CHAPTER - THREE

THE QUANTUM OF TRIBALS IN THE STEEL PLANT AS WELL AS IN THE STEEL CITY AND THEIR WAY OF LIFE

The present look of Durgapur, emerging as one of the most prominent industrial towns of India, never makes one think of its past when the entire area was covered with dense forest infested with ferocious animals, hideouts for dacoits.

It is only due to the Damodar Valley Corporation (multipurpose River Valley Projects) that Durgapur has seen the light of modernity for the first time. To start with, Durgapur Project Limited, was brought into being as an industrial organization of the Government of West Bengal. Till then, Durgapur was not an industrial city. Even up to 1952, the present industrial area was a dense forest with a
few tribal pockets, here and there.

In 1959, the proposal for the erection of a Steel Plant at Durgapur materialised and after the scenario of Durgapur began to undergo a change very rapidly. This change affected the local tribals as well, in and around Durgapur.

After the erection of the Durgapur Steel Plant, industrialisation quickened its pace. Today, the number of the factories, big and small, extends to one hundred, of which twenty five industries are large scale ones with more than 50 lakhs of rupees as their capital.

It has been quite evident that the industrialisation at Durgapur has influenced most effectively the local tribal communities. The construction of the plant and the buildings for the administrative works was possible only at the cost of the displacement of the local tribals. They had to lose not only their hearths and homes but their agricultural land as well. It may be mentioned here that for the erection of the steel plant
about 500 tribals were displaced and they had to move to other neighbouring areas. On the other hand, tribals numbering nearly 1000 came from different parts of India being allured by the scope of employment.

True, after the establishment of the Steel Plant many of the local tribals as well as tribals who migrated here from outside got employment in the Steel Plant. At the initial stage, there was much scope for employment of the tribals and there is yet much scope. But majority of them were not then willing to accept employment giving up their traditional pattern of life.

A section of them, however, has accepted employment while others moved to nearby states of Bihar and Orissa and settled down with their kinsmen. Unfortunately, no trace could be found of them regarding their settled life. Of the rest, a few have settled in the periphery of Durgapur City, away from the Steel Plant area.
It is interesting to note here that those, who were at first unwilling to join the Steel Plant as employees, later on accepted employment in the plant and even who did not get employment, later on, had to seek jobs as daily wagers under private contractors. This has been revealed in the field survey.

MIGRATED TRIBALS IN DURGAPUR

After the erection of the Durgapur Steel Plant streams of tribals started coming here for employment. Several thousands of scheduled castes and tribes were employed by the Damodar Valley Corporation for spadework like diggingearth and the dressing up of the land. Since then, a feeling grew among the poor tribal communities that Durgapur could offer them an easy scope for jobs and earnings. Consequently, a large number of tribals started coming over to Durgapur from the neighbouring states of Bihar, Orissa and Assam as well as from the different parts of West Bengal namely Purulia, 24 Parganas,
Tribal women in groups going to place of employment (Photo taken at Vidyasagar Avenue - Durgapur).

Office of Durgapur Notified Area Authority. (Photo: By the Researcher)
Midnapur and Hooghly. Besides, tribals from the remote areas of Bardhaman to which Durgapur belongs also came. Further, tribals from the remote areas of Madhya Pradesh, Kerala, Tamilnadu and Andhra Pradesh arrived here for employment after the Durgapur Steel Plant was finally established.

Durgapur, in this respect, may be called a Cosmopolitan City. But the tribals coming from distant provinces did not settle here. Only the local tribals have settled here permanently but that too, outside the Durgapur Notified Area. Tribals who came from the distant provinces chose for Asansol.

DURGAPUR STEEL PLANT AND THE TRIBAL PEOPLE

The scheduled caste and scheduled tribe communities have some special contributions towards the making of Durgapur Steel Plant at the initial stage. Their manual labour was then badly needed there and even now the sincere and hard working tribals are absolutely indispensable for the implementation of modern
giant project of Durgapur Steel Plant. Paradoxically, however, the number of tribal employees still remain quite minimal.

Even now the quantum of tribal employees has not yet exceeded two percent of the total number of employees. The total number of tribal employees was 638 (2%) during 1975 which plummeted. Unfortunately, to 254 in 1976-77. But the number of non-tribal employees has shown in upward trend.

The statistical data given below concerning the comparative increase and decrease of the executives and non-executive employees – both tribals and non-tribals of the Steel Plant during the period 1971-78 will make the picture, convincingly clear, though comparatively the number of the tribal employees falls far below that of non-tribal employees. The tribals do not, however, enjoy any special facilities regarding employment. Nor are they discriminated against.
The table given above shows clearly the gradual increase of employees, both tribals and non-tribals of all ranks during the period 1971-75.

The number of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes has increased gradually during the period mentioned above but plummetted in the years 1976-77. The authorities fail to explain the reason of this decrease. The fact remains, however, that during this period, recruitment was officially stopped for sometime.
and, simultaneously, some tribals retired from their services. This night, however, be the cause of the fall in number. Moreover, the table indicates that maximum number of tribal employees is 638 in the year 1975-76 and the minimum number of tribal employees in the years 1976-77 is 254.

SALARY & OTHER BENEFIT AS AVAILABLE

In the Durgapur Steel Plant all the employees including the tribals enjoy decent salaries in comparison with that of other industrial plants in India. An employee of the lowest rank of the steel plant at least one thousand rupees as gross emoluments per month at the beginning of his service. The salary of the non-executive employees of different ranks and strata varies from one thousand to two thousand rupees. While a tribal anchored to the old way of agricultural or traditional occupation hardly earns his livelihood, a tribal employed at the Steel Plant enjoys more comfortable and cosy life.
Besides, the service-men of Durgapur Steel Plant enjoy different facilities other than their regular salaries. In them, are included residential quarters on a minimum monthly rent, conveyance, scope for recreation and pleasant diversions, free medical treatment, security of services, supply of commodities at a subsidized rate, post-retirement benefits and free education upto the school level.

We thus see that from 1971 to 1974-75 the number of all classes of employees (including Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) is on increase. But in the years 1976-1978 the number of the employees belonging to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes decreases. The reason has, however, not been explained by the authorities concerned, though during the period, the employment was stopped officially and a large number of employees retired as mentioned before.

This may be the reason of the fall of
number of the employees. Besides, the table (No. I) shows that the minimum number of tribal employees is 254 (1976-77) and the maximum number of tribal employees is 638 (1975-76).

RESERVATIONS AS TO THE RECRUITMENT OF TRIBALS IN DURGAPUR STEEL PLANT

The Indian Constitution provides some facilities for the people of the backward communities as per Article No. 340 and 341. The Articles provide reservation of seats upto $7\frac{1}{2}\%$ for the scheduled tribes out of the total number of posts in all employments.

In Durgapur Steel Plant this directive is followed. Nonetheless, the posts reserved for the scheduled castes and tribes remain vacant for years together.

This may lead to the surmise that there has been dearth of candidates belonging to the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes around Durgapur, or there is no problem of employment among tribals.
The indepth interviews with the tribals in the remote tribal pockets in and around Durgapur undertaken by the present researcher does not answer the question fully. From investigation it appears that this is a very complex problem.

It is true that there has been a dearth of skilled hands among the tribals, but there has been a large number of unskilled but hardworking men and women seeking employment to eke out the bare subsistence of life. Unfortunately, there is no scheme to train them up and utilize for the future employment. Hence, is the problem of acute unemployment among the tribals of Durgapur.

The growing discontentment among them is fairly justified as they do not get employment in the steel plant for reasons not known to them. Posts officially reserved for them are not filled up while many of them have been employed by the private contractors as well as by the contractors of the Durgapur Steel Plant. This is a flagrant breach of the statutory mandates.
The tribals working under the private contractors are being exploited extremely owing to their simplicity and illiteracy. The tribal women are pushed to a life of sexual exploitation by the contractors of evil designs.

The reason of this problem is not far to seek and this will be explained in due course. A statistical data regarding the numbers of posts filled up and the number of posts lying vacant covering the period 1971-81 is given below.

**TABLE NO. II**

**Durgapur Steel Plant**

Details regarding Recruitment & Reservation for Scheduled Tribe (ST)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Vacancies</th>
<th>Reser-</th>
<th>Actual</th>
<th>Shortfall in recruit-</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Vacancies)</td>
<td>(Reser-</td>
<td>(Actual</td>
<td>(ment in respect of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Vacancies)</td>
<td>(vations)</td>
<td>recruitment by ST)</td>
<td>ST)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>for ST)</td>
<td>for ST)</td>
<td>ST)</td>
<td>ST)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1618</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Except</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sweepers)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>E.S.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Sweepers)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Column 1</td>
<td>Column 2</td>
<td>Column 3</td>
<td>Column 4</td>
<td>Column 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C (E.S.)</td>
<td>926</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Sweepers)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(E.S.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Sweepers)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(E.S.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Sweepers)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(E.S.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Sweepers)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(E.S.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Sweepers)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(E.S.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Sweepers)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Illiteracy and ignorance are attributed to the increasingly growing unemployment among the tribals. The reserved posts that remain vacant is due, in almost all the cases, to their ignorance. They do not have any knowledge either of employment notifications...
or of the formalities to be observed for employment. Besides, there is no dearth of exploiters who take the best advantage of their simplicity and ignorance. Through crafty designs, they are employed in their farms on a nominal wage which falls far below the usual minimum.

Moreover, they have no knowledge of accounts and the exploiters pay them for 15 days' work only against their 30 days' input.

Nor do they have, owing to their illiteracy and ignorance, any knowledge of the process of recruitment regarding the submission of applications for employment within the specified time, nor is there any organization to help them in this regard. Thus, although they are statutorily well-fortified in respect of their employment, the predatory activities of the contractors and loan-sharks make a travesty of the whole situation.

It has been mentioned before that
almost all the tribals cannot possibly, have the qualifications mentioned for the posts reserved for them. Moreover, the indifference of the local employment exchanges toward their recruitment also discourages and disheartens them to go in for employment. The crafty exploiters take this advantage to employ them in their farms on nominal wages. The tribal people, though unskilled, are hardy and sincere and that is why they are desired by their unscrupulous employers.

EXPLOITATION OF THE TRIBALS

The researcher's visit to tribal villages like Viringi, Dhanbad and Arrah reveals that the tribal people who serve as bonded labour under the contractors are under the impression that they are the employees of Durgapur Steel Plant. Owing to this blissful ignorance and illiteracy, they are quite in the dark about it or they have been made to understand this way. Some
facts give rise to this wrong impression.

Very often they are to enter the farms of the contractors through the campus of the Durgapur Steel Plant and sometimes they do the job of the Durgapur Steel Plant under private contractors. The contractors however, exploit their simplicity and ignorance to their best advantages. In fact, they never enjoy the benefits and advantages of the employees of the Durgapur Steel Plant and are often thrown out of employment at the conclusion of a particular piece of work. The tribals are, therefore, the worst sufferers at the hands of the exploiters. They are appointed purely on a temporary basis and do not have any advantage as enjoyed by the permanent employees of the Durgapur Steel Plant. They are given only a quarter of the salary drawn by a permanent employees of the Durgapur Steel Plant.

The tribal women, working under contractors, are the worst sufferers. The
young working girls and housewives very often become the prey of the contractors and their accomplices to whom trading in flesh is a common practice. They also engage tribal damsels to act as "Call-girls" as and when the necessity arises. To entice them, the girls are provided with money, cheap coloured sarees, fashionable cosmetics, perfumed oil, soaps which even are beyond their reach. Temptation thus lead the poverty-stricken tribal girls and women to the path of aberrance.

REACTION UPON THE TRIBAL SOCIETY

No sharp reaction of the immoral activities on the part of the tribal women is, however, seen as is evident from an intimate investigation undertaken by the writer, at other times they are very rigid in respect of the moral integrity of their family life. They are somewhat or more indifferent to the immoral practices of their working women. This is rather surprising.
The reason is not far to seek. It is their "chill penury" that has made them so. It is not that they like it but they do not condemn it sharply either. This is the outcome of industrialization though this also affects the main-stream of life, in general. Its most adverse effect is seen among the tribals.

These tribal working women of Durgapur are, however, not prostitutes nor do they want some extra source of earning. They, owing to their blissful ignorance, take it lightly as a part of their duty and at other times they do not even think of taking to that kind of life. Tribal morality thus stands in a sharp contrast to what is usually accepted as norms.

These women are very dutyful and sincere in their family life.

DURGAPUR STEEL PLANT AND TRIBAL WELFARE

The Durgapur Steel Plant authorities have undertaken some projects regarding the
development of the areas of local tribals. These projects yield at the same time benefits to the tribal employees. As a result, a relationship between the tribals and non-tribals has grown.

Though this development is far short of what is needed, it is still a commendable venture. Had the authorities of other industries of Durgapur taken up such social welfare programmes, the entire social and psychological contours of life of the tribals and non-tribals would have changed for the better. The natural, spontaneous indifference of the tribal society towards the industrialisation could have been minimised gradually and the tribals could easily be drawn from their obscurity and isolation to the main-stream of society. To solve the problem it is essential to draw them closer to the main-stream.

The Durgapur Steel Plant authorities have chosen 13 tribal villages outside the steel plant city. The welfare programme in
these tribal villages includes supply of drinking water, the maintaining of sanitary condition, sufficient grant for cottage and small scale industries. In the 13 villages are included Purulia, Kamalpur, Bhiringhee, Pursha, Faridpur, Palasdiha, Mazruounda (Bizra Mouza), Gopinathpur, Raturia, Birvanpur, Nadiha Mouza, Narayanpur, Jangal Mahal.

A report dated 19th June, 1980 received by the researcher from the Durgapur Steel Plant authorities regarding the project mentioned above will clearly show the activities done in this regard.

Outside Plant

"In the sub-division (Durgapur) there are 360 villages. In most of these villages those are large number of inhabitants belonging to the SC/ST communities. From the information available from S.D.O.'s office it is stated that there is a high concentration of SC/ST communities especially in the
following 13 villages -

(1) Purulia  (2) Kamalpur
(3) Bhiringhee  (4) Pusha
(5) Faridpur  (6) Polasdiha
(7) Mazruomda  (8) Gopinathpur
(Bijra Mouja)  
(9) Raturia  (10) Bisenpur
(11) Nadiha Mouza  (12) Narayanpur
(13) Janjal Mahal

We tried to get information on professional grouping of villagers, which, however, has not been possible. From the available information, it is noted that these villages, in and around Durgapur, have hardly any tradition in handicraft on cottage industries due perhaps to establishment of large, medium and small scale industries in this area. However, one shall make effort to get further information with the help of the State Government and try to segregate the professional specialisation of the villagers.
Plan for action

i) Promotion (SC/ST) but no promotable due to some deficiency, trying for 'fit'.

ii) Special drive for recruitment (SC/ST) from next year.

iii) Special Training for (SAIL level) - Executive Trainee/Graduate Engineer to fulfill.

iv) Earlier, efforts were made to impart education to illiterate adults. A scheme was made in the past for this purpose. However, the response was poor perhaps due to the fact that the level of illiteracy in this area is low. Yet there is some scope of making similar schemes in further.
TABLE NO. III
Stipend for SC/ST students living in Steel Township

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount of stipend &amp; number of students</th>
<th>Total per month 1977 1978 1979</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rs. 100/-</td>
<td>3 3 4</td>
<td>Rs. 12,000/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rs. 50/-</td>
<td>6 5 4</td>
<td>Rs. 9,000/-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Durgapur Steel Plant

TABLE NO. IV
Help to SC/ST from Durgapur Steel Plant & Cottage Industry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>...</th>
<th>...</th>
<th>...</th>
<th>Rs. in Lakhs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1975-76</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>Rs. 28.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976-77</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>Rs. 34.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977-78</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>Rs. 59.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978-79</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>Rs. 94.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979-80</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>Rs. 99.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Durgapur Steel Plant.

From the statistical data it appears that though Durgapur Steel Plant have done consideration work in the cause of the common people including tribals, it is still not
in commensurate with the large number of local population. The statistical data also point to the rise of urban population.

**POPULATION**

In the foregone pages, the population of the tribals in the steel plant and their role in Durgapur Steel Plant have been mainly discussed.

Now the discussion begins with the tribal population of the rural and urban areas outside the Durgapur Steel Plant City and towns.

It is clear from the data given before that nearly 2500 tribals (according to 1971 census report) live in the Durgapur notified area (covering Durgapur Steel City and township). According to notified record, in the Durgapur notified area there is no village especially meant for tribals as such. But Durgapur Steel Plant authorities have declared 13 villages (as referred to before)
As the researcher did a prolonged field-work in these 13 villages, he had been able to get a grasp of their way of life, in tradition and change.

It appears that most of the tribals of these villages belong to Santhal group and the maximum number of tribal population of Durgapur belongs to this ethnic group (99% Santhals out of the total population).

Besides these 13 villages, there are some areas where tribals have settled down. These villages or pockets are skirted around the urban area of Durgapur. Of these, three villages namely, Gopal Math, Jhandabab and Ara are worth mentioning. In these three villages a large number of tribals live and most of them are Santhals. Each of these three villages has some special features in respect of the composition of tribal population.

Gopal Math is known as resettlement area i.e. a colony newly settled. The said area
is composed of the tribals who were displaced from their homes and were rehabilitated after the construction of the Durgapur Steel Plant. The majority of the population are caste Hindus.

The population at Jhandaband consists of these tribals who were displaced from their own land for the newly built township of Durgapur. Most of the tribals of this area are the employees of the Durgapur Steel Plant.

Area is away from the Durgapur city centre. Almost all the residents of this village have been rehabilitated here on compensatory grounds by the Durgapur Steel Plant Authorities. From the religious as well as social stand-points, Ara is an important area. Here is a locality especially populated by Christian tribals. An exclusively tribal Christian Church is also there. The tribal Christian Church apart, the activities of the Christian missionaries are not, truly speaking, inconsequential in this village.
The three villages mentioned above are of immense importance in respect of a model survey.

Three villages have been chosen as the foci of the microstudy by the present researcher. In them are included Bhiringi (a tribal village), one village of the Durgapur Steel Plant and Jhandabad.

THE WAY OF LIFE OF THE TRIBALS AT DURGAPUR NOTIFIED AREA AUTHORITY

The tribals of Durgapur are mainly Santals. They could be found in rural and suburban areas of Durgapur in their own milieu.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste or tribe</th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SANTAL</td>
<td>All villages</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUNDA</td>
<td>Jandabad, Jangal Mahal</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KORA</td>
<td>Kamalpur</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORACN</td>
<td>Durgapur Steel Plant Quarter</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCOHA</td>
<td>Gopalmath</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From the table given above, it appears that the Santals definitely have an edge over other tribals of Durgapur, especially from the numerical aspect. The sixteen villages known as tribal pockets have the maximum number of tribal population. There is a negligible quantum of Kora population in Kamalpur village. Mundas in small quantity are found around some areas of Jhandabad.

Only three persons of the Oraon Community have been identified. All of them have come from outside the State. They are J. Tigga, Assistant Manager, Durgapur Steel Plant, Mrs. D. Ekka, Senior Medical Officer, Durgapur Steel Plant and Mr. E. Bara, Assistant Manager, Durgapur Steel Plant.

From an interview with an Executive Officer of the Durgapur Steel Plant. It transpired that they never mix with local tribals nor do they maintain any social relation with them.
TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATION

Tribals of Durgapur mainly go on foot to cover any distance, short or long. They are usually foot-happy people and they can walk kilometres after kilometres. To cover long distance outside their area, they go by bus but bus service in this area is not at all satisfactory. The tribals, however, unlike others, often prefer going on foot to waiting for hours patiently in queues. Rickshaws, Auto-Rickshaws, taxis are also available, but the tribals usually avoid them, mostly on financial grounds.

At present, there is a growing tendency among the tribals to have bicycles. Young tribals who earn a little and who have to go a long distance to attend to his duties regularly, are very keen on it. Though there are two Rail Stations namely Durgapur and Waria nearby, but they are of very little help to the tribals. They use these two stations only when they want to go to their distant native place at long intervals.
Tribals collecting crops and money for a local festival with chorus.

( Photo taken by the Researcher )

Bhiringi 'Kalibari' - a sacred temple to local people as well as to the tribals. (Photo: Researcher)

Researcher himself found interviewing rural tribal women bringing drinking water, from long distance with Kalasi on their heads.

( Photo taken by a tribal youth )
SOURCES OF DRINKING WATER

Scarcity of drinking water is the common problem of the entire region of Durgapur. To tribals, the availability of drinking water is a more acute problem though in most of the tribal villages deep wells are the only source of their potable water. Apart from this, in the villages of Ara, Gopalmath, Kamalpur, Raturia, Bonagram, Parulia, Faridpur there are tubewells. In some villages, supply of Tap Water for drinking and other purposes is there.

Water from nearby rivers and tanks are, ordinarily, used for cooking and other purposes. Drinking water is mainly supplied by the Durgapur Steel Plant, Durgapur Project Limited, Damodar Valley Corporation. The tribals of Gopalmath, Bhiringi and Jhandabad enjoy the benefit of this supply. They do not know how to make water fit for drinking. To the tribal, water is a symbol of purity and an object of their traditional reverence.
It is evident that though the tribals of Durgapur, right up to the time of the field-work of the present researcher, have old traditional belief in spirit, they do not entertain it deeply in heart. Among the village tribals, its influence is diminishing now. The reason is not far to seek. With changes in the socio-economic ambience, their belief system, too, has undergone some important, if not radical, changes. Now, they do not solely depend on hunting for their subsistence and do not have belief in jungle gods (PATS).

Most tribal women go to hospitals in cases of their ailments and, especially, during their confinement and childbirth. Their belief in "ACRAE BONGA" forest deities is gradually wearing out.

The religion of the tribals is almost alike that of the lower caste Hindus. Even the influence of the Vaisnavites of Hindu religion is there. It is interesting to note
1. A Catholic Church specially for tribals at Ara.
2. An important Catholic Church at City Centre of Durgapur.
that they abstain from taking fish, meat, eggs or liquor and are purely vegetarians and this group is found in Bhiringi area. These traits are something unusual in case of the tribal population of our country.

All these extraordinary and unusual features were hauled up by the researcher during his field survey in January 1983.

**CHURCH**

The network of the activities of the Christian missionaries is extremely sprawled and has considerable influence on the tribals of Durgapur. Consequently, a group of tribals has accepted christianity. Unfortunately, even after their accepting christianity, the tribals are still being discriminated against. They are looked upon as outcaste or pariah. But they just could not care less and they go to church situated at the city-centre of Durgapur without any sense of inferiority. Besides church, there are a few other churches, one small and two big with
prayer-halls in them.

The village is an exception in this respect. There is one in Ara Church, there exclusively for the tribals. There are 25 families each comprising of 100 members. Elsewhere, their number comes to about 10 or 15. Both the Roman Catholic and the Protestant Missions have their organizations in Durgapur Area.

M O S Q U E

The influence of Islamic religion on the tribals of Durgapur is negligible, almost nil. Among the general population, the number of Muslims is insignificant. Mosques is a rarity in Durgapur. Only two Mosques could be detected in the tribal area. Elsewhere, there are three small mosques, usually used for prayers by a handful of Muslims.

The influence of other religions on tribals is also meagre. There are however,
EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

The tribal peoples of Durgapur are backward in education. Formerly, the number of literate tribals was less than one per cent. In the 1971 census, it was almost the same though a little better. A growing interest in education was seen after 1971 among the tribal children and their guardians.

Previously, there were primary schools in tribal villages, but most of those schools were closed for dearth of students. The school of Ara is an instance in point. The primary schools of Bamum Ara - a tribal village - are, however, running satisfactorily.

The Durgapur Notified Area Authority area gives a better picture. There are 13 tribal villages in it. Fortunately, each of these 13 villages is having a primary school for the tribal children.

The proposal for setting up Primary
schools for tribals was accepted in 1962. In reality, only 7 schools could be set up in 1971. The statistical data of 1981 show no increase of schools while two schools were closed down for dearth of students. As a result, there are only five primary schools now, of which two schools are running smoothly.

This does not, however, lead one to conclude that, from 1961 to 1981, the rate of literacy among the tribals has been on the decrease. On the contrary, facts show that from 1971 onward the percentage of literacy is improving.

Now, a growing tendency for literacy among the tribals is noticed in every village and in every village, school-going tribal children form a common sight.

It is interesting to note that though the schools meant for tribals are closed now, tribal students, in increasing numbers, are attending schools meant for non-tribals or general institutions.
It is also noticed that they are more interested in the general schools than in those meant especially for them. The reason is simple enough. The general institutions offer a better standard of school and teaching which is proving extremely beneficial to tribals students who are very much in the competitive market today. They appear in the Civil Service Examinations with quotas reserved for them. Schooling in general institutions help them immensely in facing all academic competition.

But the picture of education of the tribal children has its mundane dimension as well.

From the survey undertaken by the researcher, it appeared that in some schools, meant for tribals, the students come for tiffin packets and school dresses at intervals. The teachers, too, come once or twice a month, to receive their monthly salary. Most of the schools are housed in a ramshackled construction in the paddy field.
The standard of both the School Final and the Higher Secondary teaching is extremely déplorable.

On the other hand, the schools within Durgapur township under the Durgapur Steel Plant is quite good. A number of tribal children also read in these schools. Tribal students constitute 3% of the total number of students.

Statistical data given below in this context, (though a general data including tribals) will show the expansion of literacy among general population as well as among the tribals after industrialisation.

**TABLE NO. VI**
Educational Features of Durgapur Steel Plant — at a glance (upto 1983)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total No. of School ... to V</th>
<th>Class I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bengali Medium 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hindi 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English 01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total No. of school ... to X</th>
<th>Class VI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Total No. of school ... to XII - 09
Technical Institution.. 01
GRAND TOTAL : 46
Total No. of Teachers ... 1182
Total No. of Male Teachers ... 352
Total No. of Female Teachers ... 830
*There is no Tribal Teacher in Durgapur Steel Plant School.
Total No. of students ... Class I to V 15600**
- do- ... Class VII to X 15887
- do- ... Class XI to XII 2478
** Percentage of Tribal students 2%

Source: Durgapur Steel Plant.

The data offers information about the Durgapur Steel Plant schools as well as of the Durgapur Notified Area Authority schools. It is to be mentioned, in this connection, that students in West Bengal, are exempted from paying tuition-free upto the Higher
Secondary standard. This expenditure is fully borne by the Government of West Bengal. Similarly, the schools of the Durgapur Steel Plant and the Durgapur Notified Areas are all free studentship schools and the Durgapur Steel Plant meets the expenditure of the schools within the Durgapur Steel Plant area and the teachers are appointed by the Durgapur Steel Plant and are regarded as the employees of the Durgapur Steel Plant with full benefits permissible to Durgapur Steel Plant employees. Also, admission to these schools is reserved for the children of the employees.

MEDICAL INSTITUTION AND HEALTH SERVICES

Not unlike the general body of people, the tribals of the Durgapur areas have a changed life style in many respects. The quantum of the use of modern medicine among the tribals is a pointer in this direction. Of the total number of tribals, at least 40% of them, believe in modern medical treatment while only 20% of them depend on their traditional
treatment. But, their preference for modern medicine remains futile owing to their lack of means to buy costly modern medicine.

For the notified area of Durgapur there is no hospital under Durgapur Notified Area. The common people, including the tribals, depend mainly on the Durgapur Steel Plant, Main Hospital at Bhabha Road for treatment.

"It has about 500 (1984) beds and a strength of 135 Medical Officers, 37 specialists, 527 Para-Medical Staff and 189 Nurses (of them, 5 tribal). This is one of the best hospitals in our country. Besides this, Durgapur Steel Plant has Plant Medical Unit and 5 Zonal Health Centres. Local tribal people also get facilities from here.

**TABLE NO. 7**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medicine</th>
<th>No. of persons (monthly average)</th>
<th>No. of Tribal persons (monthly)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tripple Antigen</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polio</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Most of the tribals have to fall back on their traditional methods of treatment. In cases of ailment, or disease they take recourse to 'Ojha' or Witch-doctor who, through charms and incantations, drive away evil spirits believed to be the cause of their suffering. But, in cases of delivery, Tuberculosis, Cholera or fracture of limbs, or injuries caused by accident they go to hospitals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medicine</th>
<th>No. of persons (monthly average)</th>
<th>No. of Tribal persons (monthly)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Double Antigen</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Pox</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anticholera Vaccine</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAB Ch</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth Registration Certificate</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin 'A' solution</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death Registration Certificate</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supply Nirodh</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DORMITORIES

No trace of traditional dormitories has been found by the researcher during his field work in and around Durgapur.

HOUSES & HOUSE TYPES

In Durgapur, residential buildings are of two types. Private buildings and Quarters provided by the Industrial organizations. These are of a very simple functional type.

In some localities small private buildings are being constructed. But their number is quite negligible.

The tribals mainly live in the small villages huts but those who are the employees of the Durgapur Steel Plant, reside in Quarters provided by the company. But they constitute only 2% of the total number of the residents of the Quarters.

The houses of the tribal villages are of a uniform type. The wall is built of clay and roof is of tiles or leaves. In some cases, the
Space at verandah used as kitchen by tribals.

Live stock of tribals in the part of their room.
roof is of tin and bamboo-fencing serve the purpose of walls.

The houses are mostly of the type of "lean-to" having slanting thatched roofs. The two storied mud-houses of the Santals are seen outside Durgapur (Sargram, a village in the district of Burdwan). At Kamalpur, two two-storied mud houses are seen. Generally, one big room is separated by a fence of bamboo sticks, into two, in most cases, it is partitioned by a clay wall into two. No separate kitchen is provided. They usually cook within the room. Some cook in the covered verandah. They usually use the rooms and verandah for the purpose of poultry, stable for goats and sheep. In some houses there are separate rooms for these purposes. But they come to about 20%. As domestic fuel, 80% of the tribals use fagoots, 20% use Kerosine and only 10% use coal.

LIVESTOCK
There is a natural tendency to domesticate
animals among the local tribals of Durgapur. Even those who reside in Durgapur Steel Plant quarters, try to domesticate goats. In rural areas, however, this is a common feature. But this is not for commercial purposes. Cows and oxen are the main livestock of the tribals depending on agriculture. Apart from these, many of them keep goats, sheep, swans, ducks and buffaloes. They are fond of pork but they hardly keep pigs. Pigs are very littery while the Santals always try to keep their houses spic and span. Naturally, Santals, though fond of pork meat, try to keep pigs away from their immediate surrounding. Pigs are domesticated by the Harijans and other lower castes known as Doms, Chandals and the like, all belonging to the scheduled castes.

FOREST

Durgapur has emerged as an industrial city put of a vast area covered with dense forest. But no trace of forest can be seen
now at Durgapur. To look for forest around Durgapur is now a wild goose chase!

Forests are seen in the areas of JANGAL MAHAL, FARIDPUR, JHANABAD, NADIHA, KAMALPUR and ARA.

Thus the wild forest life of the tribals could be seen no more, and the tribals of Faridpur area had left the locality.

The tribals who were displaced owing to the establishment of the Steel Plant as well as for the township were first rehabilitated here with 5 Kathas of land for each family and each family was given five hundred rupees cash.

They went, at first to Faridpur to settle down there. Faridpur was then under construction. The whole area was then Bulldozers and rollers. This was something new in the life of tribals and was also very upsetting.
This psychological reaction was known from an interview with some fairly old tribals of over eighties and some employed in the works and some employed in Durgapur Steel Plant. Depended as they did on forests, they cannot sever all connections with it.

There are, of course, some nearby areas of forest or jungles (which are not reserved forests) where from they collect fruits, wood for fuel and eatable animals for their sustenance.

**HUNTING**

Previously, the tribals of Durgapur used to live by hunting, but, of late, they have almost forgotten hunting as the forests are rapidly done away with owing to industrialisation. Still, they have not totally given up hunting. Very often, on occasions, they hunt birds, wild boars, hares. But this hunting is not a regular feature as their daily round but only casual. They eat rats and snakes as delicious.
MARKETING CENTRE

In each village there is one or two small grocer's shops which cater for the locality. Besides, in the tribal villages of Bhiringi, Gopalmath and Jhandabad there is bi-weekly hats or markets on Wednesday and Sundays. The main markets are at Benachiti and the City Centre from where they procure other provisions not available in the villages markets.

SOCIAL FESTIVALS

The principal characteristics of tribal culture are their festivals. Songs and dances are signs of festive jubilations. These Santal festivals are very colourful and gay. Since almost all the tribals of Durgapur are Santals, festive occasions are very frequent here. But the festivals of the tribals of the interior forest and rural areas are much more colourful than those in the urban areas. Industrialization and urbanization have told not only on their habitat but also on their psyche. Urban tribals now try to shy away the exuberance of the festive occasions found among the forest tribals. It
is heartening that in the villages which are mainly composed of tribals, the old, traditional festivals are still in vogue. A vivid picture of them is being given here.

**LEADERSHIP IN TRIBAL COMMUNITY**

In most of the tribal villages of Durgapur the influence of the tribal village leaders is not that keen as before, especially within the short distance from the industrial areas of Bhiringi, Gopalmath which are example of it. Still the tribals have allegiance to their 'Sardars' and 'Mukhiyas' and can in no way disobey their advice.

**FAMILY LIFE**

The tribals of Durgapur in extended families under the headship of 'Patria potestas'. In some cases, father, mother or unmarried sisters also live with them. Each family is composed of, mainly, from five to eight members. The members of the family are always found obedient to their elders. They follow the practice of tribal
endogamy and clan exogamy. Any body violating this time-old and age-old practice, faces severe punishment leading to even excommunication.

**TABLE NO.VIII**

Average size of family different ethnic groups in Durgapur Notified Area Authority

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Non-scheduled</th>
<th>Scheduled</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Durgapur Notified Area Authority</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The tendency of all tribal youths and girls is normally to seek matches of the same community. Still some exceptions to this rigidity is very often seen.

There are a few cases where some tribal girls have married non-tribal youths and youths of the scheduled castes. The percentage of these cases, though negligible, is interesting in respect of their growing tendency to come out of their traditional cocoon.

From an interview with an M.B.B.S. doctor
of the tribal group, it has been found that he is not willing marry a girl other than Santal. The reason of his intention, he explained, as the cultural gap which ultimately stands in the way of happy conjugal life. He desired a Santal girl as his wife, who had passed the H.S. Examination or who had, at least, read up to Class VIII standard. The case, no doubt, throws some light on the inferiority complex of the qualified tribals who still are not above the misgivings about cultural gap or the contrast of the social status and heritage.

It is better to say in this context that though the Caste Hindus are much liberal in their outlook in respect of inter-class marriage, marriages with tribal girls or youths are always frowned upon.

A statistical data of the inter caste marriage is given below.
TABLE NO. IX
Percentage distribution of respondents by attitude towards Inter-caste Marriage and Origin of State

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Origin of State</th>
<th>Inter-caste marriage accept</th>
<th>Inter-caste marriage reject</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>48.0</td>
<td>52.00</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>70.00</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled Tribe</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>73.00</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Urban Complex (Page : 140)

OWNERSHIP OF LAND

Before the onset of industrialization in the area, the tribals of Durgapur never felt the dearth of farming land. Each tribal family had 5 bighas of land, on average, for cultivation. But after the erection of the Durgapur Steel Plant and township, the tribals who were displaced from their hearth and home, were given 5 Kathas of land per family in the neighbouring areas as compensation.

The sad irony is that the major portion of
the land of tribals in the villages have either been encroached upon, unlawfully, or, owing to their illiteracy and helplessness, been registered in others' names by the land racketeers. This exploitation is still going on. At least 30% per cent of the total land has been transferred to others through exploitations. Besides, the tribal tillers have their own land, measuring from 5 bighas to 6 bighas each. Such tribals constitute 30% of the total number of tribals. The number of tribals living in the house covering an area of only one Katha is 20% and the tribals living in the slum areas is 15% and the tribals living in the company quarters, rented house, or thatched cottage is 5% of the total tribals.

OCCUPATION

Most of the tribals living in the urban areas of Durgapur are labourers, daily wage earners or workers of the contractor firms and they come to 80%. Of the remaining 20%, 10% of tribals have gone far away and live on cultivation
and 10% of them are engaged in domestic and Sunday job as servants, maid-servants, porters to eke out their existence.

In rural areas, the percentage of cultivators, daily wagers and labourers are 60%, 20% and 10% respectively.

In the urban area of Durgapur the percentage of women labourers is 30% of the total labourers and in rural areas it is 5%.

**INCOME**

The tribals of Durgapur area can be classed into two income groups namely higher and lower income groups.

The employees of Durgapur Steel Plant and other factories belong to higher income group. The agricultural labours and peasants belong to lower income group.

The difference of income between them is substantial. The average monthly income varies from Rs. 300/- to Rs. 1500/-. Besides, it is
noticed that the number of the members of the family belonging to higher income group is very often less than that of lower income group.

DEMOGRAPHIC PATTERN AND THE WAY OF LIFE OF A PECULIAR TRIBAL COMMUNITY IN BHIRINGI

Of the tribals of Durgapur, a peculiar type is seen at Bauripara locality of Bhiringi, quite close to Durgapur Steel Plant area. They are from the Santal group but they have given up their traditional religion and profess Vaisnava cult and are vegetarians. They also avoid liquor. This is a very uncommon feature as tribals in India as well as in other countries of the world are mostly consumers of non-veg items and liquor. The Vaisnava Santals of Bhiringi is a rare and peculiar group of tribals who abstain from taking fish, meat and wine.

This came as a shock, a surprise, too, to the present researcher who, in 1980, in the course of his field came across this "new species", 
Sanatan Kisku and his wife - oldest Santal couple of Vaisnava faith, wearing a garland of 'Tulasi' - a new discovery of abiding interest.

Photo: The Researcher.
known to social scientists and anthropologists of India were also ignorant of the situation although they had been at their tribals researches for a pretty long time. Consequently, the find of the present researcher was highly applauded by them.

COLONY AS A PART OF OLD VILLAGE OF BHIRINGI

Bhiringi is a village within the notified area of Durgapur and mouja of Bhiringi. According to the Government Gazetteer, it is stated as a village but it is fairly an urban area. The original name was Bauripara, inhabited mostly by the 'Bauris' of the scheduled caste group. It is on the Nachan Road and is within two kilometres of the Durgapur Steel Plant Administrative Buildings and is very near to Benachity, the nerve-centre of the Durgapur Steel town. On the Nachan Road stands the oldest and biggest Higher Secondary Co-Education School known as Bhiringi School. The narrow lane in front of the school leads to Bauripara. There is one slum like tribal colony known as 'Bhiringi Adibasi Colony' surrounded by big houses on all sides. Here is
a big playground. The entrance to the colony is by one side of the playground.

ORIGIN AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF VAISNAVA OF BHIRINGI

The Vaisnava tribals of Bhiringi are not the native inhabitants of Bhiringi. They came here, originally, from East Pakistan, now known as Bangladesh. They hail from the district of Faridpur of Bangladesh.

Just after the Independence of India and within two or three years of the partition of the country and following communal riot and unrest, they left their home. They were stripped of their farm land. Some time in between 1953-54 they reached the border of Durgapur and began earning their livelihood by any means. The constructional work of Damodar Valley Corporation was then going on in full swing and for spade work, a large number of unskilled labourers were recruited. At that time there was no dearth of work for daily wagers. But within a few years when the work was completed they were out of
employment in the natural way.

Formerly, at Durgapur, there was a class of Zaminders and rich families of higher caste Hindus. They required these people, hardy and laborious as they are, for their services. They took them to Durgapur and provided them with land to settle.

Work they were engaged in, include the clearing of jungles, cultivation of land and keeping watch on them. At first, their daily wage ranged from four annas to six annas or from 25 paisa to 37 paisa of the present denomination. Later on, it was raised to 62 paisa (10 annas) and one rupee under contractors. Most of them got land in Durgapur Steel Plant area. They had their house from the so-called Babus at Bhiringi.

Thereafter started the implementation of the project of Durgapur Steel Plant. Employment was available. The people found opportunity for their jobs to earn their livelihood. But they lost their own land as Durgapur Steel Plant requisitioned many plots of land, many villages, forests and tilling land.
But the colony of the Vaisnav Santals though in the notified area remained as before. Many areas of Bhiringi were taken for new township and industries, but their area remained unaffected.

Why are they Vaisnavas?

The tribals under study and their forefathers came in touch with the Vaisnavas when they were in Bangladesh. They were attracted by the 'Kirtanas' (devotional songs) and dances of the Vaisnavas and became converted to Vaisnavism. Some of the inhabitants accepted conversion to Vaisnavism a generation back. They got attracted to Vaisnavism because of its catholicity and broadness.

Vaisnavism is a sect of Hinduism. The main tenet of this religion is non-violence, love for all, equality and the constant chanting of 'Nama', for elevation of the sect. They worship Lord Sri Krishna and Shri Radha - The emblem of eternal love. The Vaisnavas do not take fish, meat, egg, liquor, tobacco and other supposedly intoxicants.
DEMOGRAPHIC PATTERN

The number of Vaisnava Santals living in the mouja of Bhiringi, within the jurisdiction of Durgapur Notified Area, does not appear separately in the documents of the Government of West Bengal. Their number is subsumed in that Tribal Community in general.

The number is, according to report available, 100 approximately. There are 20 or 22 families in all. During the field survey, the present researcher counted the tribal vaisnavas of all the rooms one by one and has come to know the names of the twenty families. So, the number, as recorded in the part of 'Tribal Community', is thus corroborated.

TABLE NO. X

Distribution of Population by age and sex in Vaisnava Santals of Bhiringi

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Household</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>0-15</th>
<th>16-30</th>
<th>31-50</th>
<th>Above 50</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of the Household of Vaisnava Santal by age & sex (according to the year 1983)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sanatan Kisku</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Iswar Hembram</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Dasarath Tudu</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Kalipada Hembram</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Jayadev Hembram</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Sachindranath Hembram</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Krishnakanta Hembram</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Provas Murmu</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Subhas Murmu</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Malati Tudu</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Amela</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Mayna Tudu</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Kumudini Mandi</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Binodini Tudu</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Dulali Murmu</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Gunodhar Tudu</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Gugal Kishore Maji</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Rupchand Mandi</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Ramcharan Murmu</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From the table given above, it appears that in that colony there are 40 females for 60 males. Sex ratio is not proportionate. Moreover, birth rate is not much. The maximum age ranges from 31 to 70 years. This means that those came as children are now grown up and their children are of 0-15 age group which shows that the rate of child death is much below the average. The total number of houses is 20 only and the total population is 100; so the average number of members in each family is five.

AGE OF MARRIAGE AND PERIOD OF MARRIAGE

The age of marriage of the Santal Vaisnava Community is like that of other tribals.

For illustration a statistical data is given below:
TABLE NO. XI

AGE AT MARRIAGE AND PERIOD OF MARRIAGE OF VAISNAVA SANTAL IN BHIRINGI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No. of persons</th>
<th>No. of persons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>whose age at marriage. Marriage, for marriages taken place before 10 years</td>
<td>0 16 21 26 Above</td>
<td>0 16 21 26 Above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>whose age at marriage, for marriages taken place during 10 years</td>
<td>to to to 30</td>
<td>to to to 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 20 25 30</td>
<td>15 20 25 30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Male  - 10 8 2 - 6 10 4 -
Female 10 10 - - 6 12 2 - -

From the table it appears that ten years earlier all the girls got married within twenty years of their age, and the Males got married between 16 and 20 years. There is no case of marriage before one has not attained his or her 15th year. 50% percent of the girls got married within 0-15 years and 50% of the males got married within 21-25 years i.e. 8 persons get married between 26 and 30 years of age. No case of marriage over that age is reportedly found.

Ten years later, the picture of marriage of this community is completely different. Under
the impact of industrialization, the age for marriage of their sons and daughters is now somewhat relaxed. From the Table given above it appears that, earlier, most of the girls (12 only) married were within the 16–20 age group.

MARRIAGE

Though the Santals of Bhiringi are of vaisnava faith, they follow the traditional customs in respect of their marriage. Their marriage is settled within their own community. In tribal marriages, bride-price, instead of dowry is the usual practice. Marriage is settled through negotiation made by the elders. Brides are mostly from Purulia. After marriage, the brides wear bangles of conchshell and put vermillion on the forehead, as in Hindu marriages. On such occasions, marriage feasts are arranged with elaborate servings of food and local drinks. Among them, widow marriage, divorce are also in practice though examples of these are not very common. As the tribals get in touch with
the Hindu community they tend to emulate Hindu customs and practices. As a mark of this Sanskritization process, a la M.N. Srinivas, the tribals under survey, also evinced some penchant for Hindu sanskritised practices among them. This is the reason of their shying away from widow marriage and divorce. After marriage both the bridegroom and the bride live in the family of the bride. It is also to be noted here that if the bridegroom is unable to pay the required bride-price, he feels obliged to stay in his in-law's house and work for them and thus make up the gap of the bride-price due and they had already paid.

But in case of shortage of accommodation, they move elsewhere. The amount of dowry ranges from Rs. 3/- to Rs. 300/- along with cattle. Of late, Rupees three or Rupees twenty one are given in all cases and cattle are not given.

LANGUAGE

The town tribals are becoming, by and large,
bi-lingual. They speak Bengali in their day-to-day conversation. Among themselves they talk in Santhali more than in Bengali. They have no skill either of reading or writing Santhali language. They have no knowledge of Alchiki, the Santhali script, either. It may be referred to here that Alchiki is now the medium of reading, writing and teaching in the primary schools in Santali-dominated areas. Efforts are being made to write text-books in Alchiki upto the School Final Examination level.

EDUCATION

Now the tribals are increasingly getting interested in formal schooling. Formerly, they had no interest in literacy and formal schooling. I have met some old tribals who have read upto the standard of Class II or Class III, but they constitute only 3%. Some tribals displaced from East Pakistan (Now Bangladesh) have settled down here. They know some Arabic and Persian which they learnt from the Muslim teachers there.
there.

At present, the rate of literacy of this colony is quite satisfactory. 30% of the total population are now literate.

The survey undertaken by the researcher reveals that, of the hundred inhabitants of this colony, only five have read up to the standard of Class VIII, only 15 have read up to Class V and the rest have read up to Class III.

Of the 13 boys and girls in the colony, 10 are school-going children. The medium of teaching is Bengali. Except Bengali, they have no knowledge of other scripts, though their mother tongue is not Bengali but Santhali. All the children read in the local primary school or in the School of Bhiringi.

**OCCUPATION**

For obvious reasons, the tribals of this place are mostly wage labourers. Some, say 50% are employed in the industries. Some, say 25% of the total population work under contractors and
and 15% of them are daily wagers and the rest
10% do menial work. Begging is not notice, for
Santals are usually against beggary.

**FAMILY STRUCTURE**

The structure of the family is mainly of
the joint type and all the members of the family
have allegiance to the elders or the head of the
family.

A statistical data on the basis of number
and relationship is given below.

**TABLE NO. XII**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of families</td>
<td>- 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families with father, mother, husband, wife, and children</td>
<td>- 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of families with parents, husband, wife, children</td>
<td>- 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and husband's brothers &amp; sisters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of families with parents, husband, wife, children</td>
<td>- 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and wife's sisters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Total number of families with husband, wife, sons & daughters - 3

Single - 2

Husband and wife - 1

20

FAMILY PLANNING

The present family planning Project does not at all interest them and they do not know much about it. The married women normally desire sexual union with their husbands during the safe period, when there is no possibility of conception. They usually avoid intercourse at day time.

MEDICINE

Of late, these tribals have accepted modern medical treatment. They move to the Durgapur Steel Plant Hospital, Health Centre, Durgapur Notified Authority Area Health Centre for their treatment. 99% cases of delivery are done in the hospitals.
FOOD AND FOOD HABIT

The tribals have changed their food habits. For the first ten years, beginning from 1952 to 1962, rice was their staple food. They used to take it four times a day and with rice they used to eat potato and ordinary fruits. From 1962 to 1972, their stable food was rice for two principal meals and for tiffins and breakfast they changed over to loaf of bread and 'Mudi' (fried rice). From 1972 right up till now, they take rice during day time as their principal diet, and at night their principal diet is chapati. Besides bread, their food includes potato, cabbage, pumpkin (Kumro), brinjal, lady's finger as vegetables. Formerly, they did not use spices. Now they use spices. Since they are vaisnavas they do not take fish, meat or egg and do not touch wine (Hadiva— a tribal home brew iron soaked rice and/or mohua flower). These have been replaced by sweets as sweetmeat shops are now abounding in remote villages of India. Thanks to the Operation Flood!
DRESS AND MAKE UP

The tribals usually put on Bengali dresses. 75% of tribal women wear sarees and blouses. Only 10% of them use undergarment especially when they are out to travel or during festive occasions. They also use toilet soap, but not regularly. The tribal men wear dhoties, shirts, trousers; the tribal women also wear glass bangles as ornaments. Use of cosmetics is quite widespread among them.

HOUSE & HOUSE TYPE OF VAISNAV VANTAL

The houses of the tribals of this place take after those of the urban colonies. The walls are of clay and the roof is either of Tinsheets or tiles. A big room is separated into two by a partition. They cook in verandahs. The rooms are always kept neat and clean. Each house is closely adjacent to the other. There is no vacant space in between the two. This is not at all healthy for them.
Picture shows that image of goddess of fortune and a picture of Lord Chaitanya are found in a room of Vaisnava tribal.

Tribals of Vaisnava faith found singing to the praise of God to the accompaniment of 'Khola' and 'Kartala'.
RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS

The most important festival of the Santal Tribals is 'SOHARA'. As Vaisnavas, they also observe 'JHULAN', 'DOLYATRA', 'RAASPURNIMA' of the Hindus. Almost in every house, pictures of 'Radha and Krishna' are seen. They wear rosary of holy basil (Tulsi Plant). In two or three houses are seen idols of Radha and Krishna, measuring to a height from 2 feet to 4 feet. At the time of 'RASJATRA' new idols are brought and the old idols are immersed in the nearby tanks. Besides, they observe 'Laxmi Puja' and 'Kali Puja' of the Hindus. They attend the festival of Durgapuja of the Hindus. They sing to the glories of God.

RECREATION

Pastime and recreation of the tribals of this area of Durgapur include dancing, singing folk songs and kirtana to the accompaniment of Khol and Harmonium. Almost 40% of the total tribal population have harmonium. Besides, very often they go to the pictures and watch Jatra.
performances. Most of their group have, today, radios and they listen to plays and songs as broadcast by the Radio. Almost all tribals listen to programmes meant for the Santals.

50% of the tribals like to mix with the Bengalee babus though this is not always welcome.

**POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS**

The tribals here are not involved in party politics. But it is not true that they do not have political consciousness. Recent literature on tribal politics in India shows that the irredentism among tribals is on the upswing and their involvement in politics, too, is of no mean order. The Santals in the present study have not shown, however, any significant inclination towards practical politics except their involvement in 'things' trade union. As employees 20% of them belongs to trade unions. They understand somewhat of politics because of their acquaintance with the fellow workers. They have some inklings of political news as well. They know the names of the political parties like the Communist Party of India (Marxist), Congress, Congress(I), Communist
Party of India and also know the name of the party in power. They, however, frankly admit that they join the political party only to have opportunity for betterment in jobs. In election they cast votes in favour of the party which promises to give them something, though very often they get disillusioned after the electoral fight is over.

Here in this place there is no supporter of Jharkhanda Party (a political party of tribals) nor do they get involved in it. But they want a separate state for tribals. This is what I have come to know from an intimate interview with them. They are extremely exploited by the racketeers and brokers - both commercial and political. They usually do not join any movement but they firmly believe that without any movement no right can ever be achieved.

All of them have welcomed industrialisation despite many problems. They want to have cultivation side by side. The women are very hardy and independent.
A view of Talpukur - on the way to Jhandabad Colony at Majhipara.

Tribal girls of Jhandabad tribal pocket found knitting.

Tribal boys girls singing and dancing to the accompaniment of 'Madala' and 'Nagra' (musical instrument of tribal tradition).