox, jackal, etc.

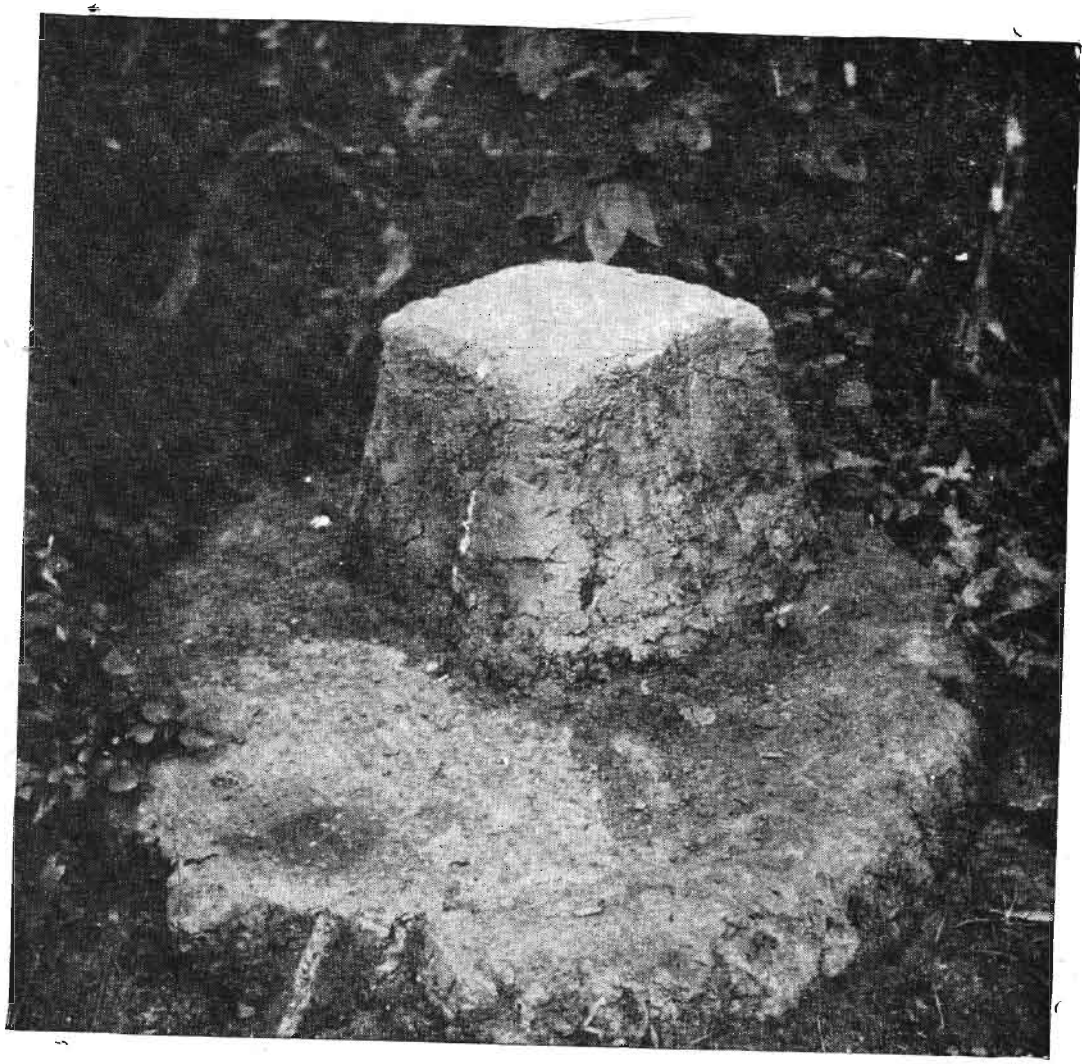
In case of cremation, a pyre is erected with twigs and sticks collected from the jungle. The dead body is laid on the pyre with the head directed towards the south as in the case of burial. A silver coin is placed on the lips of the dead body in the belief that the deceased require money for purchasing his necessities in



10. Gosainrai—The shrine of the village deity



11. The shrine of Rangaharigaram, a village deity



12. The shrine of Tulsi

the other world. The body is then covered with logs of wood. The eldest son of the deceased, or in his absence, any near male relative of the same clan, sets fire first to the mouth. This is called *Mukhe-agun.* Then he sets fire to the pyre. When the body is burnt completely some ashes and *asthis* (bones) are collected in an earthen pot. Then the mourners attending the funeral, return home after taking a bath. The *asthi* is washed in water mixed with a paste of turmeric. The earthen pot containing ashes and the bones is kept hanging from the branch of a tree. All the members accompanying the dead body are given a leaf of *Tulsi* plant (Ocimum Sanctum) and also sprinkled with a mixture of water and cowdung for purification.

The pollution period lasts for ten days, irrespective of sex and age of the deceased. The members of the bereaved family and relatives on the father's side observe the customary period of mourning. The mourners in the house of the deceased observe fast on the day of bereavement and the day after. But members of other households though related to the deceased take food though with some restrictions. On the third day all the members of the family first take bath and then take *Tita-Bhat* (rice mixed with margosa leaves). All the mourners henceforth are free to take rice and curry of vegetables with salt. During the mourning period no mourner is permitted to take oil, spices and meat of any kind. Use of oil in hair is also forbidden during the mourning period. Rice and water are offered to the soul of the deceased at the bathing *ghat* of a river or a tank on the day of the death as well as on the second and third day.

In the morning of the tenth day, the earthern pot containing the *asthi* and the ashes is taken to a place in the jungle far away from the village. This place is locally known as *Sasan.* There the pot containing the ashes is partially buried in the ground and four pieces of stone are placed on the ground around the pot and a slab of stone is laid on the ground over the four stones. In case of burial, only a single piece of stone is erected in the earth in the memory of the dead. The Savars mentioned that they regard these menhirs as houses for the dead. Similar practice is also reported among certain other Proto-australoid tribes such as the Bhils. Elwin (*op. cit.* 365) refers to Koppers according to whom the idea of raising menhirs and menhir like monuments or resting places raised above the ground emnates from the belief that the evil minded spirits of the dead desire high resting places. But Elwin himself is of the view that the whole point of the erection of a menhir is to admit the ghost to the underworld and the Shaman and other dreamers tell many stories of the houses which the dead occupy there. The reason of the menhirs being placed close together is to bring the new ghost into close association with other ancestors rather than to provide him with an earthly home. The erection of menhir saves him from isolation and loneliness. A menhir may be a temporary resting place on the earth but the ghosts' permanent home is in the under world (*ibid.* p. 366).

After the disposal of bones, a ceremony known as *Chatshruddha* is observed when all the male mourners go to the bathing *ghat,* shave their hairs and beards and pare the nails. It is obligatory for the sons of the deceased to shave their heads. In the absence of a son, the person who observes the rite of *Mukhe-agun* shaves his hair. The female relatives also pare their nails at home. Before taking the ceremonial bath, all the household utensils in the house of the deceased are washed and walls and floor of the house are plastered with cowdung and water for purification. The ceremonial bath is taken after anointing oil and paste of turmeric on the body. But the females generally smear their body with only oil and do not put on a paste of turmeric before taking bath. After this, a small hole is dug in the ground near the bathing *ghat* and everyone puts water in the hole in the name of the deceased.

On the tenth day, a community feast is arranged by the family of the deceased according to its means in which all the *Bhaiads* or clansmen and *Kutumbs* (relatives) take part. If means permit, the feast is made more attractive by drinking *Handia.* This marks the end of the pollution period.

It would be noticed from the above account that the Savars do not utilise the services of a priest or a religious functionary in the observance and performance of various rites associated with death in their community.

Religion

During 1961 Census all the Savars of Purulia returned themselves as Hindus. A survey of the Savars pantheon, religious functionaries as well as various rites and ceremonies associated with the worship and tackling of gods and spirits, however, brings out a few interesting features of their religion, Though they have taken to some of the festivals and a few of gods and goddesses of all India spread by and large, the Savar religion is based on the worship, *propitiation* and *tackling* of *gram devatas* (village-girls), hillgods, and evil spirits. They believe that these deities and spirits, if not appeased or properly managed may become angry and cause disease and death, and other calamities to the family and to the society. In almost all the Savar villages the main deities worshipped are one or more *gram devatas,* but the deities worshippd as *gram devata* are different in name and form in different areas. In village Phuljhora the two main village deities are Dhar Bru and Marang Bru, which are worshipped during important festivals, crucial stages in the life cycle of an individual as well as during illness and other serious calamities.

In the village Doledanaria there are two *gramthans* (sacred spots or altars) for the village deities which are regarded as the common property of the Savar residents of the village and worshipped by them. Of the two altars, one is for Gosainrai and the other for Rangahari Garam. The *than* (spot) of the former deity is not represented by any image but by a simple

white stone, erected in an open field. The *than* (spot) of Rangahari Garam is situated under a *Sal* tree, and here also the deity is represented by another white stone. Here it is to be noted that for marking the sacred spots of the deities *Sal* tree is regarded as more appropriate; but in its absence *Kend* tree also serves the purpose.

The village gods such as Rangahari Garam and Gosainrai in Doledanaria and Dhar Bru and Marang Bru in Phuljhora are worshipped by the Savars jointly on a community basis at their respective *gram-thans* (altars) once a year.

Besides the *gram devatas,* every Savar family has a Tulsi *than* (sacred spot represented by a plant of Ocimum sanctum), where on different occasions, like the *Akhan yatra* on the first *Magh,* worship is performed. The chief objects of family worship are four hills, namely *Ghatsila Pahar, Raika Pahar, Dalma Pahar* and *Ayodhya Pahar,* believed to be inhabited by the *Pahar-sinis* or hill-gods. The *Pahar-sinis* are propitiated in the belief that the tigers and bears of the forests and hills may not do any harm to the Savars. This belief bespeaks of their association with the hills and jungles where they lived long ago. Now though they have left the jungles and hills to live in the plains and the hills and forests have no role to play in their life except an occasional hunting expedition or a stray intrusion into the jungles to gather fruits or roots, they have not forsaken their faiths yet.

The world of spirits and ghosts has a profound influence in guarding the destiny of the Savars. *Bisai Chandi, Kalia Kundra* and *Baram Bhut* are the three leading figures among the spirits, who, though not actually worshipped, are entreated with certain magical rites. The Savars believe that these spirits and ghosts, ever on the look out to do harm to them, cause diseases, death and other misfortunes by their evil designs. Hence, it becomes necessary to keep them in check by performing magical rites through the good offices of the *laya* (priest).

On the new-moon night in *Kartik* (October-November) the Savars worship *Kali,* not represented by any image. The Savars, however, claim this deity to be the same as the Hindu Goddess Kali. The day of worship synchronises with that of *Kali-Puja.* Although the meagre data from this fact alone do not convey any idea about the extent of incorporation of the Hindu deities in their pantheon, the participation of Savars in the *Charak* and *Sivaratri* festivals of the neighbouring Hindu castes undoubtedly reveals their orientation towards the latter's religious observances.

Unlike the Savars of neighbouring Bankura and Midnapur who require the services of Brahmin priests in the worship of gods and goddesses (Risley, *op. cit.*), the Savars of Purulia have priests belonging to their own community. For the worship of the village deities and for other religious functions each village has its own religious head whose position is that of the priest. He controls the religious life of the Savars, prescribes the rites and rituals and advises the households in need on matters falling in the realm of the supernatural. The post of *Laya,* the only religious head or priest, is hereditary. Generally the eldest son succeeds to the office. In absence of any son, the office is generally succeeded by the brother's son or by any other male relative on the father's side, who obviously belongs to the same clan. No special ceremony or ritual is observed during the succession. The eldest son of a *Laya* when he attains adulthood assists his father in different rituals and ceremonies and gradually learns the know-how from his father.

Concept of soul

The Savars do not have any clear and definite concept of human soul except that every individual has a soul, which is indivisible and immortal. It has the power to move freely anywhere, leaving the body behind. It temporarily leaves the body, when asleep, and permanently only after death. After death human soul is believed to reside in the jungles. Only the proper observances of funerary rites can release the soul from its jungle-abode and enable it to be united with the deceased ancestors in the *Yamapuri* (Yama is the Hindu God of Death). In *Yamapuri* every man is punished for his misdeeds in the living world. The soul takes rebirth several years after, the length of the period depending on the period of punishment awarded by *Yama.* The Savars believe that the soul of an honest man is reborn in the form of a human being within a short period of his death. But the soul of a bad man returns to the earth in the body of an animal of an inferior species, depending upon the extent of his misdeeds. The return to the human form depends on the extent of his misdeeds in the world. It is also believed that in absence of the observance of proper funeral rites of the deceased his soul degenerates into a ghost or a spirit.

The Savars also venerate the souls of their deceased ancestors. They offer *Handia* to them during their festivals and on other occasions. They never drink *Handia* without offering it first to the soul of the deceased ancestors by dropping a few drops besides the oven or hearth. The souls of the deceased ancestors are also invoked and pleased with the same drink in other socio-religious observances, such as marriages, etc.

Festivals

The Savars observe a number of festivals in different seasons of the year. Some of the festivals are traditional and exclusively of their own. But there are some others which are of all India or regional spread. These festivals may be further broadly divided under two heads, namely (a) Family festivals, observed by the families individually and (b) Community festivals, celebrated by the Savars of the whole village on a community basis. The following table gives the annual cycle of festivals of Savars.

Annual Cycle of Festivals

Name of the month	Corresponding English months	Festivals observed by the Savars		Festivals in which Savars participate with neighbouring Hindu castes
		At family level	At community level	
1	2	3	4	5
1. *Baisakh* (Baisakh) .	April-May	—	—	—
2. *Jaisthi* (Jaistha) . .	May-June	Lakshmipuja	—	—
3. *Ashar* (Ashar) . .	June-July	—	*Ashariapuja*	—
4. *Shawan* (Shravan) .	July-August	—	—	—
5. *Bhadar* (Bhadra) . .	August-September	—	—	—
6. *Asin* (Aswin) . .	September-October	—	—	*Durgapuja*
7. *Kartik* (Kartika) . .	October-November	*Gauripuja*	—	*Kalipuja*
8. *Aghan* (Agrahayan) .	November-December	—	—	—
9. *Paus* (Paus) . .	December-January	—	—	—
10. *Magh* (Magh) . .	January-February	*Akhan Yatra*	*Akhan Yatra*	—
11. *Fagun* (Falgun) . .	February-March	—	—	*Sivaratri*
12. *Chait* (Chaitra) . .	March-April	—	—	*Charak*

A brief description of each of the festival given in the table is discussed below :—

(i) *Lakshmipuja* : This is observed in the month of *Jasthi* or *Jaisthya* (May-June) by those Savars who cultivate paddy. The goddess *Lakshmi* is worshipped by the head of the household himself before cultivation is undertaken. This worship is performed by Savars in Phuljhora and some other villages where they are carrying on cultivation. The Savars of Doledanaria do not observe it and even do not know the actual ceremony, because they do not cultivate paddy. But, they know that the Savars of other villages in the Police stations of Manbazar and Barabazar celebrate this festival at the family level.

The worship of this deity itself is not embedded in the Savar cult. The Savar agriculturists seem to have learnt the cultivation of paddy and the worship of associated deity from the Hindu co-villagers and other neighbouring Hindu castes because *Lakshmi* is regarded as the Goddess of Plenty and Wealth by the latter.

(ii) *Gauripuja* : In the month of Kartik, on the day before *Kalipuja* those Savars who own cows, worship *Bhagabati*, who has cow as its incarnation. On this occasion the cowshed is washed and plastered with cowdung and water. The head of the household observes fast. He offers mustard oil, vermilion, *Atap* (sundried rice) to the deity *Bhagabati* and sacrifices a fowl. This worship though known to the Savars of Doledanaria is not performed by them, as they do not possess any cow. But, in Phuljhora where some of them own cow this is an important family festival.

(iii) *Kalipuja* : It is held on the same day in the month of *Kartik* as among the Hindu castes. The head of the family, who performs the worship of the goddess *Kali*, observes fast on this day. However, no image is used. The *Tulsi than* is plastered with cowdung and water. Sweetmeat, mustard oil, vermilion, *Atap* rice, hemp and *Handia* are offered during the worship at the *Tulsi than* and a fowl is sacrificed. Dance, music and drinks contribute to the gaiety of the festival.

(iv) *Paus-Sankranti* : On the last day of the month of *Paus* (December-January) when Makar festival is celebrated by the other Hindus, the Savars prepare festive cakes with powdered *Atap* rice. Similar festive cakes are also prepared by the Hindu castes and by the Santals of the locality. But unlike the former the Savars perform no ceremonial rites and rituals during this festival.

Community festivals

(i) *Akhan Yatra* : Of the two the festivals observed by the Savars on a community basis, *Akhan Yatra* is celebrated in an elaborate manner and treated as more important. It is observed on the first day of *Magh*

(January-February) in a festive and gay mood when the harvesting of paddy is over. With the paddy collected from the field, all the miseries and struggles of life are forgotten for the time being and the festival is observed with drinking, singing and dancing. The ceremonial aspect of the festival consists of the worship of *Gram Devta* of the village at its *Than,* where the deity is represented by a white stone under a *Sal or Kend* tree. The *Laya* worships the village deity with mustard oil, vermilion, turmeric, *Atap* rice, *Dhup* and *Dhuna* (incense). He also offers *Handia* to the deity and sacrifices fowls and pigeons. The expenses of the worship is shared by all the Savar households of the village.

This festival is also celebrated at family level. The ceremonial part of the festival performed in each individual household consists of the worship of the four hills inhabited by the *Paharsinis.* These hills namely *Raika Pahar, Ghatsila Pahar, Dalma Pahar* and *Ajodhya Pahar* are worshipped by the households in the same manner as *Rangahari Garam* at the *Tulsithan* of the individual families. The head of the family observes a fast and performs the worship. *Laya* has nothing to do with these family worships.

After the religious part of the festival is over at family and community levels, the Savars take festive meals of rice with meat. Flattened rice, parched rice etc., are also taken and *Handia* is drunk by all, irrespective of sex. The Savars in a group enjoy the festival with dance accompanied by songs and music.

(ii) *Ashariapuja or Ashairápuja:* This community festival is observed in *Ashar* (June-July) with less grandeur than *Akhan Yatra.* The ceremonical observance of the festival consists of worship of *Gosainrai* or the other *Garam Devta* of the village concerned at its sacred spot. The deity, represented by a white stone erected in the ground in an open field, is worshipped by the *Laya* with sacrifices, of fowls, pigs etc. The festival is climaxed by a feast accompanied by drinks, songs, music and other entertainment.

The Savars participate in the *Charak* festival of the neighbouring Hindu castes in the month of *Chaitra* (March-April). They are very fond of riding in the *Charak,* as evident from a number of scar-marks on their body. On this occasion they drink *Handia* and smoke hemp. During *Sivaratri* they go to the nearby *Siv-Mandir* (temple of Siva) and pour water on the *Sivalinga* (idol of Siva). The *Durgapuja* of the Hindu castes is witnessed by the Savars in nearby Hindu villages. Formerly, the Savars were not allowed entry in a Hindu temple. Now, they can enter the temple of *Siva* on the day of *Sivaratri.*

Leisure, Recreation and Child Play

The Savars have to struggle hard to eke out their livelihood. They do not have much leisure. During slack agricultural season they get some leisure hours which they spend in gossipping, smoking *chutis* and *bidis.* They, however, find special pleasure and recreation in drinking *Handia.* The Savars also entertain themselves by singing and dancing of which they are very fond of. They, however, neither possess so many musical instruments nor the varied dances of their neighbouring Santals.

They have some musical instruments such as *Madal* (musical drum), *Dhol* (drum), *Dhomsa* or *Nagra* (drum) and *Bansi* (flute made of bamboo). All the three musical drums resemble those of the Santals of the area. The Savars of Doledanaria have the *Dhol* and *Bansi* of their own. In different ceremonies and festivals they hire the other instruments from the Santals of the village. They do not possess any stringed instrument.

During *Kalipuja, Ashariapuja and Akhan Yatra* festivals the musical instruments are played generally by the Savar youths during the dances. These are also played during the dances in marriages. They also sing and dance when they take *Handia* or country liquor. Savar girls participate in dances but they never play on any musical instrument, though there is no taboo. Both married and unmarried women take part in dancing. Males also join them often. It has been reported that the techniques of their dance called *Danr-nach* to the tune of *Karam* songs resemble those of the Bhuiyas. During the dance the participants stand in a row, each clasping the palms of the person on the right or left. The clasped palms are kept pressed against their breast before clasping the palm of the other person. The whole row moves alternately forward and backward. In their forward movement they jump forward, the body leaning in front and in the next backward movement they stand straight. This dance is reported to be typical of the Savars and is not performed by their neighbouring Santals.

Children play small games among themselves. There are, however, no organised sports and games. A common sport is to play hide-and-seek. Smaller children make mud pics and toys of clay and soil. They also play at winnowing, cleaning gram and cooking and imitate other household chores.

Inter-community Relationship

As the Savars are of tribal extraction and live in isolation, they are not assigned a definite ranking in the local traditional caste hierarchy. Risley, however, observes that their social rank is certainly not higher than that of Bagdis, Lohars, Koras and similar communities who hang on the outskirts of the Hindu caste system. (Risley, *op cit.* p. 246). In Purulia district the Savars generally live almost segregated in villages of their own where generally the caste Hindus are not residing. The latter in the neighbouring villages, however, assign a low social status to the Savars. According to them the Savars are not allowed to use freely any water source, such as well or a tank, and do not have free access to places of worship generally frequented by caste Hindus. Their

entry into the Siva temple is prohibited, except during the Sivaratri festival when the restrictions are relaxed for the day. The barbers of the Napit caste, it is said, will not provide traditional service to the Savars on their socio-religious occasions. Similarly, the washermen of Dhoba caste do not wash their clothes; their social religious observances do not, however, appear to otherwise require such services, and on economic grounds the services of a washerman is an unthinkable luxury. The Savars themselves appear to be rather indifferent about the social ranking assigned to them by the caste Hindus in the neighbouring villages, as, according to them, there is no occasion when they would require to have any sort of ritual interaction or any social intercourse with the latter. On the other hand, their contention is that they would not accept food and water from the members of Hari, Muchi, Dom, Dhoba, Bauri and Bagdi communities (Scheduled Castes), etc. This pretention did not evoke any reaction from the caste Hindus residing in the neighbouring areas when they were asked to comment on the claims of the Savars. It is, however, interesting that though the Savars would accept a low ranking than most of the caste Hindus, such as Mahato, Rajput, Thakur and Kayastha, they curiously enough do not accept the superior position of Brahmins. Infact, they display an attitude of contempt and disdain for Brahmins. This is rationalised on the myth of fraud said to have been played upon the Savars by the Brahmins who usurped the priestly functions of the former in the worship of Jagannath of Puri and foisted upon the latter the label of a low class. In the neighbouring Bankura and Midnapore districts of West Bengal, however, the Savars freely utilise the services of Brahmins wherever they can get it and also apparently accept a lower social status than the latter (Bhowmick; *op. cit.*). Not unexpectedly the airs that the Savars of Purulia assume in respect of the Brahmins are ridiculed by the latter who regard the former as one of lowest with whom they would deny social intercourse of any sort.

As mentioned above the Savars live almost in isolation, as they generally inhabit villages of their own, sometimes with Santals as their co-villagers. In Doledanaria and Phuljhora villages they live with a few families of Santals with whom they have minimum of social relations. The nearest they come in contact with each other is in terms of employee and employer relationship in so much as the former work with the latter as agricultural labourers. This is reflected in their social status as the Savars rank lower than the Santals. This rank is also accepted by the former. Normally, a Santal would not come to a Savar house to participate in any family ceremony or even attend any of their community festivals. While the Savars would accept cooked food and water from Santals, the latter usually do not reciprocate the practice, though they are not too rigid in this matter; if a Santal has friendly relations with a Savar he would accept food and water from him or even attend a ceremony in the family. The attitude of the two communities towards each other is thus of indifferent tolerance for each other. There are hardly any occasions when there is inter-tribal strife between them, rather they would cooperate with each other in economic field and gang up on matter of mutual interest.

By and large, the Savars are cut off from the main stream of social and political life elsewhere in the district. This appears to be so because the caste Hindus of the area do not evoke a sense of fellow feeling or a spirit of communion by having any social relations with them. One of the reasons is that inspite of their apparent docile nature and cool temperament the Savars are viewed with suspicion for alleged criminal practices. The genesis of this behaviour is not clearly understood as the Savars have not been considered criminals or notified as a criminal tribe in the area. It may be because sometimes the Savars have been associated with the Lodhas, who were notified as a criminal tribe in the area. According to the Savars, they become scapegoats for any misdeed in the area where they are residing.

The negative orientation of the caste Hindus towards the Savars which appears to be derived from their poor image as thieves and criminals, has contributed to the latter's developing a sort of phobia in respect of the outsiders. It is reported by the local people, and also acknowledged by the Savars, that they used to run away until recently whenever they came across an outsider. However, for quite sometime or so they have gained more confidence and are not so much wary of strangers as they were previously.

Organisation of Social Control, Prestige and Leadership

The Savars of Phuljhora narrated that in the past their community had a strong and fairly well organised agency for regulating their social and religious matters. All the adult males constituted the village council, headed by the *Malik* or *Laya*. The office of headman operated on hereditary principle and passed from father to the eldest son. In the absence of a son, a suitable near kin of the same clan was selected to hold the office. The *Malik* or *Laya* was assisted by the *Bhadda* whose function was to act as a messenger and inform the tribesmen about the meetings of the tribal council and carry out similar errands for the headman. The Laya also held the office of the high priest in conjunction with the office of the headman. The presence of *Laya* was absolutely essential, and still is, during marriages and funerals. He also received the government officials. But, inspite of his exalted position the *Laya* exercised in his political power on democratic principles as he delivered judgements after ascertaining the view points of the community men. Free and frank discussions were allowed on any matter of importance in the open-air meetings. Even women were allowed to participate in the meetings if they so desired. The council dealt with both civil and criminal cases, such as disputes arising out

of sale and partition of land and property, cases of theft, personal quarrels, cases of elopement and other sexual offences etc. The divorces were also affected before the council. Decisions were arrived at after free and protracted discussions, which sometimes continued for days, and the judgement was delivered by the *Laya*. The offender was generally punished by imposing fines which varied according to the nature of the offence and his financial standing. At present, most of the functions of the tribal council have been taken over by the statutory panchayats.

The traditional agency of the tribal council and the *Malik* or *Laya* as an organ for social and political control is languishing now and much reduced in power and sphere of activities. The *Laya* is now a formal headman on hereditary principle and divested of most of his socio-political power. He no longer holds a special and privileged position and enjoys no especial rights and higher social status. He is more or less reduced to the position of a high priest only to preside over marriages and funerals and worships.

Now, whenever there is a minor dispute, such as a sexual offence or breach of community taboo, etc. or a matter of concern to the community the village elders assemble at a place to constitute the Panchayat and discuss the matter. Sometimes, they invite members of other communities of the village as impartial judges. The offender is punished with a small fine, which varies from Rs. 5/- to Rs. 20/- according to the gravity of the offence. The amount is deposited with *Laya* and is spent on a feast of *handia* (liquor) and meat for the villagers. The aggrieved party is rarely compensated by way of money realised as fine from the culprit.

There is no agency at present to deal with matters at a higher level beyond the village panchayat. In case of a dispute involving persons belonging to two different villages the community men from both the villages meet to form the *ad hoc* tribal council.

There appears to be a vacuum in the power structure and leadership among the Savars under discussion. While the traditional leadership has been gradually losing ground and withering, no new emergent leadership has come to replace it. One of the reasons could be that in Purulia the Savars are more or less isolated. Another reason may be the poor state of literacy (1.33%) in the community. It is noteworthy that none among the Savars was a graduate upto 1961, as the Census data for the year indicates. A few matriculates are employed mostly in towns, etc. These few individuals are respected and consulted in important matters, but there is no noteworthy person endowed with quality of leadership. The lack of leadership among them poses problems for them in their dealings with the government. 'There is none', as Ghotu Savar puts it, 'to place our grievances before the government, no M.L.A. no M.P., There appears to be no doubt that in comparison to the neighbouring tribes of Santal, Munda, Oraon, etc., the Savars are not organised politically.

Social Reform and Welfare

Social reform : There does not appear to be any organised or established agency for initiating and carrying out social reforms among the Savars of Purulia. An isolated reform movement is, however, reported to have been initiated among them in recent years by one Balram Das. This was aimed at revival of 'the past glorious culture' of the Savars. This was sought to be achieved by performing a *Santi yajna* (offering to the sacred fire) by a *Laya* (where the Savars prayed for a prosperous life, disappearance of the bad and evil from their society and restoration of their original right of serving as the priest of Lord Jagannath at Puri.

The initiator of the reform movement is, however, reported to be a caste Hindu and not a Savar. He had earlier carried on similar movement among Lodhas of Midnapore of West Bengal and Singhbhum district of Bihar. He had also taken interest in the execution of a scheme for the denotified tribes.

Welfare programmes undertaken for the Savars by the Government of West Bengal : The Government of West Bengal have undertaken a few schemes, such as colonization, promotion of education, agriculture activities, health, housing, etc. for the development of Scheduled Tribes in the State under the five year plans. The Savars are also covered under these schemes. However, it is noteworthy that the State Government have undertaken special schemes for the rehabilitation of Savars residing in Purulia district. From the information collected from the Special Officer, Scheduled Castes and Tribes, Welfare, Purulia, it appears that three colonisation schemes have been undertaken for the Savars in the district. Of these, two were started during the first year of the Third Five Year Plan. Their particulars are furnished below:

(1) The first rehabilitation scheme was started at Latpada in the Bara Bazar police station in the year 1959-60. Under this scheme, 20 Savar families were provided houses at a cost of Rs. 500/- per house with a total expenditure of Rs. 10,000/- on this item alone. The other important aspect of the scheme was the allotment of .50 acres of agricultural land including homestead land. The cost for the reclamation of the same and purchase of agricultural implements came to Rs. 5,000. Besides, Rs. 1,500 were spent on the construction of a well in the colony. The total cost of setting up the colony came to Rs. 16,500/- only.

(2) The second rehabilitation scheme for the Savars was undertaken during 1960-61, when 30 houses for 30 families were constructed at a cost of Rs. 750/- per house at village Rithagora in the police station

Bandwan, at a total cost of Rs. 22,500. The scheme also provided for purchase of agricultural land at a cost of Rs. 10,000 and agricultural implements at a cost of Rs. 4,800. For further encouraging economic activity, each of the 30 Savar beneficiary families under the scheme was provided a country goat at the rate of Rs. 15 each. Poultry birds were also supplied at the rate of Rs. 10 per family. In addition, for encouraging sheep rearing, 30 sheep were provided to the 30 beneficiaries at the rate of Rs. 15 per family. The other feature of the scheme was construction of a two roomed brick building for housing a lower primary school at a cost of Rs. 2,500. Thus, a total expenditure of Rs. 41,000 was incurred on this colonisation scheme.

(3) The third colonisation scheme for the Savars was started at the village Kalipur of Balarampur police station. This was initiated during the year 1961-62 and for this a total amount of Rs. 22,800 was spent by the State government. The scheme provided for construction of 16 houses at a cost of Rs. 1,000 each. The houses are *pucca* brick built with tiled roof. Besides, each has a verandah and separate cowshed attached. Provision for agricultural implements was also made at a cost of Rs. 1,000. Seeds and manures for raising agricultural crops, such as *Juar* and groundnuts, were purchased for Rs. 1,000. Eight pairs of bullocks were also purchased at the rate of Rs. 400 per pair. Goat rearing was also encouraged by providing a sum of Rs. 50 per family and poultry birds were given to the beneficiaries at the same rate.

An attempt was made to evaluate the success of these colonisation schemes and their impact on the Savars. The Savar beneficiaries under the scheme are hardly satisfied with the functioning of the above colonisation scheme. The others also had a poor opinion about the same as they thought that these colonisation schemes were not properly planned and executed with foresight. The reason for the lack of success of these schemes in all the three cases was attributed to settlement of the Savar families in the plains area, away from their original habitat; the land provided was of very poor quality and not fully reclaimed and without any provision for irrigation. Another reason given was that the land for agriculture was provided to the Savars on a co-operative basis for all the Savar beneficiary families together. This invariably resulted in bickering and quarrels as the Savars were not co-operating with each other in cultivating the land jointly.

During the field study, an attempt was made to evaluate the success of the colonisation scheme for Savars at the village Latpada by paying a visit to the colony. This was the first colonisation scheme for the Savars. It started during 1959-60, when houses were constructed for 20 Savar families at an expenditure of Rs. 500 per house. It was found that only a few members from each were living in the colony and others continued to live in their original houses at the village Higoli, at a distance of about 5 to 6 kms. from the colony. The beneficiaries under the scheme were also provided 50 acres of land along with agricultural implements, etc., for cultivation on a co-operative basis. However, this did not seem to have made any headway as the land alloted remained uncultivated from the very beginning. It was pointed out by the Savars that the land in question was of very poor quality and not reclaimed properly; and without irrigation facilities it was almost impossible for them to start cutivation of any sort. The other main hurdle that they pointed out in the way of cultivation of the land was that the land was provided to the 20 families on a co-operative basis without any individual rights. As a result no one among them was willing to take initiative in the back-breaking task of making the land culturable for cultivation. Besides they could not take a lead in the matter on a co-operative basis and there were quarrels and bickerings among them. Almost all the Savars interviewed in the colony were of the view that if land was alloted to each of the family on an individual basis, if not all, a fairly large proportion of them would come forward for cultivating the same.

Thus, it appears that by and large the scheme has not been successful. It mostly provided night shelters for a few families. It appears that for more or less the same factors the other colonisation schemes could not make much impact on the Savars though some of them they appear to have met a slightly better fate than the colony at Latpada.

Biographies

Mangal Savar : Middle aged, Mangal Savar is the only person in the Phuljhora village who has studied upto middle class. Considering that the literacy among the Savars of West Bengal is only 1.3 per cent, it is no mean achievement on his part. In fact, one can count the Savars who have studied upto middle class on one's finger tips. He is the second eldest among the four brothers of a fairly large family which has been living in the Phuljhora village for generations. He is married and has a son. His wife and son are living with his two married brothers and their children in the same house, Mangal himself lives alone in Jhalda town where he is employed. His widowed mother as well as his 15 years old unmarried sister also stayed with them. One of his younger brothers, Phagu, however, lives separately alongwith his wife, two daughters and a son. All the brothers including Phagu, however, cultivate their land jointly and his share of the produce is given to Phagu.

Mangal's father was a small cultivator who died a few years ago due to illness. The old man had hardly visited any other place except the open and sprawling fields and hills surrounding his village which was his small world. His family was of average means, as the standard of living among the Savars of the area goes.

As a young boy, Mangal used to visit Barabazar, the headquarters of the police station of his village, where in the market places he saw many things and was particularly attracted by the officials going to Purulia town or Dhanbad in Bihar and other places. The place was full of vehicles, jeeps, cars and buses. This gave him the vision of a world different and better from his isolated hamlet bounded by green jungles and emptiness. From his earlier boyhood Mangal was a restless soul, not happy with his lot. He wanted to dress like the 'babus' and the government officials whom he saw in the town and who sometimes visited his village in connection with the discharge of their official duties. He realised his ambition will remain an empty dream unless he educated himself. He was determined to study hard and become an officer and not a "meek cultivator" like his village folk. In his venture he had to overcome a number of obstacles. There was no tradition of education in his family, in his village, and for that matter among his entire community. His elder brother had hardly any education. Besides, the means of education were not easy. There was no school in the village. But this did not deter him at all. He walked a distance of 12 kms. daily to visit the primary school at Barabazar. Later, he went to study in the middle school at Sindri. Eventually his persistence and tireless labour bore fruits; he passed middle class as early as in the 1950 to become one of the pioneers among his community to achieve this landmark. He could not become a 'babu' but he got a job of a watchman in the Grain Goala, run by the State Tribal Welfare Department at Jhalda, a few kilometres away from his village. He is employed there since 1952 and earns a monthly income of about Rs. 150 and, importantly enough for him, dresses in bush-shirt and trouser like a 'babu'.

Mangal has recently been allotted a Government quarter at Jhalda where he is employed by the State Welfare Department. There he lives in fashion of the townsfolk. Mangal is staying alone and visits his family at Phuljhora only occasionally. He does not like to bring his wife and children to Jhalda. He takes his meals in the local market but some time cooks for himself at home. During his service of more than 15 years at Jhalda he brought his wife and mother to live with him only for a short span of two or three months. Somehow he feels embarrased to bring his "junglee wife and children", as he puts it, in the town. It is, however, of interest that Mangal was married at the age of 19. He had seen his wife earlier and had no objection to marriage though he did not show any enthusiasm for it. One of the excuses that he puts forth in support of keeping his family away in his home village is that he cannot afford money for the maintenance of his wife and son in the town where he is employed. His colleagues and his brothers, however, consider it as a lame excuse as they rightly point out that Mangal has to spend a good deal of money for taking his meals in the market and also on his ultra modern 'babu' dress in the town. His family is, however, not angry over this issue and seem to have acquiscesed to his wishes.

In spite of his education and employment in a Government department, which is concerned with the welfare of tribal communities, including his own, Mangal seems to have failed to assume any leadership and initiative in the betterment of his community or taking interest in his community's affairs. Rather he has alienated himself from his community folk as he appears to consider them backward, unambitious, and ignorant. He has not much to offer by way of suggestions for amelioration of his community. He, however, feels strongly about education which, according to him, is the panacea for all the ailments of his community. Sometimes, he sends some money to his family and occasionally visits his home to see his family members. He has, however, tried to introduce new plants in the family homestead in the village. He has successfully grown two mango trees and a jackfruit tree. His brothers are very proud of this feat as they are the only persons in the village having a jackfruit tree. His mother beamingly pointed out that last year it gave two fruits and now they could expect more from it.

Ghotu Savar : Ghotu Savar is a young, intelligent and outspoken person of about 28 years who resides in the new colony set up by the State Government for the Savars at Latpada, under the programme for welfare of backward classes. Though Ghotu is not a traditional *Malik* or *Laya* (leader) of his community, he appears to have been endowed with quality of leadership which is recognised by his Savar brethern in the colony.

Ghotu is married and has children. He feels it his bounded duty to fulfil the mission of serving his community and helping it to achieve a better standard of living. His approach towards community reforms is pragamatic. He is all for giving up what is bad and acquiring what is good for his community. He is also for revivalism of the "past glorious culture and tradition of the community." He mentioned that his community is a very old and ancient one which lived in princetine glory in the past but has come to the sorry state of affairs at present. He mentioned that the Savars were first to inhabit the country, even before the neighbouring Munda and Oraon who are also Adivasis like the Savars. According to him the Shiva came to dwell on the earth first and the Savars were next to come and, thus, they are children of the land, the earliest inhabitants.

Ghotu Savar has been in touch with the State Welfare Department for introducing measures for the amelioration of his community. Though he has had no formal education he has an ambition for a better living for himself and for his community. A decade ago his visions for a better life and good days were raised when the government set up a colony at Lat-

pada. He enthusiastically moved away from his original home at village Hijoli to Latpada though he was not satisfied fully with the new site. After a decade, however, he is a frustrated person. According to him the land provided to 20 beneficiaries is poor in quality and it is very difficult to cultivate it in the absence of irrigation facilities. The entire terrain, he mentions, is desolate, the soil most unyielding and unsuitable for cultivation and has failed to provide them with a livelihood. According to him the colony is almost a total failure and is only successful in as much as that it provides shelter to a few families. Even then, it is not satisfactory as most of the families are maintaining two households, or rather two shelters, one in the original village 4 to 5 kms. away at Hijoli where they cultivate, and the other at Latpada.

Ghotu has, however, not lost all hopes. Even now, according to him, things can be improved to a certain extent if the 50 acres of land provided to the 20 Savar families on a co-operative basis is assigned to them on an individual basis. He feels that this way the present bickerings and lack of initiative would be overcome to an extent, and at least a few families, when alloted land for themselves, would work day and night to get something from the soil. He is of the view that by and large the colonisation schemes undertaken by the government for the Savars have failed to deliver goods as they did not tackle certain basic issues. The main failings, according to him, are that the site for new colonies is generally in the plains, far away from their original habitats and without the protection of their gods. The land assigned for cultivation is barren, not fully reclaimed and the terrain more often than not is of extremely poor quality. It is, however, very important to have the land properly reclaimed as the land in the area is rocky, with rough soil, without any provision for irrigation and almost entire success of the crops depends on adequate rainfall. The land provided for cultivation is given on a co-operative basis with the result that no one among them takes initiative in cultivating it as the same is a back-breaking job and none of them is certain of the success. Nobody likes to co-operate in a venture of dubious success. He is of the view that if the above mentioned lacunae are removed then the colonization schemes would be of some use to them. Otherwise they are a loss to the government and frustration of the hopes of Savars.

Ringdu: Ringdu is the eldest brother among a family of four brothers. Two of his brothers and their families are living with him and share the meals from the same hearth. His another married brother, however, lives in a separate house. But all the brothers cultivate jointly and $\frac{1}{4}$th share of the produce is given to the brother who has separated. Incidentally, the reason of separation was that the wife of the separated brother could not pull on with the wives of other three brothers. Ringdu had to hold the reigns of his family's household affairs after the death of his father. Tragedy struck him again when he lost his young wife only after two years of marriage due to some illness.

Forty years old Ringdu is, however, a contended person. All his family memebrs live with understanding and harmony and peace is not disturbed by petty family quarrels. He is respected by his brothers and his sisters-in-law. He has no child of his own but affectionately fondles his brothers' children and considers them as his own. Though Ringdu has had no education he is a smart and intelligent man who has seen a little of the world. He has visited the nearby towns of Purulia, Dhanbad and other mining centres, such as Sindri, etc. He is consulted by his fellow villagers for his straight forward dealings and progressive views on community affairs. He cultivates but in lean period sometimes goes to collect firewood and fuel from nearby jungle and sells the same in the Barabazar for 50 paise per head load. He is very proud of the fact that his younger brother is educated and is employed with the State government where he earns a good income every month. Through his brother he has come to know of many things, which are considered as progressive. While observing the investigators taking their packed lunch of bananas, husked rice, biscuits and toasts he remarked, "look, I am uneducated like most of my other villagers and have to eat jungle roots and tubers like animals. Had I been also educated, then I would have also become a 'babu' and taken the nice dishes which you are taking." He further added, "My brother who is a 'babu' at Jhalda, also takes nice dishes like you why should then my brother stay in the village and eat the dirty stuff we do?" Though in the first flush his remarks appear to be jocular, atleast it was made in the same vein, one can also discern a feeling of frustration and envy. It also appears that he has got mixed feelings about his educated brother. While he is happy and proud that the latter is educated, employed with government and lives like a respected 'babu' he is unhappy that he does not mix up much with other members of the family and regard them as backward.

Ringdu likes to travel about in buses and other vehicles. He was very keen to have a joy ride alongwith his other family mêmbers and villagers in the jeep in which the investigators visited the village.

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ANNEXURE

FRAMEWORK FOR ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

I. Name, identity, origin and history

1. Name; synonym; Sub-caste/sub-tribe as in President's Order and as in other published sources such as Census reports, monographs etc., grouping with other castes and tribes during various censuses. Affinity with other castes and tribes according to recognised authorities.

2. Etymological significance of the name; names by which the community is referred to by (a) others and (b) itself.

3. Identification of the community by occupation or any other way of life.

4. Myths and legends connected with the origin and history of the community and its segments; historical references and popular beliefs about history and migration of the community.

II. Distribution and population trend

1. Area where found; population and concentration in the State and outside; physical aspects of the areas of concentration.

2. Numerical strength in 1961 and population variations during 1901-61; sex ratio; age-groups and rural-urban distribution in 1961.

III. Physical characteristics

1. Racial Stock; appearance and affinity with other known communities.

IV. Family, clan, kinship and other analogous division

1. Family, size (observed and published), Types of family, residence after marriage, descent, lineage and its economic and religious functions and inheritance.

2. Clan/gotra and sub-clans; names, etymological meaning, clustering of clans, belief and mythology about origin, status among clans, clan and regulation of marriage (preference and prohibition), occupation and clan, clan and rituals, clan and food (restrictions, prescriptions etc.).

3. Others; Phratry, Duel Organisation, like moieties etc., as in 2 above.

V. Dwelling, dress, food, ornaments and other material objects distinctive of the community

1. Settlement : Village site, location, settlement pattern (agglomerated, nucleated, dispersed, sprinkled, isolated, amorphous, star-shaped, horse-shoe shaped, linear, rectangular, circular or ring-shaped etc.) and variations; regional pattern vis-a-vis pattern of the community.

2. Neighbourhood pattern on the basis of religion, castes (Caste Hindus, untouchables) and tribes, etc., with segregations, if any, and the basis thereof.

3. Dwelling unit : compound, entrance, source of water, the use of different parts of the house (latrine, cattle shed, isolation huts etc.); shape (square, round, irregular etc.); storeys; nature of floor, plinth; wall; roofing, thatching; ventilations and doors; materials used; decorations and embellishments; temporary structures.

4. Dress including head gear and foot wear used ordinarily, on ceremonial occasions and special occasions, sex-wise and according to majority or minority; dress of priests and office bearers; variations.

5. Ornaments; use; material used; from where obtained; variations according to sex and age.

6. Personal decoration; Tattooing; mutilation (chipping of teeth, etc.); hair cutting; how done, purpose, attitude and variation according to sex and age.

7. Food and drink : Materials (staple and other), prescriptions and prohibitions, fuel, utensils and mode of preparation; practices connected with serving and taking of food; preservation of food, rituals, if any.

8. Equipments connected with economic pursuits, religion and ritual; how procured, material used, construction, manipulation and purpose.

9. Other household equipments : As above.

10. Equipments connected with recording to time, space and weight and their methods of use, as above.

VI. Environmental sanitation, hygienic habits, disease and treatment

1. Environmental sanitation, settlement, disposal of night soil, garbage etc.
2. Hygienic habit : cleanliness of body, teeth, dress, houses, utensils etc.
3. Diseases : Incidence; local names; interpretation of the causes; symptoms; diagnosis and cure-persons and methods involved.
4. Modern system of medicine and attitude of the community towards it.

VII. Language and education

1. Ancestral Language : Classification according to Grierson, persistence of ancestral language and literature.
2. Mother tongue : Classification according to Grierson; bilingualism and multilingualism; regional language.
3. Information collected during 1961 Census on language and literature.
4. Education and literacy : Tradition and modern attitude, information collected during 1961 Census, literacy and levels of education.

VIII. Economic life

1. Economic resources : Land, community land, individual ownership and types of land possessed and land utilized.
2. Forest wealth : Flora and fauna; nature and extent of right in the forest; forest utilization.
3. Fishery, Livestock and others.
4. Working force; Sexwise, Urban and rural variations and comparison of the same with the region.
5. Non-workers.
6. Industrial classification : Details as collected in the field and comparison with that of the 1961 Census figures, traditional occupation and changes in the pattern; main and subsidiary occupations.
7. Forced labour, bonded labour, patron-client relationship (*jajmani*), mode of payment.
8. Seasonal migration connected with occupation; recruitment, formation of working groups.
9. Nomadic movement : cycle and occupational pattern.
10. Shifting cultivation : method, implements and equipments, produce, participation, cycle of rotation, measure to regulate shifting cultivation and its impact.
11. Terrace cultivation : As above.
12. Income and expenditure : Source of income, extent, expenditure on food, clothing, house, education, social functions and others.
13. Other aspects of economic life.

IX. Life cycle

A. Birth

1. Beliefs and practices connected with conception, barrenness, still-birth, miscarriage, abortion, child death, determination of sex, etc.
2. Pre-natal and natal practices : Residence, diet, work, taboos, etc., delivery place, assistance, equipments used in delivery, position during delivery, severance of umbilical cord (who does and how done), disposal of placenta.
3. Post natal practises : Confinement and segregation, ceremonial pollution, diet for mother and child, rituals.
4. Protection and care of child and training.
5. Attitude towards birth of child, preference about sex, preference about number, segregation of sex, etc.

B. Initiation

1. Initiation ceremony; descriptions.
2. Pre-marital sex relations within the community, outside the community, sanctions and taboos.

C. Marriage

1. Age at marriage for both sex; prohibited degrees of relationship, preferences, widow remarriage (preferences and taboos).
2. Civil status and social status.
3. Types of marriage : Monogamy, polygamy (Polyandry and polygyny).
4. Selection of spouse : Qualities valued (for bride and groom), mode of selection, procedure.
5. Modes of acquiring mate : By negotiation, force, intrusion, elopement, etc.

6. Terms of settlement : Payment of bride price, dowry, service, exchange, adoption, etc.

7. Ceremonies connected with marriage : Details including who presides over the marriage and services of functional castes.

8. Statistical data as per 1961 Census.

9. Divorce : Reasons and procedure.

D. Death

1. Concept about death, measures to ensure future well being of the soul, measures to avert harm by the spirits.

2. Methods of disposal : Burial, cremation, exposure, floating on water, etc.

3. Preparations for disposal of dead, informing friends and relatives, treatment of the dead body, digging of pit etc., for disposal; how carry, who carry, who accompany, place of disposal, methods of disposal, norms and taboos.

4. Ceremonies connected with disposal.

5. Death rites : Details.

6. Monuments : Tombs, megaliths, etc.

7. Pollution : duration, restrictions in work, food, dress, shaving, hair cropping, sex life etc., removal of pollution.

8. Mourning : mourners and duration.

X. Religion

1. Deities : supreme deity, benevolent deities, malevolent spirits, presiding deities of village and other aspects of life including occupation, clans, gotras etc.

2. Place of the deities in the regional pattern and Brahmanical and other traditions.

3. Rituals and concepts associated with the pantheon.

4. Spots associated with the deities, pilgrim centres and methods of worship.

5. Religious functionaries.

6. Calendar of festivals and their observance.

7. Concept of soul, hell, heaven, rebirth, transmigration of soul, etc.

8. Sects and denominations : Name, distribution, beliefs and practices etc.

9. Statistical information.

XI. Leisure, recreation and child play

1. Use of leisure time : For male, female, children and adult; seasonal variation in leisure time.

2. Recreations, their mode and extent, for males, females and children.

3. Leisure and recreation with reference to work.

XII. Relation among different segments of the Community recognised segments—name, basis (territorial, ceremonial, social, prestige, religion, sect, education, age, etc.); Interrelationship among various segments; status of the segment; status of women.

XIII. Inter-community relationship

1. Ceremonial relationship : Service by Brahmins, traditional service by castes like barbers, washermen, etc.

2. Pollution by touch or proximity to high Caste Hindus, use of well, admission to temple.

3. Secular relationship : Model for other communities, dominance due to economic resources, political status, social status, etc.

4. Bridge role, buffer role, alliance and antagonism of the community.

XIV. Structure of social control, prestige and leadership

1. Social control : Levels of social control, community level, regional level, hereditary, special functionaries, etc., social control by other agencies.

2. Mode of acquiring offices.

3. Control exercised by traditionally recognised leaders, functionaries of statutory bodies of the region, powerful individuals belonging to the community, etc., at the regional level and local level.

4. Relationship between spheres of social control and agencies of social control.

5. Leadership :For social change, for technological change, for political action and for other organised activities at the community level, regional level and local level.

6. Social prestige : Method of gaining social prestige (by performing ritual, merit or feast, associating with historical association, etc.) symbols of social prestige.

XV. Social reform and welfare

1. Social reform movements : Intensity, reasons for raising social status, establishing traditional norms, for westernisation, etc); history and import of the movements.

2. Social welfare : Agency, religious organisation, community as a whole, Govt., official and non-official, role of the social welfare measures and impact.

XVI. References cited and other bibliography.

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