

CHAPTER III.

DAILY LIFE.

RECENT TRENDS.

The daily life that is prevalent at the present time either in the towns or in the villages in this district is somewhat different from the daily life that was in vogue about thirty years back. The changes are more visible in the urban areas. Some of the factors that have brought about the changes are the spread of western education with all its corollaries, spread of libraries and the influence of the Press, economic condition, improvement of communications and more facilities for amusements and entertainments. Another social factor is a slow integration of some of the communities particularly in the villages. There has been a change in the social values of castes and communities. The land reforms policy of the Government has also been an important factor in doing away with the economic status of the intermediaries like the zamindars. At one time the zamindars and the high caste men, both in the rural as well as in the urban areas of the district, were the natural leaders of the people. The English-educated person had a fascination on the villagers. But at the moment, it cannot be said that there is anything like natural leadership as exclusive to any particular caste or community. The English educated person has not the same premium in the villages because of the unemployment incidence among them. The influence of the Press particularly the Vernacular Press has been considerable in bringing about changes in the mental outlook affecting daily life.

The villages, however, had to struggle for existence as there was more attention paid to the provision of amenities for the urban areas. The abolition of the zamindari had, at the first instance, led to a swing of migration for the intelligentsia and the rich from the villages to the towns. The present policy of the Government, however, is to bring about an adjustment between the villages and the towns and to raise the value of the villages by disintegrating the previous centralised administration at the district headquarters. Any important and big village in the district now will have quite a few of the subordinate officials. This is a new feature. The Gram Panchayat system has a great role to play in raising the status of the villages. In a big village, there may now be a Block Development Officer, a Karmchari, a Mukhiya, a Gram Sewak, a Co-operative Inspector, a Veterinary Assistant, a Health Assistant, an Overseer, etc. This picture is quite different from what we had some time before when in the rural area, the only static official normally was the police thana officer. With the emphasis on development work, the villages have assumed a new role.

There is another great factor influencing the social and daily life in this district. North Bihar is famous for its *melas* and fairs. This district has a large number of *melas* some of which attract thousands of persons. When the crops are reaped, people are free to participate in

these *melas* and fairs. Whether originating in economic, religious or social reasons, these *melas* and fairs do not appear to have dwindled in their importance. They still attract a vast floating population and there is always a large turnover of saleable commodities including livestock. The two important festivals which still attract huge crowds are *Ram Navami* and *Vivah Panchami* or *Sita Vivah*.

• *Ram Navami.*

Ram Navami is observed to celebrate the birth anniversary of Rama held to be an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. It is observed every year on the ninth day of *shukla paksha* in the month of Chaitra. However, Vaishnavas begin the festival as early as the first day of *shukla paksha* and conclude on the ninth day. This is also observed by Shaktas, believers in the Adishakti Bhawani, goddess Kali. It is an interesting fact that *Ram Navami* is preceded in the night by *Vasanti Navaratri* which is generally observed by Shaktas, and on the day following, on which day, at noon, Rama was born, *Ram Navami* is observed. The birthday of Rama is celebrated in all important temples of Rama and Sita and in the Vaishnava temples. On the ninth day of the *shukla paksha*, at noon, when the sun reaches the meridian, the priest of the temple publicly exhibits a coconut or cucumber (*khira*), puts it in a cradle and announces the birth of god.

On this occasion congregations are regaled with stories of the exploits of the great hero Rama who conquered Lanka (Ceylon) and killed the demon king Ravana. At places, religious dramas and dances depicting episodes from Rama's life, known as *Ramalila* are organised. On the birth-day of Rama many religious-minded people observe fast, while others take only fruits and milk.

Vivah Panchami.

Vivah Panchami is observed to celebrate the marriage anniversary of Rama and Sita. It is celebrated every year on the fifth day of *shukla paksha* in the month of Agrahan. On this occasion people, chiefly ladies, from far and wide rush to Janakpur on the border of Nepal where Rama and Sita had entered into the tie of marriage. The ceremony is celebrated with all the pomp of the marriage ceremony of an oriental prince and princess. A *barat* (bridegroom's) party is organised, a boy acts as Rama while another as Sita and others as the associates of Rama and Sita. As mentioned in the *Ramayana* the sacred bow is broken by Rama and Sita is wedded to him. On this occasion a big *mela* is held at Janakpur. These two festivals are more fondly looked forward to by the ladies in this district and have a great influence on the social life of the Hindus. The other socio-religious festivals of importance are *Chhat*, *Gopashtami*, *Mahabiri jhandah*, *Jhulan*, *Durga Pujah* and *Dewali*.

The *melas* and fairs bring to the villagers commodities which have now become a part and parcel of the village household. Articles like lanterns, torches, bicycles, better types of shoes, various toilet articles for the

ladies have a very good sale in these *melas*. In spite of better communications bringing the towns and urban markets nearer, the *melas* and fairs have still their fascination and use for the rural public. On the social side also these congregations of the villagers have helped to break up the rigours of casteism and orthodox habits. They have also helped to liquidate the *parda* system to a very great extent. The *melas* and fairs are patronised more by the women-folk.

DAILY LIFE.

The daily life of the people varies according to different status and avocation of the castes or classes. Rich people whether in the urban or in the rural areas will have a different routine than that of a poor man, a day labourer or an office assistant or a petty shop-keeper. In the urban areas, the common pattern of daily life of the intelligentsia class of people is that the person rises early in the morning and gets ready after his bath and breakfast within an hour. He reads the newspaper or has some chat and then turns to the call of his profession. This is the usual routine for a doctor or a pleader, a school or college teacher, a businessman and a Government servant. By 10 A.M. he is ready after a meal for the school, college, court or other place of business. In the evening, he will probably study, visit friends or a club or some amusement centre or spend the evening with the family. A lawyer or a doctor will have to deny himself the pleasures of social amenities some time after dusk because of the demand of his profession. Usually the businessman stays at his place of business till quite late in the night. Amusements like cinemas or theatricals will not be normally resorted to as a part of daily life. Probably once or twice in the week, one will pay a visit to the local amusements. The Sundays or other holidays are usually spent in resting or visiting friends or visiting some amusement centres. Taking holidays over a continued period to break the monotony of daily life is still rather uncommon to the average man. With the development of tourism and railway facilities this is, however, likely to develop.

The office assistants and the persons associated with the offices, courts, etc., in the towns have a regular pattern of life. By 9-30 A.M. or so, he is to get ready for office and after a quick meal, he will be in the office by 10-30 A.M. Cheap literature and particularly novels are frequently read by them in the night. In the noon he has a cup of tea with some snack.

A day labourer in the town starts his work early in the morning and returns by 6 P.M. or so. His meal is either taken to the site by his people or he has some dry food like *chura*, *sattu* or *bhunja*. The labourer in the town has seldom the opportunity to have a meal at his house on a working day. Usually by the evening he comes back very tired and has to relax himself.

The daily life of a big land-owner or a big farmer in the country-side starts early in the morning. He will normally supervise the work of the

labourers. If he is a petty land-owner, he will usually do a part of the manual work. Village politics and his own cultivation affairs take away most of his time.

The labourer in a village takes some food cooked over-night known as *basia* early in the morning and goes for his work. He works in the field whole day and usually has no proper mid-day meal. If at all, a meal is taken to him by the women-folk of his family. This meal usually consists of cooked rice and probably some spinach (*sag*). He comes back home in the evening and after a wash he has his substantial meal in the night and retires. This meal will also be cooked rice, probably a little *dal* and some vegetables. The meal at the night is usually taken quite early and by 8 P.M. or so a labourer's household has retired. The women-folk of his family would add a little to the family income by working in the house of some rich neighbour. They would keep themselves busy in cooking food, washing clothes, looking after the children or do a little marketing. They will also scrape grass for fodder or pluck some leaves for the same purpose.

The average town wage-earner will go to his place of work after taking some snack, the quality of which depends on the financial means of the family. If he is a mechanic, mason or a carpenter or belongs to a slightly higher wages group, he will probably have some *chapati* made of wheat and a vegetable and probably some *gur* or a cup of tea. Some of them also take a hastily cooked meal of rice. This type of wage-earner in the town goes to his work with some *chapatis* for his mid-day meal. His substantial meal is in the night on return from work and consists of rice, *dal*, and some vegetables and very occasionally meat or some fish. Meat or fish or even *dal* daily, however, does not find place in the menu of an ordinary wage-earner in the town or in the village who earns from Rs. 1-8-0 to Rs. 2-8-0 a day. The women-folk have to do the same type of work as indicated before.

The women-folk of the average wage-earner's family in the town try to supplement the income by keeping goats or poultry if there are facilities. This is particularly so with the Muslims. If the wage-earner of a lower income group belongs to a caste which does not observe *parda* the women-folk will probably add to the family income by hawking fruits or vegetables.

Food.

It is not financially possible for the ordinary lower income group family to have any balanced diet and the food taken is particularly deficient in protein or fruits. The middle class or the upper income group, however, take a very small quantity of meat or fish probably about twice a week. The size and the income of the family control the menu of the middle class whether of the upper income group or of the lower income group, both in the urban and rural areas. It is only the night meal in the family that is usually looked forward to as this meal is taken at leisure with the members of the family. This meal does not

much differ in the quality from the morning meal. Rice, *chapati*, *dal*, some vegetables and probably some milk form the usual menu with an occasional variation with a very small quantity of fish or meat or sweets. Eggs have not yet become an ordinary item of food in the rural areas. With the rise in the price the middle class of lower and higher income groups are slowly turning more to meat than fish. *Ghee* as a cooking medium has become a casualty and hydrogenated oil is now the common cooking medium. *Ghee* adulterated with hydrogenated oil has a ready market. Even hydrogenated oil is being adulterated.

ENTERTAINMENTS.

Burdened with economic pressure there is not much scope for amusement or entertainment in the daily life of an average middle class family. The people of the country-side unfortunately waste a lot of their leisure in laziness and discussion of village politics or the current gossips in the neighbouring town. It is, however, a pleasant feature that *bhajans*, *kirtans*, *Sat Narayan puja*, *milads* are an attraction. *Jatra* parties, wrestling and theatricals have a strange fascination for the villagers. Cinemas are a great attraction.

INFLUENCE OF COURTS.

A section of the middle class people of the country-side is in the habit of attending the court and this appears to be both a necessity and a form of entertainment. Usually in the villages there are professional *pairbikars* who are the link between the lawyers and the litigant public. Such people are taken by the litigants to the court for getting their work done. Their daily life is to leave the village on the previous night or in the early morning if there is a convenient train or a bus and carry with them the parties. They will visit the houses of the lawyers, get the cases ready and spend the whole day in the court and will come back to the village in the night. They have a busy life.

AFFLUENT CLASS.

The daily life of the people belonging to the more affluent class who are not in any profession or business, whether in the urban or in the rural areas rather moves in an idle groove such as taking a heavy meal, long siestas, visiting friends and places of amusements, etc. With the abolition of the zamindari this class is affected and has got to be work-minded. Muzaffarpur district had a number of families both in the interior and in the towns known for their aristocracy and culture.

LADIES.

Ladies of the house of a middle class family both in the rural and urban areas have to do a lot of household work. It is difficult for a middle class family to indulge in a number of servants. The average middle class family which depends on service or a profession for livelihood can afford to keep only one servant or a maid-servant either whole-time

or part-time to help the ladies in their household work. The boys do not usually help the ladies in their household work even though they can. The adults also hardly do any household work excepting a little marketing. The ladies have to look after their children, do the cooking, clean the house, wash, sew or mend the clothes of the family and at their leisure time they would probably do a little needle-work, knitting or some embroidery work. The young girls of the urban middle class family are usually sent to the schools and so the mistress of the house is deprived of their help in running the household excepting on holidays. On such holidays the girls are usually employed in sewing, knitting, embroidery work and to help in cooking. It is only in very few middle class families that girls are taught music. The cinema has definitely developed in the girls a liking for music and dance. The ladies of a middle class family usually devote a portion of their time in making *achars* (pickle), *burees*, *morabbas* or to desiccate vegetables and dry them (*sukhauta*) to be used in the rainy season when vegetables are scarce and expensive. Certain handicrafts, however, appear to be dying out amongst the ladies at the moment. Such handicrafts are making baskets from particular kinds of reeds called *siki* and *munja*, sewing cloth covers, making artistic designs on cloth with shells, etc. The reason is not far to seek. The economic pressure has made the ladies turn to such occupations as will be more useful for the family. It is quite common now for the ladies to knit sweaters, mufflers, hose, etc., and naturally they have no time to make cloth covers for *pandan* as *pandan* itself is becoming a luxury, or make a basket of *siki* and *munja* which could be bought if necessary for a few annas. The spread of female education has definitely led to a better tone in the average middle class family, a distinct change for the better in food, dress and mode of living.

TOILET.

Normally people both in towns and in villages are early risers. Bathing is a common habit. A good deal of attention is paid to personal hygiene. The mouth is usually cleansed with twigs of *nim*, *bamboo*, *karanj*, *chirchiri*, *bat*, etc. The twig is also split into two parts and a part is used to clean the coating of tongue. The use of tooth brush and tooth paste is more confined to the richer and urban class of people. Clay or soap is largely used. Use of soap has tremendously gone up. Massage of the body with oil is a common practice, particularly in the middle and upper class people. The oils that are used are mustard, coconut, *gulrojan*, *til* or some other scented oil. Ladies usually shampoo their hair with clay, *amla* or curd mixed with mustard oil. Bottled shampoo has not yet made a headway. On some days ladies also massage with oil or a paste made of turmeric before bath. Males generally do not have this turmeric massage. Use of *itr* or musk for ceremonial occasions or to show honour to a guest is dying out. The use of soap has become common and is pushing out *sajimati* (a kind of clay), and *ritha* (soap berry) which were in common use before.

DRESS, ETC.

Shoes are not used commonly by the labourers or people of lower income group. Use of shoes is common in the middle class families both in the rural and urban areas particularly when going out of the house. There has not been much change in the wearing apparel of ladies excepting in the cut of the dress or mode of wearing them. Use of *shalwar* and *dopatta* is becoming more popular particularly for the young girls in town. During the last war owing to the high prices of *dhoties* men-folk started using trousers and this has stuck. A pair of trousers will last longer and is more economical in the long run than a pair of *dhoties*. Use of half pants or shorts is also more in vogue now for school-going children. Boys in the colleges wear trousers which was very unusual 30 years back. Buttoned up or open neck coat is becoming a casualty among the younger generation and bush shirts are replacing them. Open neck shirts mostly half sleeves, a pair of trousers or *dhoti* or *payjamas* are the usual costume of the average middle class males for out-door wear. The western costume of a pair of trousers, shirt, with tie and an open neck coat for office purposes is being slowly replaced by trousers and bush shirt or buttoned up coat. For ceremonial occasions men wear *kurta* and *payjama* or *sherwani* and *churidar payjama* or a buttoned up short coat (prince coat) and a pair of trousers. Use of turban or cloth cap for the head is distinctly on the decline. Ladies have their finger nails painted by the barber woman or themselves on ceremonial occasions. *Mehdi* leaf decoction is the usual material for such painting. Lip-sticks, rouge or other toilette articles for ladies are no longer confined to a very small and negligible percentage of richer families in towns. Jewellery is more worn by the ladies while going out of the house.

SALUTATION.

The custom of salutation is an integral part of the daily duty. Salutation by touching the feet or knee is supposed to be the most intimate and affectionate. Raising of both hands and touching the forehead and uttering the word "*pranam*" or "*namaste*" is the usual mode of salutation. It is also customary to touch each other as a mode of affection and salutation. Exchange of smile is also a recognised form of greeting. If two equals meet the usual mode of salutation may be by just touching each other with their right hand.

Hermits or *gurus* or persons who are very senior and highly respected are usually saluted by uttering "*dandwat*" and by joining the two hands and by lowering the body and touching their feet. Previously caps or turbans used to be taken off when salutations were offered to the superiors or at the temples. This mode of salutation is also dying out.

EATING PLACES.

A remarkable new feature in the towns is the growth in the number of tea, *pan* and *sherbat* stalls and cheap eating places which often

make encroachments on public roads. Owing to the congestion in the towns many people have to come from the villages and have to take a snack meal and these eating houses cater for them. Usually fried food (*pakorahs*), cheap snacks and *sherbat*, tea or a simple hot cooked meal are available in them. A number of Punjabi hotels and Bengali sweetmeat shops have grown up in the urban areas.

Tea, *lussee* (cold drink of curd) and *sherbat* are the usual drinks served in restaurants and hotels. Coffee has not made much headway. The big towns in the district each have one or two bars where stronger drinks are available. The *bhathi khana* or the country liquor shops are common feature in every town and also in some of the larger villages. *Tari* or fermented palm juice is a popular beverage in the summer season. *Tari* is the poor man's beer. Smoking is spreading. Cheap cigarettes have a ready market. *Biris* and *khaini* (chewing tobacco) are for the labourers and cultivators. Cigars are confined to an intellectual minority.

COMMON FOODSTUFF AND COOKING.

A brief mention may be made of the common food and its method of cooking. Among the cereals used rice ranks easily the first and then comes *marua*, maize and wheat. Fish and meat are the principal items of non-vegetarian food. Game birds, chickens, ducks or eggs hardly come in the ordinary menu. Fruits also are not a common item of the dietary excepting probably plantains or mangoes during the season provided they are cheap. Sweet potatoes, *sattu*, *litti*, *chura* and curd (*dahi*) occupy the first position in the menu of the average common man. Milk is a common item for those who could afford. Milk is consumed purely as milk and also in the form of curd, *ghee*, butter and *chhena*. The milk of both cows and buffaloes is used. Goat milk is coming into vogue in the towns.

Potatoes, *parwals*, ladies' fingers, *lauki*, *komhra*, brinjals and cauliflowers are the common vegetables. The use of onion is becoming common. Garlics are not very much used. Salad consisting of slices of tomato, radish, onions, etc., has been introduced in the last few years both in the villages as well as in the towns.

Several methods of cooking are in vogue. Roasting in fire is one of the primitive methods of cooking but is now confined to making what is known as *chokha* by adding salt, mustard oil, green or red pepper to the potato or brinjal or any other kind of vegetables roasted. Some grains such as wheat, barley, gram and maize are scorched and used as food (*oraha*). Frying is also a common method and grains like paddy, rice, flat rice, gram, maize and peas are usually fried by putting them on the body of the fire or on hot sand. The grains fried in this manner go by name of *bhunja*. Frying with *ghee* or oil but without water is resorted to usually for preparing vegetables known as *bhunja* or *chakka* (big flat pieces of vegetables coated with *besan*).

Another process which is coming into use is stewing vegetables or meat in closely covered pots with *ghee* or oil and some condiments or even just in water. By this method one can get stewed vegetables or meat which is easily digestible and this is more or less confined to the middle and upper class families with an acquired taste for food without spice. Another method of cooking is to steam vegetables or meat in a closed cooker or in a closed utensil. *Ghee*, mustard oil, some other kind of oil, or hydrogenated oil is the usual cooking medium.

Chapatis or bread are usually baked with the help of the utensil known as *tawah* or pan for baking them on the fire. They are not placed long either on the pan or on the fire. *Parathas* or thicker *chapatis* and *kachauris* fried in *ghee* or hydrogenated cooking medium are considered a delicacy. Salted fried snacks are kept in stock for a quick repast.

Food is ordinarily cooked on an open oven which has two mouths. They are made of clay or bricks and there is an opening below through which the fuel feeds the fire and the items of food are put in two pots and are prepared simultaneously.

Vegetarian food has also a variety, some of which may be mentioned here. They are various kinds of sweets and *kheer* prepared from milk, *raita*, *karhi-bari*, various kinds of *papars*, *tilauri*, *adauri*, *kumhrauri*. Special kinds of sweet pudding are prepared with the help of milk, *ghee* and dried fruits such as *pista*, *kismis*. *Kachauri* or *pooree*, or *polao* with or without some vegetables could be made very savoury. *Poorees* stuffed with powdered gram or *sattu* or with pulse and *ghee* are very much liked. They are also offered to the family deities in temples.

The culinary condiments which are generally used in the preparation of savoury dishes are turmeric, cumin-seeds, red pepper, black pepper, ginger, cardamoms both big and small, cloves, coriander seeds, cinnamon, nutmeg, mace, cassia, cubeb, mustard, saffron, onion, garlic and green chillies.

Meat is prepared in various ways. *Kabab*, *korma*, *kalia*, *doh-piyaja* and curry are the legacy of *muglai* or Moslem cooking. Roast, stew, cutlets, steak chops, etc., have come into the menu from the West. Spices, chillies, saffron, black pepper, vinegar, turmeric, etc., are the condiments largely used for cooking meat.

The utensils used for cooking in common household are *batlohis* for cooking rice or pulse, cauldron of brass or iron, flat pans, tongs for catching hold of and taking out breads, *jhanjh* for taking out *poorees* from the hot *ghee* in which it is fried, *karahi*, a kind of high edged pan for preparing *pua* or *jalebi* (sweets).

A special room is usually set apart if accommodation permits for the kitchen and the verandah is commonly used for taking food. The family sits in a verandah in a line and food is served hot and quick from

the kitchen. Previously cooks used to be drawn from the Brahmin caste. But now cooks of other castes are also employed even by higher caste Hindus. Particularly in families which do not observe caste restrictions Dusadhs or Kahars are commonly employed as cook. Muslim cooks are also in demand.

Among the prohibited food mention may be made of beef and pork. Beef is taboo for Hindus and pork is taboo for the Muhammadans. This prohibition still holds its own both in the towns and in the villages. But the other taboos, current twenty-five years back, such as not eating fish, meat, onions, garlic, brinjals or potatoes on a particular day of the week or on a festival day are not usually observed now. The average middle class family observes more in breach the customary taboos on particular food for the New Moon, Full Moon and *ekadasi* if left to itself.

TEA AND SMOKING.

Tea drinking has become common in the middle class family and in the group of people belonging to the class of the mechanics, drivers and other hard manual labourers. Tea drinking has not yet become a habit with the cultivating class or the lower income group in the villages. Coffee is absolutely confined to a very small percentage of middle class families in the urban areas. Cold drinks or *sherbat* are used very occasionally and more for ceremonial purposes in a common middle class family. Aerated waters are confined to the townships. Cold drinks prepared with various kinds of seeds of flowers, rose petals, almond, black pepper, curd and sugar are in vogue. *Bhang* is also a beverage indulged in but more on ceremonial occasions particularly on the *pooja*, *holi* and *diwali* days along with spicy dishes of meat. The consumption of country liquor is not common in the middle class family. Foreign liquors are confined to the higher income group of urban people. The habit of smoking is spreading particularly among the younger generation. Ladies of some castes also smoke the *hookah*. *Hookahs* or hubble-bubbles are dying out. *Biris* and cigarettes are replacing the *hookahs*. The chewing of *pan* is very common and the expenditure of the common middle class family on *pan* is not inconsiderable. Cigars have a restricted circle of its adherents.

HOBBIES.

Reading of books or newspapers has yet to become a habit in the average educated family, whether in the rural or in the urban areas. Cheap books on light subjects and particularly novels in English or in Hindi have, however, some attraction. Libraries in the towns are not so well patronised as the libraries in the villages. Hindi newspapers are, however, making a slow headway. Libraries in the villages are being well patronised. Gardening as a hobby has yet to make a headway. Indoor games are the usual hobby.

Radio sets are still a luxury both in the urban and rural areas due to economic reasons. Radios are switched on more for the film

songs or news than for the educative talks. Unless the prices of the radio sets are very much reduced or more radios are set up at different public places in every township or a big village, it will take quite some time for the common man to become radio-minded. As already mentioned amusements and entertainments hardly form a regular feature in the life of the average common man. Popular lectures, art exhibitions, and cultural shows have not yet become a regular part of the civic life.

PASTORAL SONGS.

Pastoral songs have still a prominent role in the daily life of the villagers. They are full throated songs by men and women while working in the field at transplantation of paddy or harvesting the crops. The theme is generally a love episode or a famous battle of the past. Sweet and melodious they are often in the form of question and answer. They are important for their musical value. These unrecorded lyrics are handed down from generation to generation by word of the mouth. Many songs have been lost.

With the advent of spring in the month of March, men begin to sing a type of song full of mirth, joy and rather suggestive appeal to women known as *holi*. This is sung till the festival of *holi* at the end of the month of *Falgun*. *Holi* is not sung in any other season. With the *rabi* harvest ready in the field in the month of Chaitra, they begin another type known as *Chaiti*. These songs weave a thread round the romantic love of the newly wed couples or lovers. This goes on till the thrashing and harvesting of *rabi* crop. It marks the close of the cycle of harvests and a fresh start is made by sowing new crops which require water after a month or two. Songs sung during this season, i.e., before the rains set in in the month of Asarh and also during rainy season, i.e., Shravan and Bhado depict cloudy scenes, torrential rains and thunders of the cloud. This is known as '*kajli*'. It is also meant to please rain-gods to send down rains. Women have their own set up of songs for this season. They swing on '*jhoolas*' (swings) and sing *kajli*. Sometimes when rains are delayed, they come out of the village in groups and sing songs invoking the pleasure of the rain-gods.

Labourers both men and women are fond of singing while paddy transplantation goes on in the field. They have a special type of songs for this occasion. Women sing songs full of humour and jokes while men sing romantic amorous songs inviting their sweet-hearts to come and join them in the pleasant weather. A special type of song known as '*birha*' is sung on these occasions. Generally the singers go on composing when they sing. There is not much of established version. These songs are not very rhythmic and methodical.

FOLK LITERATURE AND SONGS.

Quite a number of such pastoral and folk songs are very good example of imagination. There are some long descriptive songs,

delineating chivalrous character of some imaginary personality of the past ages. Stories of 'Alha' and 'Kunwar Vijayee' are available in book form. They are very popular. Many villages have got a man who remembers the whole story in verse by heart. Sometimes they go on singing such songs for the whole night at the pressing demands. They sing them at the pitch of their voice and louder the tone the better is its effect on the audience. They are not accompanied by any musical instrument. Nothing is known about the authorship of these verses.

One or two remarkable writers of songs in people's every day language have become very popular. Songs of one Bhojpuri composer Bhikhariya are very popular. These songs are about village life, methods of cultivation or some prevalent undesirable questions such as early marriage, dowry system, etc. They have acted as a powerful satire on many habits of the villagers. Another writer of importance is the author of anonymous 'Bideshia Natak'. It deals with the life of a villager who was married early and points out the consequences that follow afterwards.

Cinema songs have gained in popularity and they seem to be slowly working against the old folk-songs. The younger generation does not appear to be impressed by the old music in comparison with the new lilt in cinema songs. Cinema songs have not, however, got a lasting hold. One popular song is soon replaced by another. The old folk-songs are nearer the life of the villagers and give a truer picture of their life, culture and habits.

A tendency to enrich folk literature in regional languages has been noticed in recent few years among the poets of acknowledged status. They have attempted at producing folk-songs and their creation is easily distinguishable from the old folk-songs which were unsophisticated and natural expression of a villager's sentiments.

WITCHCRAFT.

There is still a popular belief in witchcraft influencing the daily life. There is a notion among the villagers that by practising certain rites and enchanting certain *mantras* on the burial ground during the period of *Dasarah* and *Dewali* festivals, a man or a woman can attain the superhuman power of killing a creature at will and carrying anything wherever he or she likes. Some near or dear one of the family is believed to be sacrificed by the practitioner of the craft in the beginning after which alone that superhuman power is bestowed. Children are supposed to be their easy prey and every mother tries to keep her child away from any woman of the village who is suspected to know this art. There are certain methods of protection such as applying black ointment in the eyes, tying black strings on the forearm of the child and wearing certain metallic ornaments containing blessed ashes or some paper with *mantras* written on it. When a child falls ill and is supposed to be under the influence of some witch a priest or

a *tantric* is called or the help of some spiritual deity is invoked to ward off the effects. Fantastic stories of cure by such worships help these unsophisticated people in getting a firm hold on the mind of the villagers. In many cases of serious illness in a village a *tantric* or a man supposed to have got supernatural powers is found doing something simultaneously with the surgeon or the doctor; and sometimes he is more relied upon than the latter.

SNAKE WORSHIP.

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

TREE WORSHIP.

Certain trees as *pipal*, banyan and *amla* are worshipped by the villagers. The *pipal* tree is considered to be holy and nobody generally cuts it down or uses its wood for fuel. Spirits are believed to live on *pipal* trees and they are worshipped if they happen to lie in the village or outside it near a temple, etc. There are some people who regularly pour water at the root of *pipal* trees in belief that Rama's devotee, Hanumanjee, would be pleased with them one day and bestow superhuman powers on them and help them in getting salvation. Other trees are significant for specific reasons. Generally they are worshipped because they are considered to be the abode of a particular god, deity or ghost. Women offer *puja* under such trees at the time of marriage and birth in the family. In this way they hope to win the support and help of the spirit living on the trees at the time of marriage or birth. Some trees are worshipped for getting a child. Generally such trees are very old and big. The basis is an erotic idea.

HOUSING AND HOUSEHOLD.

Changes are seen also in the pattern of houses and household particularly in the urban areas. The traditional house with a few rooms, narrow verandahs and *angans* with a well, kitchen, lavatory and cowshed is now better planned although the floor space has become less. The use of cement is common and the low mud and brick house with lime is being replaced by cement concrete smaller houses. Owing to the great demand of residential houses flat system has been superimposed on houses which were not built for that purpose and not much privacy is allowed. The part of the house in the towns which is neglected is the bath-room. Even in big residential houses very small bath-rooms are to be seen. Housing conditions are rather exacting in every town and for the average family the house rent paid represents a big percentage of his income. Although living in flats is gradually coming in vogue with difficulties about sharing of entrance, kitchen, bath-room, lavatory, well or tap there are no signs of community cooking coming in. Even in a small house where there are several occupants everyone

has a separate cooking arrangement. Yet this system of sharing houses goes to break down many social conventions and caste barriers.

There has not been much change in the pattern of houses in the villages. Richer people who are building cement concrete houses in the villages are adopting the models in vogue in towns adding certain rural features. There is more of living space per inmate in the houses in the rural area. The poor live in very small huts in insanitary conditions.

Another sign of the upgrading of standard of living is in the provision of more furniture in the household in both rural and urban areas. The average family has some furniture in the house consisting of bedstead, tables and chairs. Even in a household of the lower income group there will be found one or two benches, tables, a couple of stools or chairs. The families of the higher income groups have the proper furniture for the drawing and dining and other rooms.

ORNAMENTS.

Craze for ornaments in women-folk still forms a part of the daily life. Gold and silver ornaments are usually prized by the women. Brass, copper and other cheaper ornaments are meant for the poorer sections. Bangles of glass and chains of glass beads and various kinds of stones have a ready sale. The pattern of ornaments has changed to some extent particularly with the introduction of the stone-set jewellery. Owing to the economic reasons heavy ornaments with variegated patterns are being replaced by lighter ornaments with more attractive style. Many of the ornaments used by the last generation are dying out. Ornaments used to be worn by the males a few decades back. At present excepting rings males do not wear ornaments as a rule.

GENERAL.

The outline of daily life described above is a pattern which is commonly found but naturally it would somewhat differ in particular communities or castes.

MIDDLE CLASS.

It may be mentioned that the upper middle class of the urban areas formed and still forms the backbone of the culture and intellect in the district. Some of the zamindars of the last generation were not only enlightened themselves but they liberally contributed towards the spread of education and provision of medical relief. They were also great patrons of music, dance and art. They had founded a large number of temples and other religious institutions.

THE BAR.

The Bar at Muzaffarpur and in the mufassil contained some of the best brains of the province and their contribution to legal knowledge has been considerable. Muzaffarpur Bar at one time had a sprinkling of European barristers. Mention may be made of one of them, Mr. Springle Kennedy, whose wife and daughter were killed by the

bomb thrown by Sri Khudiram Bose to whom reference has been made in a separate chapter. Fortunately the interest of many of the foremost members of the Bar of the last few generations went beyond the court rooms and they were instrumental in founding a large number of educational and cultural institutions in the district. It was again the members of the Bar that took the leading part in the various phases of the political movement. In 1907-08 when a very large number of *raiya*ts were arrested in Bettiah for refusing to cultivate indigo, it were some members of the Muzaffarpur Bar who took up the cases of the oppressed *raiya*ts at Bettiah without any remuneration. When Khudiram Bose was tried there was no dearth of lawyers in Muzaffarpur to defend them in spite of the fact that they incurred official displeasure which meant a lot those days. It was again the members of Muzaffarpur Bar who were in the fore-front when Mahatma Gandhi made his historic enquiry against the indigo planters of Champaran district in 1907. When the Non-co-operation Movement was started some of the members of the Muzaffarpur Bar threw away their lucrative practice and joined him. There has been a steady flow of such members of the Bar to do work for the country till now. It may also be mentioned that the relationship of the Bench and the Bar at Muzaffarpur was all through cordial. The judiciary and the executive in Muzaffarpur district had some of the well known administrators under the British regime. The Bar and the Judiciary have a great contribution to the daily life of the intelligentsia.

THE PLANTERS.

The presence of a large number of European planters who were to be found probably at a distance of every 10 miles and the existence of a large number of smaller zamindars were the two other characteristic features of Muzaffarpur district. Both these communities along with the other sections mentioned before did contribute a lot towards building up the social and economic life of the district which go to make up the daily life of the present generation.

THE ZAMINDARS.

As zamindari has been abolished it may be mentioned here that many of the existing charitable and educational institutions owe their existence to the landed aristocracy. By patronising the fine arts the landlords had kept up the flow of culture from the past. In some of the old *Kabuliyats* the social obligations of the landlords were mentioned. In many cases they had fulfilled the obligation. Their contribution has a lot to do with the daily life of the people.

The prosperity of the district depends on a simultaneous and healthy development of both rural and urban areas. The modern gadgets like torches, bicycles, plastics and radios are no longer a novelty to the villagers. The Community Projects, the setting up of Anchals and Gram Panchayats and the availability of electricity are upgrading the villagers' daily life which is compensating the urbanisation of other areas.