

CHAPTER III.

THE PEOPLE.

GROWTH OF POPULATION.

The first census was taken in 1872 and recorded a population of 18,14,638 for the district as then constituted. During the next nine years there was an increase of 8.5 per cent, the number returned at the census of 1881 being 19,69,950. Part of the increase may have been due to a more accurate enumeration; the increase in the next decade was 3.3 per cent and the population in 1891 was 20,36,021. The greatest gain was in the Begusarai subdivision, while in the Jamui subdivision there was practically no increase of the population, and in the north-east of the subdivision there was a heavy loss due to epidemics.

The growth of population from 1901 to 1951 is shown in the following table* :—

Census year.	Persons.	Variation.	Net variation. 1901—1951.	Males.	Variation.	Females.	Variation.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1901	20,70,191	..	..	10,12,229	..	10,57,962	..
1911	21,35,000	+64,809	..	10,44,468	+32,239	10,90,532	+32,570
1921	20,29,965	—1,05,035	..	10,05,530	—38,938	10,24,435	—66,097
1931	22,87,154	+2,57,189	..	11,45,797	+1,40,267	11,41,357	+1,16,922
1941	23,64,544	+2,77,390	..	12,84,084	+1,38,287	12,80,460	+1,39,103
1951	28,49,127	+2,84,583	+7,78,936	14,34,824	+1,50,740	14,14,303	+1,33,843

Census of 1901.—At the census of 1901 it was found that the population had only increased by 1.6 per cent, a result attributed to a severe epidemic of plague in 1900-01 and, in a minor degree, to emigration from the district. Monghyr, however, was the only district in South Bihar which escaped a loss of population. This was due to the fact that to the north of the Ganga there is a rich alluvial tract, which attracts emigrants and was free from plague in 1901. The portion south of that river sustained a small loss, an increase in the four thanas having been more than obliterated by a heavy loss in the tracts where plague had appeared, viz., the town of Monghyr and its environs, and two thanas in the west, to which the epidemic spread from Mokameh in the Patna district.

* District Census Handbook, Monghyr, 1951, published in 1956.

The population trends shown in the census of 1901 are summarised as follows in the Census Report :—

“The fertile Begusarai subdivision on the north of the Ganges, again shows the greatest growth of population. The headquarters subdivision is stationary, owing mainly to the outbreak of the plague and the consequent mortality and confusion, but the removal of certain offices of the East Indian Railway from Jamalpur to Calcutta had also affected the population to some extent. The only thana in this subdivision which shows a marked increase is Kharagpur, which at the time of the census harboured a considerable number of plague refugees from Monghyr. In the Jamui subdivision also the population is practically stationary; the sparsely inhabited and the hilly thanas in the south-east, Jamui and Chakai, continue to show steady development, while Sheikhpura and Sikandra in the north-east have lost ground. The decrease is specially marked in Sheikhpura, which adjoins the Mokameh thana in Patna and, like it, has suffered greatly from the ravages of plague. Both Sheikhpura and Sikandra were decadent in 1891 also, when the prevalence of fever was blamed for the result.”

Census of 1911.—Regarding the growth of population shown by the census in 1911, L. S. S. O'Malley observes in the Census Report of 1911 as follows :—

“All the other districts of South Bihar have a far scantier population, owing to the hills and jungle in the south. Monghyr is the most populous of them, but the north of the district is an integral part of North Bihar, being a fertile alluvial plain intersected by large rivers and subject to inundation. It has a mean density of 715 per square mile, the maximum of 961 being found in the Teghra thana and the minimum of 562 in Gogri, which is a low-lying tract with a large area of marsh and grass jungle. South of the Ganges there are, on the average, only 528 persons to the square mile. Here the most thickly populated tracts are the thanas lying along the Ganges, south of which there is hilly country, bearing a growth of scrub jungle, with a rocky surface unfavourable to cultivation. The Kharagpur thana with 415 persons to the square mile begins to show a marked diminution, which reaches its lowest point in the jungle and waste lands in the extreme south of the district the soil supporting only 231 persons per square mile in Chakai.”

On the whole, the decade 1901—1911 was prosperous and in spite of epidemics of plague and fever, the natural increase of population was marked by 64,809 or 3.1 per cent. On this occasion the Begusarai subdivision recorded a very slow increase due to the epidemic of plague. The Sadar subdivision showed a general increase in all thanas except Kharagpur and Surajgarha: the population of the former of these had been swollen by plague refugees in 1901, and the latter was depopulated in 1911 by an outbreak of plague at census time and by an exodus of labourers to cut the crops in Sheikhpura. The increase in the Jamui subdivision was ascribed to the increase of cultivation in Jamui thana.

Census of 1921.—In the words of Mr. P. C. Tallents the results of the census of 1921 were as follows:—

“The year 1911 was unhealthy as elsewhere with higher mortality than usual from cholera, plague and fever; but the number of births was well in excess of the number of deaths in this and every other year of the ten except 1917, 1918 and 1919. In this district also the plague seems to be losing its force, for two-thirds of the total mortality from plague occurred in the first half of the decade. Outbreaks of cholera occurred at intervals; more than five thousand deaths were ascribed to it in 1911, 1915, 1917 and 1918, the last being the worst attack. The deaths from fever increased steadily from 1914 to 1918, the year of the influenza epidemic, and then sank to normal again in 1920. Generally speaking the health of the district was good down to 1916. In that year the Burhi Gandak was in flood in the north of the district and damage was done to property and crops, but the public health suffered little. In 1917 cholera, plague and fever brought the death rate up to 41.6 per mille against an average of 31.8 for the preceding five years. There was also a heavy flood in the Ganges: this damaged the autumn and winter crops and reduced the stocks in hand which were further depleted by exports in response to high prices in the early months of 1918. The outbreak of cholera in 1918 was of exceptional violence, and caused 16,000 deaths. In August there was heavy rain which damaged the *bhadai* crops and in September the rains ceased. All the three crops were affected and in the *tal* area further damage was done by insect pests. The people, harassed by the influenza epidemic and the high prices of imported articles, with their stock of foodgrains at its lowest, were thus confronted at the end of the year with a general failure of crops. In Jamui and Kharagpur thanas arrangements had to be

made for the distribution of gratuitous relief and agricultural loans were distributed on a liberal scale. The able-bodied men emigrated in large numbers, in many cases leaving their families behind them to be supported by gratuitous relief. The total number of deaths in the year was 1,31,000 of which fever and influenza contributed 98,000. The deaths were 50,000 in excess of births and the death-rate rose to 61.2 per mille. In 1911 it fell to 40.7, but the birth-rate dropped to 30.5 from which it again rose slightly to 31.5 in 1920. The monsoon of 1919 was a specially good one and the fine crops that resulted from it went far towards re-establishing the normal economic state of affairs. For the decade the recorded births were well in excess of the recorded deaths, by 39,000 in the case of males and by 26,000 in the case of females. The census showed that the loss of population in this district was 1,05,534 or 4.92 per cent, only 573 less than the loss in Bhagalpur which was the heaviest in the province. There was a large gain in Jamalpur thana and a small gain in Monghyr owing to the extension of the railway workshops at Jamalpur. Otherwise there was a loss in every thana in the district. In the Sadar subdivision the loss was heaviest in Lakhisarai. In 1911 a large number of labourers were engaged in cutting the crops in Lakhisarai thana at the time of the census, but in 1921 the crop-cutting had been almost completed before the census was taken, so that the loss recorded here exaggerates the loss to the permanent population: there was however some real loss, for the total number of recorded deaths in this thana during the decade exceeded the total number of births."

Census of 1931.—In the Census Report of 1931, W. G. Lacey had mentioned that the average density per square mile of the population was 582, but the distribution of population was very irregular. The subdivision of Begusarai recorded a mean density of 864, while the Sadar and Jamui subdivisions recorded the mean density of 582 and 343 respectively to per square mile.

Regarding the incidence of population W. G. Lacey further mentions as follows:—

"It is true that the year 1921, which had a death-rate of 31.2 per mille, was less healthy than most of the following years but the birth-rate had already risen to 40.7 as compared with 30.5 in 1919 and 31.5 in the following year. The best productive year in the whole decade was the last, but even then the rate of survival was

about 4.5 per mille. It was in 1930 that the most severe outbreak of cholera occurred, causing 14,000 deaths. The average annual mortality from this disease was just over 5,000 and there was only one year in which the death-roll did not run into four figures. The total number of deaths from plague in this period was about 7,500, but it is little disquieting to find that in Monghyr alone of all the districts where this scourge lingers, the latter half of the decade showed little improvement over the first half: in the last three years there were 2,500 deaths from plague. Small-pox was not in evidence at all until 1926, but from that year onward it was responsible for the loss of about 6,000 lives, the most severe outbreak (here as elsewhere) falling in 1927. The first two and the last three years of the decade witnessed plentiful harvests. In 1923 the *bhadai* crop was damaged by floods, while scarcity of rain led to an indifferent yield of winter rice. The Gandak embankment was breached in the following year, and this caused a certain amount of loss to the cultivators north of the river. In south Monghyr the paddy harvest of 1927 was very disappointing.

"The net increase of 12.67 per cent in the population of this district since the previous census is greater than that recorded by any other Bihar district except Patna. In Begusarai subdivision the growth is less rapid than elsewhere, probably owing to the same causes which checked its progress in the two previous decades. It is also reported that cholera and plague were practically alive in this part of the district in recent years. Jamui subdivision in the south has increased its numbers exceptionally fast, just as Banka subdivision in the south of Bhagalpur district has done. In both these areas there is a fairly large proportion of aboriginals and low-caste labourers, who would normally have sought employment away from home in mines, mills, docks, tea-gardens and the like, but were restrained from doing so by the industrial depression abroad and the comparatively easy conditions in their own district. Moreover, District Officer states that fresh land is constantly being brought under cultivation in the Jamui subdivision. In the Sadar subdivision, where, the general rate of increase strikes a mean between the two extremes the most rapid progress has been achieved in the purely urban thana of Jamalpur. The rural thanas, except Surajgarha, have maintained a remarkably consistent level of expansion, and the only reason that can be given for the mere smaller increase

in Surajgarha is that an epidemic of small-pox was in progress there at census time and have driven a number of people away from their homes temporarily."

The actual increase in the district population according to the census was 2,57,189.

Census of 1941.—The total increase of population in 1941 census was 2,77,390 or the population had increased by 12.13 per cent. The census operations were cut down due to war emergency and the detailed report of the 1941 census was not published.

Census of 1951.—The census of 1951 enumerated a total increase of 2,84,583 or 11 per cent from the 1941 census. The period that elapsed between the decade 1941–1951 was normal so far as the health of the people was concerned. The epidemic of plague had practically disappeared, though stray cases of plague had been reported from Begusarai in 1945. The net increase of population in course of five decades (1901–1951) had been 7,78,936 or about 37.05 per cent.

Total population according to subdivisions and revenue thanas.

The district has four subdivisions, viz., Sadar, Khagaria, Begusarai and Jamui. The following table will show the population of each subdivision as enumerated in the census of 1951 :—

Subdivision.	Population.			Males.			Females.		
	Total.	Rural.	Urban.	Total.	Rural.	Urban.	Total.	Rural.	Urban.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Sadar	9,37,204	7,47,039	1,90,165	4,76,963	3,75,689	1,01,274	4,60,241	3,71,350	88,891
Khagaria	5,84,902	5,74,852	10,050	3,00,811	2,95,496	5,315	2,84,091	2,79,356	4,735
Begusarai	7,93,942	7,49,100	44,842	3,92,594	3,69,943	22,651	4,01,348	3,79,157	22,191
Jamui	5,33,079	5,11,019	22,060	2,64,456	2,53,050	11,406	2,68,623	2,57,969	10,654

The revenue thanawise population, etc., as enumerated in the census of 1951 was as follows :—

Subdivision.	Area in square miles.	Population.			Density.
		Persons.	Males.	Females.	
1	2	3	4	5	6
SADAR SUBDIVISION ..	1,168	9,37,204	4,76,963	4,06,241	802
1. Monghyr	281	2,27,259	1,18,364	1,08,895	809
2. Jamalpur	4	44,172	23,937	20,235	11,043
3. Surajgarha	174	95,346	47,256	48,090	548
4. Lakhisarai	221	1,77,825	90,727	87,098	804
5. Kharagpur	255	1,97,215	99,238	97,977	773
6. Sheikhpura	233	1,95,387	97,441	97,946	837
KHAGARIA SUBDIVISION	757	5,84,902	3,00,811	2,84,091	651
1. Gogri	757	5,84,902	3,00,811	2,84,091	651
BEGUSARAI SUBDIVISION	715	7,93,942	3,92,594	4,01,348	1,110
1. Teghra	235	2,89,539	1,42,150	1,47,389	1,367
2. Begusarai	480	5,04,403	2,50,444	2,53,959	1,447
JAMUI SUBDIVISION ..	1,303	5,33,079	2,64,450	2,68,623	409
1. Sikandra	243	1,41,236	69,155	72,081	581
2. Jamui	444	1,94,625	95,809	98,186	438
3. Chakai	616	1,97,218	99,492	97,726	320

Density.

The incidence of density of the Monghyr district in 1951 census was 722 per square mile as against 650 per square mile in 1941. The density for the State was 575 to the square mile. The density of the subdivisions and the revenue thanas has been given before. The density of the Begusarai subdivision is highest, while the incidence of density in the Jamui subdivision is lowest in the district. Barring Jamalpur police-station which is essentially a town, the Teghra police-station is thickly populated in the district, the incidence of density being 1,367 to the square mile. The incidence of density of the Chakai police-station is the lowest in the district, being 220 to the square mile. The density of the revenue thana of Chakai being 320 per square mile.

Migration.

The incidence of emigration is high in the district. Emigration is most active from the south of the district, where the infertility of the soil in a large part of the Jamui subdivision forces the people to find employment elsewhere, particularly in the coalfields of Chotanagpur and the tea-gardens of Assam. The figures of emigration from individual district to other States of India were not compiled at the 1951 census. The Census Report, 1951 (Vol. V, Bihar, Part I Report) only gives number of person born in the district and enumerated outside. The number of emigrants within the State comes to 1,17,570.

There is also a movement of the population to the north of the district, and every year, in the months of January and February, large numbers cross the Ganga to graze their flocks in *pargana* Pharkiya, a tract of low-lying country, which is mostly flooded in the rainy season, but affords excellent pasturage in the drier months. Migration from village to village is rare, except along the banks of the Ganga and its affluents where the frequent shiftings of the river beds necessitate the movement of the villagers. Migration of a temporary nature from the neighbouring districts of Bhagalpur, Darbhanga and Muzaffarpur into *pargana* Pharkiya is also common after the rains. At this period a large number of cultivators come with their cattle and till land at a low rate (*dohra* cultivation), returning to their homes when the *rabi* crops have been cut.

The incidence of immigration is low in the district. According to the census of 1951, out of the total population of 28,49,127, there was a population of 97,849 born outside the district but enumerated within the district when the census operation took place. The population of 97,849 is distributed as follows according to their birth places :—

Patna Division	18,037
Tirhut Division	28,718
Bhagalpur Division (excluding Monghyr) ..	43,355
Chotanagpur Division	2,712
States, etc., in India beyond the State ..	3,861
Countries in Asia beyond India	1,152
Countries in Europe	10
Countries in America	4
Total	97,849

Distribution between Urban and Rural population

The proportion of the rural population to the urban is several times greater and the urban rural ratio is 1 : 10 according to the census of 1951. The rural population in 1951 was 25,82,010 while the urban population was 2,67,117. In 1901 there were four towns

in the district, viz., Monghyr, Jamalpur, Khagaria and Sheikhpura, which had an aggregate population of 71,436. The number of towns has increased by 1951 from four to thirteen, viz., Monghyr, Jamalpur, Barahiya, Lakhisarai, Teghra, Sheikhpura, Begusarai, Phulwaria, Jamui, Jhajha, Barbigha, Khagaria and Kharagpur and the urban population had increased by about 270 per cent. The drift towards the towns is not intense as the district has not been industrialised yet to any appreciable extent to attract a large number of rural population. Except the railway workshops of Jamalpur and the cigarette factory of Monghyr the scope for the employment in the other existing industries of the district is meagre. The position will be altered to some extent when the Refineries and other allied industries start at Barauni.

Displaced Persons.

The number of displaced persons in Monghyr was 1,254 in 1951 out of which 404 came from West Pakistan and 850 from East Pakistan.

The facilities allowed to displaced persons include educational assistance, technical and vocational training, loans and other help to facilitate their settlement in industry and business, etc.

LANGUAGE.

This section is taken from the last District Gazetteer of Monghyr. The language prevalent in the district is Hindi. It varies from more or less pure Hindi, with a vocabulary of Prakrit-sounding words, now only to be heard among the *purohits*, to the much altered Bihari dialects of Maithili and Magahi, which constitute the ordinary speech of the people. With few exceptions, they use the latter among themselves, though even the most rustic can usually understand the more correct Hindi spoken by the educated classes in the towns. In the Begusarai subdivision, and in the greater part of the portion of Monghyr subdivision which lies north of the Ganga, Maithili is spoken in the form classified by Dr. Grierson as Southern standard Maithili, a dialect which is not quite so pure as the true standard Maithili of Darbhanga. In the south of the Gogri thana, and in the eastern portion of the Monghyr subdivision south of the Ganga, in what is known as the Kharagpur country, a variety of Maithili is spoken called the *Chhika-Chiki* dialect. It closely resembles the dialect common in Bhagalpur, and its chief peculiarity is that a sound resembling "O" (as in the English word "hot") is added at the end of words. This sound is represented in transliteration sometimes by the letter "o" as in *hamaro*, my, and sometimes by "a", as in *chalala*, he went. In the remainder of the district, the western portion of the south Gangetic tract, the main language of the people is the Magadhi or Magahi dialect of Bihar, which is the same as that spoken in Patna and Gaya*.

* G. A. Grierson—"Linguistic Survey of India", Vol. V, Part II, 1903.

Broadly speaking, however, the river Ganga marks a linguistic boundary, Maithili being prevalent to the north and Magahi to the south. There is this further distinction, moreover, that the speech of the people in the north of the district bears more traces of its Prakrit origin than that to the south, and the people are less able to understand words of Persian derivation. The southern portion of the district has been more exposed to outside influences, and the people have not succeeded in preserving such purity of speech.

Santali is spoken by the Santals in thanas Chakai, Kharagpur and Jamui. Bengali is spoken by the Bengalis, scattered all over the district but concentrated in the towns. Urdu is confined to the towns.

The table below will show the number of persons, males and females speaking different languages as mother-tongue enumerated in 1951 census :—

Languages.	Persons.	Males.	Females.
Indo-Aryan language—			
Hindi	27,93,241	14,01,253	13,91,988
Bengali	21,081	12,215	8,866
Marwari	1,604	487	1,117
Punjabi	354	254	100
Oriya	9	8	1
Gujrati	5	..	5
Nepali	3	3	..
Munda languages—			
Santali	32,830	20,604	12,226

Bilingualism.

The table below will show the number of persons who commonly use another Indian language in their everyday life in addition to their mother language :—

Mother-tongue.	Total speakers.	Total persons returned as speaking a language subsidiary to their mother-language.	Subsidiary language.
Hindi	27,93,241	12,152	Bengali .. 8,149 Santali .. 3,734 Marwari .. 264 Oriya .. 5

Mother tongue.			Total speakers.	Total persons returned as speaking a language subsidiary to their mother language.	Subsidiary language.		
Santali	..	..	32,830	7,275	Hindi	..	7,009
					Bengali	..	266
Bengali	..	..	21,081	3,202	Hindi	..	3,015
					Santali	..	187
Marwari	..	..	1,604	499	Hindi	..	491
					Santali	..	8
Punjabi	..	..	354	82	Hindi	..	82
Guzrati	..	..	5	2	Hindi	..	2
Nepali	..	..	3	1	Hindi	..	1

In the census of 1951 Urdu has been incorporated with Hindi. But for the sake of convenience the census of 1951 has mentioned that there were 1,37,055 returns of Urdu.

The scripts used are the Devanagri for Hindi. In the rural areas the *Kaithi* characters are also used. The persian script is used for Urdu. The immigrants use their own scripts.

RELIGION AND CASTE.

Hindus form the majority of the population. Next to Hindus are the Muhammadans. The Christians and Anglo-Indians form only small minority groups. The figures of each community as enumerated in the census of 1951 are as follows :—

	Persons.	Males.	Females.
Hindus	26,10,087	13,14,019	12,96,068
Muhammadans	2,36,393	1,19,445	1,16,948
Sikhs	913	484	429
Jains	94	56	38
Buddhists	279	142	137
Christians*	1,350	667	683
Jews	1	1	..

From the above table it is apparent that the Hindus are predominant in the district. They form about 91.60 per cent of the population. The percentage of Muhammadan is about 8 per cent and the other communities form only 0.40 per cent of the population.

* This will include 121 males and 116 females among the Anglo-Indians.

The tractwise distribution was as follows:—

District and Tracts.	Hindus.		Sikhs.		Jains.		Buddhists.		Muslims.		Christians.		Jews.	
	Males.	Females.	Males.	Fe- males.	Males.	Fe- males.	Males.	Fe- males.	Males.	Females.	Males.	Fe- males.	Males.	Fe- males.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. Khagaria Police-station (Excluding Khagaria town).	77,817	74,482	11	4	13	9	..	..	3,990	3,050	3	2	..	..
2. Gogri, Parbatta and Chautham Police-stations.	1,30,285	1,21,750	5	4	14	11	..	..	11,206	10,682	10	3	..	..
3. Bakhtiarpur Police-station ..	62,684	59,731	..	..	16	7	..	3	9,439	9,618	3	..	..	..
4. Teghra Revenue Thana (Excluding Phulwaria and Teghra towns).	1,17,557	1,23,111	..	..	..	..	..	..	9,972	9,198	..	..	..	..
5. Begusarai Police-station (Excluding Begusarai town).	77,535	78,025	9	2	..	..	..	..	6,189	6,893	..	..	..	..
6. Balia Police-station ..	50,981	54,785	..	..	..	..	..	..	7,433	7,312	..	..	..	..
7. Bariarpur and Bakhri Police-stations.	95,477	95,339	..	..	..	..	..	..	4,790	4,492	..	..	..	..
8. Monghyr and Surajgarha Revenue Thanas (Excluding Monghyr town).	1,19,704	1,18,516	70	92	..	..	..	..	5,308	4,504	26	37	..	..
9. Lakhisarai and Kharagpur Revenue Thanas (Excluding Kharagpur, Lakhisarai and Burhee towns).	1,58,181	1,54,349	15	27	..	..	..	..	8,143	8,674	8	13	..	..
10. Sheikhpura Revenue Thana (Excluding Sheikhpura and Barbigha towns).	74,352	73,420	11	25	2	2	..	..	9,825	11,635	44	56	..	..
11. Sikandra Revenue Thana ..	62,901	65,212	..	..	..	..	..	..	6,254	6,869	..	..	..	..
12. Jamui Police-station (Excluding Jamui town).	45,708	47,503	..	4	..	..	..	..	5,796	5,560	..	..	..	..
13. Chakai Revenue Thana and Lachhmipur Police-station (Excluding Jhajha Town).	1,21,235	1,21,576	22	12	..	..	..	..	11,134	11,231	..	2	..	..
14. All towns of Monghyr District (Monghyr, Jamalpur, Kharagpur, Lakhisarai, Burhee, Sheikhpura, Barbigha, Jamui, Jhajha, Khagaria, Begusarai, Phulwaria and Teghra).	1,19,602	1,08,260	341	259	11	9	142	134	19,966	17,220	583	570	1	..

The Hindus as well as the Muhammadans are evenly distributed according to their respective proportion both in the rural and urban areas. All the other minor communities, viz., the Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Christians and Jews are mostly found in the urban areas, their number in the rural areas was very small.

Scheduled Castes.

The number of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and the other Backward Classes was 12,71,530 in 1951. They were distributed as follows :—

	Rural Total.			Urban Total.			District Total.			
	Persons.	Males.	Females.	Persons.	Males.	Females.	Persons.	Males.	Females.	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Scheduled Castes	4,20,152	2,11,320	2,08,832	10,825	9,953	9,872	4,39,977	2,21,273	2,18,704	
Scheduled Tribes	55,546	27,980	27,566	1,166	584	582	56,712	28,564	28,148	
Other Backward Classes.	6,84,131	3,43,506	3,40,625	90,710	47,680	43,030	7,74,841	3,91,186	3,83,655	

The above table will show that out of 12,71,530 of these classes only 1,11,701 were living in the urban areas. They mostly live in villages and are dependent either on daily labour in the fields or are small cultivators.

Principal Communities.

Figures were not compiled castewise in the census of 1941 and 1951. The last census which mentioned the distribution of castes and sub-castes was the one of 1931. Since then considerable changes have taken place and the repetition of the figures of 1931 will not serve much purpose.

Hindus.—Besides the four traditional divisions, viz., the Brahmana, Kshatria or Rajput, Vaish and Shudra, the each division has numerous castes and sub-castes. The last District Gazetteer of Monghyr published in 1926 has given an account of the six principal castes of the district as follows :—

“*Ahirs.*—The Ahirs or Goalas are an agricultural caste, whose hereditary occupation is that of herdsmen. They tend flocks and herds, and though most are settled cultivators some still roam about from place to place, seeking fresh pasturage and selling milk to the Gauras, who

prepare *ghee*, which is purchased whole-sale by the *mahajans*. They are mostly numerous in the Gogri thana, where they came originally to graze their cattle on its extensive pasture lands, but stayed to cultivate. As a class they are said to be less litigious than *Babhans* but no less fond of a fight, and they sometimes display an aptitude for combination which is uncommon among other sections of the population.

"*Babhans*.—The *Babhans* are mostly engaged in cultivation and the characteristic occupation of the caste is that of settled agriculturists. They comprise tenure-holders of all grades and occupancy and non-occupancy raiyats, but are to a large extent petty proprietors as well as tenants. According to their own account, though ranking as high-caste cultivators, they are not particularly sought after as tenants, because they cannot be called upon for *begari* or forced labour, and also because they cannot pay a high rate of rent; for they will not plough themselves, but employ labourers for the purpose. The truth appears to be that their bold and overbearing character, and their tendency to combine in strong and pugnacious brotherhood, render them undesirable tenants in the eyes of an exacting landlord.

"*Dhanuks*.—The *Dhanuks* are a servant class found in every place where there are high-caste Hindus. They perform the menial duties of the household, along with their wives and children, and are generally employed as personal servants in the households of the upper classes. Some of the *Dhanuks* are also cultivators, and the females act as maid-servants.

"*Musahars*.—The *Musahars* are field labourers, whose wages are paid in kind, according to the immemorial custom in the villages. They live in a kind of social thralldom, sometimes selling themselves, their wives and children to lifelong servitude for paltry sums. With an ingrained aversion to emigration, pilfering in times of plenty, and living upon roots, rats, snails and shells, they cause considerable difficulty to Government officials in times of dearth. They live apart from the *basti*, and are not so numerous in the north-western part of the district as in the south-eastern. The bulk of the caste are field labourers and palankeen bearers, and only a few have attained to the dignity of cultivating on their own account or acquired occupancy rights. The name *Musahar* is believed to mean rat-catcher or rat-eater, and is an appropriate designation, for they

are professional rat-catchers. Mr. Lockwood in his work *Natural History, Sport and Travel* writes :— 'The Mushirs, or Mousers, as they may be called, are found in every village of Monghyr, and are half-starved even in times of plenty. They seldom see coin, but receive their scanty wages in coarse grain, which they flavour with rats, mice, snails and jungle roots, whilst living in hovels which an English pig would consider poor accommodation. One would imagine that such persons must find difficulty in getting wives, but the contrary is the case, for bachelors and spinsters are unknown. Directly they arrive at the age of puberty they present themselves at their landlord's house, and having signed a deed binding themselves to remain in bondage for the term of their natural lives, receive a few shillings in return, with which to entertain their friends at a marriage feast, and to set up house'.

"*Dosadhs*.—The Dosadhs are another caste probably of aboriginal descent. Their characteristic occupation is to serve as watchmen or *chaukidars*, but they are also employed as village messengers (*ggrait*), grooms, elephant drivers, grass and wood cutters, *punkah*-coolies and porters. They rank in this district among the most persistent criminals known to the police, but have a good character as carriers of goods. Some of the *chaukidars* and *goraits* hold small allotments of land rent-free in return for the services rendered by them to the village; but generally speaking their thriftless habits hinder them from rising above the grade of occupancy raiyats, and a very large proportion of them are merely tenants-at-will or landless day labourers.

"*Koiris*.—The Koiris are agriculturists pure and simple but they are distinguished from the Kurmis and other purely cultivating castes by their skill in rearing tobacco, and other special produce requiring more careful cultivation than the staple crops. In the neighbourhood of large towns they work as market-gardeners. Many Koiris are tenure-holders, and here and there members of the caste have risen to be petty zamindars; but most of them are prosperous cultivators, holding occupancy rights."

Some of the remarks in the last District Gazetteer do not hold good now. For example it is difficult to agree that the Musahars or the Dosadhs were exactly as pictured in the observations quoted above. In any case the Musahars do not sell themselves or their wives and children to life-long servitude for petty sum now. The financial condition of the Musahars is certainly still bad but some of them have

started regular cultivation and own small bits of land. They work as field labourers but a good percentage of them has migrated to industrial areas. As *Palki* is going out of use they are no longer professional *Palki* bearers. The observation that the Dosadhs are of an aboriginal descent is also far too sweeping and some of them now claim Rajput origin. It is not correct to describe the Dosadhs as the most persistent criminals. Many of them are employed in offices and in domestic service, particularly to serve as cooks. The Welfare Department has been striving for the uplift of such backward people. The remarks on the Babhans also cannot be accepted now.

There had been a great change in the social status of the lower castes due to the change in the tenancy laws and the abolition of the zamindari. The Bihar and Orissa Kamiyauti Agreement Act of 1920 had abolished the *Kamiyauti* or bonded labour system. Before that it was quite common that landlords, big or small, had *Kamias* or labourers tied down to them. Usually some paltry sum was advanced as loan and the interest was paid in the form of labour which was to be continued from generation to generation. The Bihar Land Reforms Act, 1950 has eliminated several obnoxious tenancy laws. Apart from that the spread of education among the backward classes has brought in fundamental changes in their social status.

Scheduled Castes.—The Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Backward Classes, according to the census of 1951, formed about 45 per cent of the population. The Musahars and Dosadhs under the Constitution were notified as Scheduled Caste. Apart from them there are a number of such castes such as Chamar, Dhobi, Bauri, Ghasi and Mehtar, etc. Ahirs have been notified under Backward Classes. Under Scheduled Tribes mainly come Santhals, Bhuiyas, Kols and Koras. Regarding the Tribes and the aboriginal races the last District Gazetteer of Monghyr published in 1926 mentions as follows :—

“Tradition points to a former predominance of aboriginal races, which were ousted by Rajput immigrants. The northern portion of the district is believed to have been long under the sway of the Bhars, traces of whose rule are still found in ruined forts in the Begusarai subdivision and in *tappa* Saraunja to the extreme north-east. The Pharkiya *pargana* again is said to have been held by lawless tribes of Dosadhs, who were eventually subdued by a Rajput soldier. The south was comprised in the Jharkhand of the Muhammadan historians, a broad belt of the forest and rolling country, which, beginning at the Son and stretching as far as Midnapore, was the boundary of and barrier against early Aryan invasions. Tradition relates that in the Kharagpur *pargana* the original inhabitants

were Khetauris, who were ruled over by 52 chiefs, until they were overcome by three Rajput brothers, the founders of the Kharagpur Raj, who had taken service with one of them. To the south of Kharagpur the country was similarly seized from the Khetauris by the Rajput ancestor of the Rajas of Gidhaur.

"The south of the district is still the home of castes and tribes of aboriginal descent, such as Santals, Bhuiyas, Kols and Koras, among whom the Santals alone number 23,000, almost all found in thanas Chakai, Jamui and Kharagpur. As elsewhere in India, the aboriginal races have been driven back by successive waves of conquest into the hilly tracts, where it was impracticable to follow them up, and whence they have subsequently extended themselves again towards the plains. There they have come into contact with the Hindu community, and considerable commingling has resulted. Ethnologically, the difference is still easily perceptible. The features of the inhabitants of the hills, with their low brows and flat faces, have a strong resemblance to the Mongolian type, and they contrast strikingly with the high-browed Aryan-featured Babhans of the northern parts of the district.

"The Khetauris or Katauris are believed by Mr. W. B. Oldham to have been the old Hinduized and aristocratic section of the aboriginal Maler, whose descendants still survive in the Sauria Paharias of the Santal Parganas. He calls them the brethren and kinsman of the Maler who loved the ease and fertility of the plains and gave the race its kings, and princes; and later on coalesced and intermarried with the Rajput Aryans as they approached, and took their Hinduism with the status of its soldier caste; and never daring to call themselves Kshatriyas at once, were found with the name of Kshatauri or Katauri, as the nearest permissible approach to it..... The Katauris have long since disappeared from the west and south of the tract which they used to cover, and have receded towards their ancestral hills, driven back, I believe, by the Bhuiyan invasion from the south about three centuries ago, which established the petty kingdom of Lachmipur, the pargana of Passai, and most of the *ghatwalis* of Sarath Deoghar, and immediately preceded the formation of the sovereignties to Birbhum and Kharagpur by two Pathan adventurers."*

* W. B. Oldham—"Some Historical and Ethnical Aspects of the Burdwan district" (Calcutta, 1894).

Regarding this theory, Mr. H. McPherson*, I.C.S., writes, after studying the unpublished manuscript of Buchanan-Hamilton and with special reference to the Santal Parganas:—"Dr. Buchanan's notes put an entirely different complexion on the disintegration of Katauri ascendancy. He shows that the princes of the Sauria Maler in the plains north and west of the hills, and in the Manjhwa valley within the northern hills, were of a caste called Nat or Nat Pahariya, who were closely akin to, if at all distinguishable from the Maler. These Nats were not displaced till Akbar's advance about 1576. Katauri domination was confined to the region west of the hills, and the Bhuiyas were not invaders who helped Pathan adventurers to overthrow the Katakauris, but were the aborigines of the forest tracts, over whom the Katakauris exercised sway, and to whom they were closely related by blood or inter-marriage. The Katakauris had possession of the more open country to the north; the Bhuiyas held the forest tracts as *ghatwals* under the Katakauris. The adventurers who overthrew the Katakauris of Kharagpur were not Pathans, but Rajputs. The foundation of the Pathan Kingdom of Birbhum occurred about the same time as the expulsion of the Katakauris from Kharagpur, but there was no apparent connection between the two events. Both occurred about the middle of the sixteenth century. A grandson of the Rajput conqueror of Kharagpur gave offence to Akbar and was treacherously assassinated in 1601. His son was taken to Delhi and there embraced the Muhammadan faith, and Kadir Ali who was Raja of Kharagpur in Buchanan's time, was the direct descendant of this Muhammadan convert. Younger branches of the family remained Rajput and some of them received *ghatwalis*, a circumstance which gave much offence to the Bhuiya *ghatwals*.

"The proposition that the Bhuiyas were not the sixteenth century invaders who overthrew the Katakauris, but the original inhabitants of the forest tracts and guardians of the passes, who owed some sort of allegiance to the Katakauris and in turn to their successors, the Rajputs, is proved not only by Dr. Buchanan's historical notes, but also by his ethnical enquiries. The Bhuiyas belong to the same Dravidian stock as the hill Maler. They have lost their Dravidian tongue and have taken on a veneer of Hinduism. Their chiefs made the usual Khatriya pretensions and calling themselves Surajbansis disclaim connection with their Bhuiya kinsmen. But the physical characteristics of all are alike Dravidian, and in Captain Browne's time (1772-1778) the chiefs never thought of claiming to be other than Bhuiya. The highest chiefs of the Bhuiyas are called Tikaits, and are supposed to have received the mark of royalty. Inferior chiefs are called Thakur, and the younger members of noble Bhuiya families are called Babus.

"Buchanan, repeating the tradition current in his time, says that the Khetauris appear to have lived in brick houses, and to have

* Later Sir Hugh McPherson, K.C.I.E., C.S.I.

been somewhat more civilized than the barbarians by whom they were expelled. The same tradition still lingers. Not only is the name of the Khetauris still widely known among the people to the south, but the tradition that at one time they were the owners of the soil, is confirmed by remains attributed to them. There are ruins of brick houses at Taranhar, one mile from Bamdab, with old bricks of peculiar size and dimensions, which are said to have been built by them; and in Raja Tarai, a hamlet of Karangarh two miles from the Kakuria inspection bungalow, there are the remains of what seems to have been a fort, which the villagers allege was once occupied by the Khetauris. A curious instance of the belief in the wealth of the Khetauris is reported. A few years ago, it is said, some Khetauris came from the Santal Parganas and stayed in Taranhar for a night, during which they dug up the ground in several places searching for buried treasure. The villagers allege that their leader was a descendant of the Khetauris, who had discovered from an old paper that there was treasure buried at a certain place in the village; and as the party decamped in the dark, the villagers all suspected that they had actually found buried treasure."

There are several smaller organisations working for the up-grading of the Harijans. The most important organisation is the Depressed Classes' League with an All-India field. This organisation was established for the propagation of national ideas among the Harijans. During the Round Table Conference in 1932-33 the League worked with affiliation with the Indian National Congress. The League has been organised throughout India by Shri Jagjiwan Ram, Railway Minister, Government of India. Monghyr is also a unit.

Muhammadans.—Monghyr seems to have attracted the Muhammadans at an early period, the town of Monghyr being made one of their seats of Government. Smaller settlements were also attracted over the district round a number of chiefs who received *jagirs* from the early Muhammadan emperors and kings. The Muhammadan pockets are especially noticeable at Monghyr, Sheikhpura, Hussainabad and Ballia Lakshminia. Among the Muhammadans the most numerous sections in the district of Monghyr are Sheikhs, Jolahas and Kunjras. There are still some old aristocratic families in the towns and the interior.

Religious Beliefs, Manners and Customs

The religious beliefs of the Hindus and Muslims, the two principal communities in the district of Monghyr, are almost the same as those existing elsewhere in the State. It is not necessary to go extensively into them here. Briefly, it may be mentioned that many of the orthodox beliefs are slowly changing. Among the educated classes there is hardly any rigidity in social inter-mixing due to differences in religion. The Hindus' religious faith is essentially eclectic and has absorbed various currents of thoughts and

beliefs. There is room among the Hindus for the orthodox worshippers of a legion of gods and goddesses along with the believers in strict monotheism of the *Upanishada* and even one who does not believe in any God. The number of temples and mosques in the district are quite large. References have been made elsewhere to the Christian Missions and their impact on the cultural aspect of this district. The Christians, a minority, are known for their marked social habits and a community life. According to the Census Handbook Anglo-Indians number only 237 in this district.

Orthodox Hindus observe various customs, from the very conception of the child in the womb till death. Traditionally there are 40 *samskars* which are to be observed but now very few of them are observed strictly. There are particular taboos which the expectant mother has to observe during her pregnancy. She is supposed to observe various restrictions even after the birth of the child and till certain *pujas* are done. The *namakaran* is generally held on the 12th day after the birth of the child provided the child was not born during the *sataisa* period. *Mundan* or the first cutting of the hair of the child and *upanayan* or sacred thread ceremony are other important functions in the life of the child. The next important *samskar* is the marriage, rites of which are regulated according to the customs and traditions of the particular community. The old idea of fixing of marriage after detailed examination of the horoscope is slowly liquidating. Inter-caste and inter-racial marriages have become quite common. The consent of the bridegroom or the bride is not ignored even if the marriage is done according to orthodox restrictions. In Hindu marriages of this side *sindurdan* by the bridegroom on the forehead of the bride is a very common custom. *Sindurdan* has now percolated to the other castes and communities as well. Marriage under the Civil Marriage Act is not uncommon. Under the new Hindu law marriages are also observed by registration.

There are also particular customs according to which funeral rites are to be performed. For Hindus, cremation is usually done and it is taken to be the religious duty of the son to perform the last rite of his father for his spiritual salvation. The person, who kindles fire in the pyre, has to observe several restrictions for a particular period. In a Muhammadan burial, recital of verses from the holy *Koran* is invariably done and the last prayers are offered near the graveyard. After the grave is closed the *imam* or *fakir* recites verses of the *Koran* and prayer is offered for the peace of the soul. On the 40th day alms are distributed and a dinner is given to friends and relatives.

SOCIAL LIFE.

Property and Inheritance.

For the Hindus, the law of inheritance is governed by the Hindu Law and in the case of the Mahammadans, by the Mohammadan Law,

A Hindu's property is never held in abeyance. It is the general principle of the Hindu Law that property devolves on the sons on the death of the father. According to Manu, the great law giver, "to the nearest *sapinda* the inheritance next belongs". A Hindu accrues his right in the ancestral property as soon as he is conceived but such right cannot be accrued in the separate property of his father. There are two schools of Hindu Law, *Dayabhag* and *Mitakshra* which govern different sections of the Hindus.

The position of women in this district along with the women elsewhere has been very much improved since the passing of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1956. A Hindu daughter has now as good a claim in her father's property as the son, provided her father does not debar her by law. Widow marriage and divorce are coming in though not common. Monogamy is the rule now.

So far as Mohammadans are concerned the father has the absolute right in the property and can debar any of the sons from inheritance. Among Mohammadans the daughter has as good a claim in her father's property as the son and there is a fixed ratio of the rights of son and daughter and the other relatives.

Family Life.

The old idea of joint family system among the Hindus is rapidly liquidating even in the villages. The shift of the more intelligent and educated section from the rural areas to the towns is adding to the liquidation of the joint family system in the rural areas. Family life is becoming more and more individualistic. Usually the branch of the family which earns more money slowly separates from the poorer branch. Family life in the villages is disintegrating and educated persons as a class are shifting to the towns.

The previous idea of a Hindu marriage being more sacramental than contractual is on the wane. The orthodox restrictions of marriage alliance between particular relatives are, however, still basically followed. Contract marriages under Act III of 1874 are not unpopular. The number of civil marriages, inter-caste marriages and inter-provincial marriages is very small in the district but accepted as a matter of course. Dowry system is still prevalent in some shape or the other. In middle class families the marriage of a daughter has become a problem due to the demand of dowry. Widow re-marriage is not held to be abnormal now. Working girls have no more difficulties to get married than others. But it has got to be admitted that although theoretically women are held in high esteem, they are not given their proper position yet either in the rural or the urban areas. Still economically, women are dependent on their husbands, fathers or sons or others due to the social structure. Independent earning by women is still not common. It is a fact that the women of the lower castes or the working girls are economically better off owing to their earning status. It is, unfortunately, this

backwardness of the women as a class that is holding back a broad-based social upgrading. There are, however, distinct signs of a break and the Indian National Congress, Bharat Sewak Samaj, All-India Women's Council, Social Service Board and various other voluntary social services organisations are actively engaged in broad-basing the social structure where women will have their full share. The spread of education among women in Monghyr district has been steady but not phenomenal. Only recently a Girls' College has been started in Monghyr. Marital age has been extended generally.

Prostitutes.

It is rather disgusting to find that practically all the prostitutes in Monghyr town have their habitation in *Chowk* area which is the very heart of the town. There has been no organised effort to segregate them. The number does not appear to have declined although there has not been any particular survey as to their number or condition. Some of the Muslim prostitutes had left the district and the country for Pakistan in the wake of the communal disturbances of 1946. The abolition of zamindaris and the economic deterioration of the hitherto cushioned moneyed class has visibly affected the economic condition of these women. There is no doubt that this class had kept up the flow of classical music and dance for several decades when dancing in a household would have been held as intolerable and immoral and music was a rarity. So far as underground traffic in women, drinking and particular criminal offences associated with sex and drink are concerned, it may be mentioned that there is nothing particular about this district. Figures for detected traffic in women are not available. Drinking and gambling are discouraged.

Home Life.

There has been a somewhat exhaustive treatment of the types of dwelling, furniture, decoration, dress and ornaments, food, amusement and festivities in the re-written District Gazetteer of Saran. It may broadly be mentioned that the observations there have their bearing on this district as well. The villages in this district are usually clustered together within a space of the village and apart from the cultivation land. There is usually a small homestead land adjoining the house. The individual houses are not sited within the cultivation land of the tenants which is the common feature in some other parts of India. Villages have not grown as haphazardly as towns have. Most of the houses in the rural areas are *kutchra* being built of mud and plaster with thatched roof and usually well-to-do men have a small *angan* attached to the house. The *diara* villages are particularly liable to be inundated by floods and burnt down by fire and a very austere type of hutments are the usual dwellings in the *diara* areas. There is no sewerage system within the village and there is a general lack of a sense of sanitation which is also quite noticeable in the urban areas. In the rural areas,

lavatory does not exist excepting in the houses of well-to-do people, and the problem of cleansing the lavatory is becoming rather acute. But the open spaces in the outskirts of the villages and the nearby fields are commonly used by the villagers to make up the lack of proper privies in their individual houses.

The growth of the towns in this district has been treated separately. It may be mentioned that excepting Monghyr none of the present towns in Monghyr district has had any planned programme behind its growth. Monghyr also was forced to adopt a planned programme because of the great earthquake of 1934. The towns have one common pattern along with the towns elsewhere in Bihar. The bazar portion is usually crowded. Slums are not segregated and there is a clear weightage from the municipalities for the better upkeep of the areas where the officials and richer folks live, although the main municipal income comes from the bazar portion. The houses in the towns are usually brick built with mortar and cement. Housing condition in the towns is already an acute problem and portions of a house are being let out on rent without proper facilities for separate bath-room or lavatory. The housing problem can only be solved after a large number of houses have been made available for the people of lower and smaller income groups. As they are, there is not much of privacy or comfort in the houses of the common men.

Furniture and Decoration.

Possession of furniture is a sign of money and taste and the index of furniture in a household naturally varies. Urban influence has recently been responsible for the richer villagers slowly come in for proper drawing room, bed-room and dining room furniture along with better type of houses. The average middle class families have not only a number of sleeping cots, but also some chairs, tables and a few wooden benches. Interior decoration is more of a casualty in most of the houses because of more lack of money than of taste. Gardening as a hobby has yet to percolate. It is a pity that even middle class people who can afford not to speak of the richer folks have not taken to gardening as a matter of course.

In the urban areas usually there is more of furniture in the household. With the small-sized rooms that are coming in vogue, the furniture have to be simple but artistic. Heavy type furniture with ornamentations are going out. The slant is towards following the pattern of the furniture in the West. Interior decoration in the house of a rich man of taste in a town has slowly been coming in. Books are hardly possessed with pride.

Dress and Ornaments.

There is nothing particularly different in dress and ornaments among the people in this district from those in Saran district which has had an exhaustive treatment in the re-written *Saran Gazetteer*.

The old costumes like *kurta*, *dhoti*, *paijama*, coarse *sari*, *jhula*, etc., are still there in the villages but are being replaced with better type of *dhoti*, coat, shirt, trouser, bush shirt, *salwar*, *chaddar*, *dopatta*, etc. The use of shoes and chappals is normal for the town dwellers. Villagers are also taking more to the use of better type of shoes and *chamarua* shoes made of untanned hide are slowly disappearing. The use of cosmetics and other articles of toilet particularly for the ladies has come to stay and their popularity depends on taste, money and availability. Regarding ornaments, significant changes have come in their use for both men and women. A few decades back males used to have more ornaments for the finger, ear and the neck. But now male's ornaments are practically reduced to rings only. Women have given up many of the old type ornaments which were very heavy and ornate. The slant is towards ornaments of simpler design, lighter weight and there is more use of stone instead of gold and other expensive metal. The neck is the most favourite part of the body for the wearing of ornaments. Ornaments are used by the ladies for the neck, arms, wrist, fingers, waist and feet. As a rule no gold is worn on the feet. Gold, silver and precious stones are the chief ingredients. Glass, beads, etc., are also commonly used. Glass bangles and imitation jewels are very popular.

Food and Drink.

The following quotation from the re-written *District Gazetteer of Saran* applies to this district as well :—

“The diet of the common man is very unbalanced and deficient in protein. This is partially due to habits and economic status. Rice, wheat, barley, maize, pulses and vegetables are the common food of the district. Rice and wheat are the staple food of the higher income group. The people of lower income group live on barley, maize, other cereals, pulses and *sattu*, a flour prepared from one or other of the various grains. Vegetables also form a main part of the food. The poorer class and the middle class families take more of vegetables and pulses with their main diet rice or *chapati*. Fish, meat, milk and eggs are relished but the price keeps them away from the table of the common man to a very great extent. Fruits do not form a common item of the dietary of the average middle class or even of the richer section. Fruits like mango and *litchi* are taken during the season provided they are cheap. But cheaper fruits like plantain and guava are not commonly taken. Sweet-potato and *litti*, a cake formed of *sattu* and wheat flour with ingredients inside form a favourite menu of village common man. Milk and its various preparations such as curd, *ghee*, butter and *chhena* are more for the rich. Milk of

both cow and buffalo is taken. Goat-milk is slowly coming into vogue in the towns and specially for children. Among the vegetables potato, *palwal*, lady's finger, pumpkin, brinjal, cauliflower, cabbage, bean, radish, bitters and various kinds of spinach are usually taken according to taste and price. Onion and garlic are now commonly used although they were little taken 20 years back. *Salad* consisting of slices of tomato, radish, onion and lemon juice, etc., has been introduced in the district recently and has spread to the villages. Although there has been no survey it may be said that the majority of the population are vegetarian probably more due to tradition and economic condition.

Vegetarian food has also a number of special varieties. Various kinds of sweet-milk preparations are much relished. Various kinds of sweetmeat, *puri*, *kachauri*, dried fruits, pickles, snacks like *papar*, *tilauri* or *sukhauti* change the monotony of the ordinary vegetarian food. The culinary condiments generally used are turmeric, cuminseeds, pepper, ginger, cardamoms, cloves, coriander seeds, cinnamons, nutmeg, mace, cassia, cubeb, mustard, saffron, assfoetida, onion and garlic. The cooking medium is usually some kind of oil like mustard, hydrogenated oil (vegetable ghee) and ghee. Unfortunately, pure ghee is a rarity now.

There are various kinds of meat preparations current in the district. Most of them are of *Moghlay* types like *biriani*, *polao*, *kabab*, *kurma*, *murgmushallam*, etc. The restaurants are popularising meat preparations like cutlet, chop, roast, etc. Tea shops are found in every town and big villages. Tea drinking is becoming a common habit in the middle class families and in the group of people belonging to the class of the heavy workers like mechanics, drivers, and hard manual labourers. Tea shops are fast becoming the clearing house for gossips and rumours. Coffee has not yet become popular. Tea drinking is yet to become the common beverage of the lower income group villagers. Cold drink or *sarbat* in the summer season and specially on ceremonial occasions is common. *Lassi* made of curd is also becoming a popular drink in the summer season. Various kinds of aerated water more attractive for the colour have penetrated even into the villages. Cold drinks prepared with various kinds of seeds of flowers, rose petals, almond, black pepper, curd and sugar are in vogue in the richer class. *Bhang* is not a popular beverage. It is taken particularly in the *Holi*

festival. The higher excise revenue leads one to think that there is now more consumption of toddy and country made liquor. Smoking is also becoming quite common in spite of the increasing price of tobacco. Smoking among women is very common. *Biris* and cigarettes are slowly replacing *hukka* smoking. Smoking of cigar is not common. The chewing of *pan* with areca nut is very common and expenditure on it is not inconsiderable."

Amusements.

Songs and music have a great fascination for the rural people. *Bhajans* and *kirtans*, devotional songs with music have not lost their popularity. Apart from them there is a craze for particular types of songs with particular seasons like *Holi*, etc. The *melas* and fairs have a great impact on the rural population. Usually the *melas* and fairs provide a number of amusement centres such as *nautanki*, theatre parties, circus, cinema shows, etc. These amusement centres in the rural areas have a great influence on the sense of humour and the craving for amusement among the rural population. Many of the cinema hits could be heard sung by villagers.

Football matches and wrestling have a great hold on a rural public. In bigger villages as in towns there are theatrical parties during particular festivals like *Durga Puja*, or *Deepawali*.

The towns in the district have somewhat better facilities for amusement and recreation. Monghyr has got a number of cinema houses and some sort of exhibition or amusement centres practically remain there for at least six months in the year. The student population has very little contact with their teachers during the hours beyond the college study. The bulk of the student population fend for themselves in the afternoons and congregate near the tea-shops or the restaurants or visit cinema houses. Football matches and other games have a stronghold on them and their craze and interest could have been canalised to organise more of sports, cultural meetings, etc. The towns do not have adequate playing-grounds, parks or centres of cheap amusement and recreation. Cinemas are the big attraction in the towns now for amusement and recreation. Club life has yet to develop. Card games are popular.

It is a regrettable fact that there has been very little recreational use of the forests, lakes, springs and beauty spots in this district. It is rare to see week-end parties at Kharagpur lake. This lake area is well connected by roadways and anywhere in the West would have been visited by hundreds of the people during holidays and there would have been a string of hotels and restaurants. Very little use is also made of the few libraries in the district. Radios are very few. On the whole there is not much utilisation of leisure by proper relaxation.

Festivals.

Festivals form part of the daily life of the Hindus and Muslims both in rural and urban areas. Monghyr wears a gala appearance during particular festivals. *Janmashtami*, *Shivaratri*, *Ramnawami*, *Tij*, *Durga Puja*, *Deepawali* and *Holi* are some of the festivals for the Hindus, and for the Muslims *Sabebarat*, *Ramzan*, *Id*, *Bakrid* and *Fatiha-duaz-dahum* are important.

ECONOMIC AND PROFESSIONAL GROUPS AND CLASSES IN RELATION
TO SOCIAL LIFE.

As mentioned before, the majority of the population of the district are agriculturists and even a sizeable percentage of the non-agriculturists have something or other to do with agriculture. It is the agricultural economy which permeates the social life in the district and we may, in a way, say that the social life of the district is rooted in the villages. It is the rural pattern of life which largely rules the district and the present Welfare State has put the necessary accent on it by emphasising the importance of the agriculturists of our villages. To give an example, the political leaders five decades back were more or less urban with urbane manners and their political meetings were mostly held in the towns. They gave the leadership that was suited to the times. But with the change in the political set-up and with the gradual evolution of self-government and the ushering in of democracy, it was clearly appreciated that the leadership may remain in the hands of the urban people but they must win the support of the villagers. This is one great change that Mahatma Gandhi had brought to the country and Monghyr district along with the other districts in Bihar had the fullest impact of that teaching. The District Branch of the Indian National Congress gained popularity because the leaders toured throughout the villages at the critical period of organising the Congress movement in bullock-carts, *ekkas*, boats and on foot. They lived with the people, they ate their food and they fully demonstrated that they were one with them as they were really so. The artificial gap which had been brought in by the western education between an English educated man and the villager was quickly obliterated. The average common man in the villages of Monghyr district realised that he also counted and probably with the realisation there has come in a certain amount of avoidable evil. At the moment, with the widening of franchise based on adult franchise, it is the agriculturists of the district that form the bulk of the electorate. No democratic set-up of State administration could alienate the agriculturists now. That is the reason why the Congress Ministry have been trying their utmost to bring in welfare measures and land reforms so that the condition of the agriculturists is improved. A series of reforms that have been brought in are calculated to improve the economic condition of the cultivators, *bataidars*, agricultural labourers and landless labourers. It is a different thing if some of the reforms have not achieved their

target. But, nevertheless, the objective is there. The village has again been put on the map and the trend is to improve the villages.

The apparent anomaly that the rural population forming the backbone did not supply the leadership in the past decades has now been removed. The zamindars with their power of purse and their contact with the British administrators naturally supplied the leadership. Next came the lawyers and other professionals who formed the brain trust in the district. The zamindars as a class cannot be run down because many of them in Monghyr district tried to discharge a part of their social obligations by starting schools, colleges, libraries and other cultural institutions. Many of them have endowed temples, mosques, trusts and other charitable institutions. But at the same time it must be said that it is the zamindars who had encouraged the various *abwabs* that the raiyats had to pay over and above their rent. The number of rent suits in any year was many times larger than the other types of civil suits. This alone shows that the zamindari as an institution was not very popular.

The abolition of zamindari came in the chain of a series of agrarian reforms. This move has a tremendous effect on Monghyr district particularly. This district has had a very large number of big landlords, many of whom were money-lenders, traders and professionals as well. The fact that it is this district alone in the State of Bihar so far that had sponsored a Life Insurance Company and a Bank many decades back (they went into liquidation) shows that there was money in the hands of the landlords and others. The abolition of zamindari has affected various strata of people. The landless labourers, agriculturists, service-holders, lawyers and merchants have been affected directly or indirectly. The zamindars who were more or less a leisured class used to employ a vast number of retainers either from the landless labourers or from the middle class men as *gumasta*, *patwaris*, *gorait*, *barahil*, etc. A very negligible percentage of them has been absorbed by the Government as most of them were not found quite fit for Government employment. They had become a pampered class who thrived on the miseries of raiyats. The lawyers lost a very good source of income and if lawyers are affected in a district of the type of Monghyr there could be no doubt that the other professional classes would also be affected. It is understood that the bullion merchants and the merchants of consumer goods are also visibly affected. Charity has suffered. No particular investigation has been done but a cursory enquiry from the local authorities elicits the fact that the large number of dancing girls and prostitutes of Monghyr and other towns in the district have also lost much of their income because of the abolition of zamindari. There is also no doubt that the abolition of zamindari has affected schools, colleges, art and music. A good number of musicians and singers used to get employment in the *darbars* of the big zamindars. Monghyr always used to send a large number of singers to Sonapur

fair which collected annually the musical talents of the State. With the abolition of zamindari many of these persons have been thrown out of employment. The vacuum can only be filled by the State and it may be mentioned that the State as a Welfare State has been trying to fill up the gap. The State is financing schools, colleges, libraries, art and music centres. The private colleges that were started by the landlords are only now existing because of liberal help given either by the State or by the University which also is largely subsidised by the State.

The biggest impact of the abolition of zamindari has been a realignment and reassessment of the social values of the different strata of the population. The old type aristocracy with its peculiar idea of social value based mostly on casteism, length of purse and western education has to be liquidated. The process of liquidation has already started. Previously casteism did play a great role in the social life of the district. A so-called higher caste man whether he be educated, cultured or rich would expect and did command a natural leadership. A lower caste man, however, educated or well-mannered he may be, would have to be a back-bencher in any social assembly. Unfortunately the higher caste people developed an unseemingly spirit of arrogance and complacency and so it is they who are feeling the result of the impact more keenly. The English educated men from the town of Monghyr used to visit the interior with a peculiar spirit of exclusiveness two or three decades back. A village boy sent to Monghyr or Patna for college education was almost lost to the family of ordinary common cultivator he belonged to. With the spread of communication and quicker locomotion that sense of prestige associated exclusively with the English educated men of the towns and the professionals had already started liquidating when the abolition of zamindari came in. At the moment there is no natural leadership for an English educated man with a long purse only because of his education or money.

The political turmoil and the mass consciousness that was aroused with the advent of the Non-Co-operation Movement and the district of Monghyr was in the forefront in the fight for freedom in Bihar from 1920 onwards, brought about a great upheaval and the leaders of the Non-Co-operation taught the common man to shed his fears and blind regard for the zamindars, the constituted authority and also indirectly to them in the long run as well. Apart from the Congress movement, the Kisan agitation had also helped the common man to come out of his cell. Then came the Second Great War and there was a peculiar circulation of money and overnight there was the emergence of the new caste of the rich. Many of the people who never counted before became suddenly rich through business, regular or irregular, and they fully utilised their money in buying up-lands, constructing houses, starting business, etc. This Second Great War brought in a big abandon in domestic life and society

and many of the orthodox moorings of the society were visibly snapped.

This phase was followed by quick changes in the political field and as mentioned separately, Monghyr district had played a very important role. The events in 1942 were followed in this district as well by a bitter communal outburst in 1946. Lakhanpur village was a sample of what men are capable of doing if they lose their senses in communal frenzy. Then came the declaration of Independence which brought in peculiar problems and the biggest change was the turnover of the Police State to a Welfare State. The accent has now been put on the development projects and very rightly the shift is towards the villages. It was clearly realised that the problems of the far-flung villages can never be properly appreciated by the executive authorities sitting at the district or subdivisional headquarters miles away. That is why there was a concrete change in the character of administration by setting up a large number of Block Development Officers to cover the district and thereby the gap between a village and the district headquarters or the subdivisional headquarters is sought to be removed.

It has been mentioned elsewhere that the exclusive agricultural economy of the district has her own problems. The biggest problem is the ever-increasing population. The agricultural economy of the district is coming to a saturation point and even agriculture has to be industrialised to keep pace with the changes. It has to be realised that there must be more of technical skill in agriculture and a certain amount of managerial skill which could be canalised into the system of co-operative farming. The ever-growing population is another problem. The growth of population must bring in a certain amount of wastage of human power. There has to be a regimented population and the current emphasis on birth control has not come in too soon. The Second Five-Year Plan will bring in great changes in the district but if the population goes on multiplying at the present rate much of the good work will be undone. The food situation is bound to become much more acute in a decade unless there is a check on population.

Another great need of the district is the amelioration of the condition of the women-folk in the villages. Even at the moment the Blocks mostly aim to bring about changes more for the direct good of the males than the females. Many of the Blocks have not even got a sprinkling of women on the staff who could more usefully take up the work of social education. The district lives in the villages and the best leadership in the villages could only come from the women who have got tradition and culture behind them and all that is required is the touch of literacy and education. Unfortunately there has been an extremely lopsided progress in the district so far as this aspect is concerned and the impact of an unenlightened women population cannot have a very good effect on the social life.