The Maikal Plateau is an important region of the Deccan Plateau. It lies in the north-eastern part of the North Deccan and forms a part of the upper catchment of the Narmada Basin. Physiographically it has been classed as an eastern segment of the Satpura Range (Map 1.1). A greater part of the Maikal plateau lies in the Mandla district of the Madhya Pradesh, and is surrounded by Jabalpur district on the north-west, Shahdol district on the north-east, Bilaspur and Rajnandgaon on the south-east, Balaghat on the south, and Seoni district on the south-west. Its extends from 22°12' to 23°22' north latitude and from 80°18' to 81°51' east longitude. The region is a mountainous tract. It is endowed with rich forests. The study area is administratively divided into five tahsils viz. Mandla, Dindori, Niwas, Shahpura and Nainpur tahsils. (Map 1.2)

PHYSIOGRAPHY

Physiographically, Maikal Plateau is divided into a number of table-lands and valleys which tend to increase in height from west to east. One ascends a hill to come across a plateau locally known as 'Dadar plain', comprising narrow and confined valleys.

Mandla lies on a plateau where a number of hill ranges extend from the main Maikal hills from Amarkantak. The whole area can be

Niwas-Shahpura plateau includes the area North of the Narmada river. The land here gradually rises from west to east into hill range of Banda pass which is a part of the Sukumgarh (1049 Mts). This hill range forms a watershed between river Silgi which flows in the south-west direction to meet Narmada and Chhoti Mahanadi a tributary of the Johilla river.

The Dindori plains in the south of Narmada river consist of a narrow elongated plain area known locally as 'Khulauti'. The main river of this tract flows from south to north to join Narmada. Other streams include Machhrar, Chakrar, Seoni and Turar.

South of Dindori plains, lies the southern highland extending from Amarkantak in the East to Budner river in the west. The main hills are Amarkantak (1100 mts.), Pakri Sondha (1115 mts.), Khannat (816 mts.), Mangarh (981.15 Mts.), Nigwanigarh (949.75 mts.), Daldala (802.2 mts.).

Ghughari Bichhia Plateau between Budner and Banjar river is cut up into deep valleys and carries some of the rich sal forests of the region. The Jagmandal hill lies north of this plateau.

In the south-west region of the district lies the Plain of Haveli. It includes Banjar river valley area, plateau of Thamhar and Chakrar river. In this region black, kavar, moor, yellow & sihora soils are commonly found. This region is agriculturally very rich.
The general elevation of the Maikal Plateau varies from 403.5 mts. above sea level at Cheolia (where the Narmada turns into Jabalpur) to 1036.2 mts. the top of an isolated hill near Barbaspur into the east of Dindori Tahsil. The general elevation, however with exception of the banks of the Narmada and Banjar rivers and the Haweli and plateau tracts ranges from 540 mts to 720 mts. The height of Maharajpur a superb of Mandla across the river is 443.70 mts and that of the fort at Mandla 446.10 mts of the table lands the plateau and Haweli on the west is between 420 mts. and 450 mts. Ghughari Bichhia or the central plateau varies from 540 to 630 mts. while the entrance upper valleys of the Narmada have an average elevation of 765 mt chauradadar plateau the most eastern part of the regions. Average over 900 mts. the north and north-western parts comprising the mountainous mokas and Bijegao country also lie high averaging about 600 mts except in the vicinity of the Narmada and Gour rivers.

DRAINAGE PATTERN

The study region consists of the streams of the Upper Narmada Basin in the southern parts and those of the Son System in the northern parts. The Narmada river is the main river of the region. The river flows through rocky hills and is not navigable in this area. The important tributaries of Narmada include Budner (Halon, Phen & Kukarkanala), Kharmer, Machrar, Chakrar, Turar, Seoni, Banjar (Surpan, Matiari) and Thanwar etc. Important river have originated from this region.
CLIMATE

Climate has a direct influence on the health of the people. It may provide favourable or adverse environmental condition. There is a direct relationship between climate and mental vitality of man (Mishra 1970). Climate also plays an important role in governing the regional diversification of agriculture, food habits and health conditions in the present are of study. In not and dry climates, female mortality rate is higher than male, as against more male deaths in most other places (Banerjee 1967). There are three climatic seasons viz:

1. The summer season (March to June)
2. The Winter season (November to February)
3. The rainy season (July to October)

Cold winter, hot summer and medium rains are the main characteristics of the region. The average annual temperature recorded in the area is about 24° C. The above annual rainfall as per the records as about 1325.2 mms.

Temperature:

The temperature start rising in the month of March till June. The highest temperature has been recorded in the month of May 39.74° C and the Lowest temperature has been recorded in the month of February 9.45° C.

The entire dry summer season is marked by very hot days. The local winds called 'Loo' increases its hotness particularly in the month's of
May and June. The pre-monsoon showers slightly reduce the temperature during the middle of June. The month of March and April witness average temperature between 25°C and 28°C; which is comparatively low. That is why the medium hot day is recorded in these months. The summer season presents very unfavourable health condition to the population resulting in many environmental health hazards. Month wise temperature is given in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1

Maikal Plateau: Monthly Temperature and Rainfall

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Months</th>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>Temperature in °C</th>
<th>Rainfall (in mm.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mean daily maximum</td>
<td>Mean daily minimum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td></td>
<td>27.31</td>
<td>10.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td></td>
<td>28.42</td>
<td>9.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td></td>
<td>36.02</td>
<td>14.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td></td>
<td>38.01</td>
<td>18.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td></td>
<td>39.74</td>
<td>19.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td></td>
<td>36.18</td>
<td>20.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td></td>
<td>29.39</td>
<td>24.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td></td>
<td>32.26</td>
<td>25.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td></td>
<td>30.97</td>
<td>23.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td></td>
<td>30.27</td>
<td>22.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td></td>
<td>28.29</td>
<td>18.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td></td>
<td>16.80</td>
<td>14.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual</td>
<td></td>
<td>31.15</td>
<td>18.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rainfall

Rainfall may be considered as a fundamental element of climate from the point of view of health hazard to the people. The rains start in the month of June and continue till the month of September. The highest month of rain are July and August when the rain recorded in Mandla is 609.0 and 296.8 (mms) respectively. June is the month when the rain begin and the rainfall recorded is 127.6 (mms). The lowest month of rain is February when the rain recorded 01.3 (mms). The average annual rainfall is 1325.2 (mms) in 1997. The highest rain in South-East part and the lowest rain in North-West part of the study region. (Map 1.3). Month-wise rainfall is given in Table 1.1.

Humidity

The term atmospheric moisture covers a wide variety of climatic factors. Moisture in vapour or gas form is known as humidity. It is always present in the atmosphere. The amount of moisture which air can hold, depends upon its temperature. Humidity may be expressed as absolute humidity or relative humidity. Absolute humidity is the weight of water vapour in a unit, volume of air and relative humidity is the percentage of moisture present in the air. Humidity has an effect on physical health and comfort but if the relative humidity exceeds 65 per cent the air inside the room becomes sticky and uncomfortable. Relative humidity below 30 per cent is also unpleasant. Month wise relative humidity is given in Table 1.2.
Table 1.2
Maikal Plateau : Average Humidity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Average Relative Humidity(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 1976</td>
<td>50.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>81.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>82.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sepember</td>
<td>76.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>59.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>57.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>59.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1977</td>
<td>59.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>47.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>29.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>28.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source : 1. Director Regional Meteorological Centre, Nagpur.
         2. Director, Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology Pune

Relative humidity is at its maximum volume during the rainy season, i.e. July, August and September. It goes upto 76-83 per cent. Heavy clouds and over cast sky is a regualr feature during the monsoon months. For the rest of the year it is either completely clear or slightly cloudy. The percentage of humidity varies from month to month. It is lowest in the month of March and highest in the month of August. In the summer season relative humidity falls to as low as 20-30 per cent. It falls below 60 per cent soon after the withdrawal of monsoon, but the end of September and the
beginning of December. It remains in the range of 40-60 per cent during the
winter months especially during the afternoon.

SOILS

The disintegration of the rocks results into various type of
soils varying from loose sand, reddish murrum to dark stiff clay loam.

Lateritic murrum is the common soil type of the area found
both in higher plateaus and in lower valleys. In lower places, layers of
decomposed. Trap popularly known as black soil is formed which is
generally shallow except, in lowering areas of the region.

The hillocks are invariably bare. The Lateritic soil as capped
over deccan trap consists of hydrated oxides of aluminium, iron and its
characteristic red colour is due to ferric compounds it.

Bell (1912) has described agricultural soil of Mandla into
following five types:

The Kabar I is bluish black 'Black Cotton' clay having depth
and fertility. This is soft, sticky when wet very hard and heavy when dry. It
is normally free from sand and stones wheat is sown in this type of soil.

The Kabar II is inferior to the 'Kabar I' and is more gritty,
lighter in colour, less in depth with small pebbles & is liable to water
logging.

The 'Mund' or 'Morand' type has also been classified in two
sub-types and it is suitable for wheat and rice both. The Mund -I is a type of
'Black Cotton' soil but it is more gritty and contains small white nodules known as Kanhar. The second soil type, viz the Mund-II is sandi with greater percentage of pehhlar of white lime stone locally known as Kanhar.

The Sahara is a type of soil contains pure sand pale yellow friable and is fit for rice. This is called 'Khisa Sahara' and if having greater part of sand it is called 'Kaitha Sahara' or 'Domatia'.

The Barra type is red or yellow graver and Murrum soil this is the poorest soil unfit for cultivation grass land are located on this type of soil. This is often extraordinary story and rock under lying within 30-40 cm of depth. Large expenses of good level barra are usually found on 'Dadars' the flat tops of hills, it is common type of soil of this region.

The Kachhar type is recent alluvial deposit found all along the banks of river Narmada and its tributaries. This is rich yellow and flaky, left by the river water after the floods in rainy season. This is highly fertile and seasonal vegetables are grown on this.

TRANSPORT

The region is highly dissected hilly area with a dense forest cover. There are very poor transport and communication facilities. The roads are maintained by Public Work Department (P.W.D.), forest department and local bodies have constructed and maintaining the 6417.1 Kms long road out of which 2603.0 Kms metalled road and 3814.0 Kms is unmetalled roads. The Haveli Plain, tahsil and district headquærter are
well connected by road. The length of railway line is only 50 Kms between Nainpur to Mandla fort. Mandla city is connected by road 97 Kms from Jabalpur and 265 Kms from Raipur. Road map of this area is shown (Map 1.4).

VEGETATION

Population of a region responds to the varying distribution of plants and animals. The forest environment often creates negative conditions with respect to population of a region (Ahmed 1963) and hence is one of the fundamental factors in determining the population characteristics of a region.

The physical features and topographical features play an important role in the determination on the type of vegetation. The major portion of the maikal plateau region is covered by moist and dry types of forest. The forest of the region has been classified as tropical dry deciduous forest and moist deciduous forest. The area of highland is characterised by moist deciduous sal type of forest, while the low land area is characterised by dry teak forest. The topographical feature affects the density of vegetation. Mixed type of forest is also characterised in Maikal plateau. The major part of Maikal plateau is covered by sal forest, mostly sal occurs in the area around Dindori tahsil. Towards south little variation is observed and forest is occasionally of it the mixed type particularly in the Niwas tahsil of Mandla district except in the north western parts i.e. Narayanganj and Jagmandal ranges teak occurs but rarely in the rest region is occupied
by the reserved forest and form the important timber growing area of the state. The teak in different stage of development has been very clearly marked on the land sat imagery. A large part of the area is under the grass cover.

The hilly area mainly the main Maikal range and high plateau is covered with thick sal forest. The slope has a very dense vegetation every where. The much gentle foot hill slopes have a thick soil. They are occupied by thick vegetation area around Maikal range while the plain is occupied by sperse vegetation and is under cultivation. The area of Dindori showing a dense vegetation moist type of vegetation is planted in the slope of plateau around Amarkantak vegetation is scanty in both the flat lying terrain and granite areas. It is chiefly characterised by shrubs and grasses, but the hill tops surrounding the area, composed of metasedimentary rocks (chilps) are abodes of thick forest.

The most common species of shrubs terminalia arjuna is growing on the deccan trap, is found in the study area. The common species of vegetation in the Maikal plateau are sal (shorearobusta), Mahua (Madhuaca latifolia) Teak (Tectonia grandis) Sarao (Shorea robuts) Bija (Ipterocarous marsupicum) Tendu (Disopyhres tomantosa) Bel (Aeglana melos), Aeola (phylanthis emblica), Chironji (Buchanarmia latifolia), Banyan (Ficus bengalensis), Mango (Mangiferaingdica) Bamboo (Dendrocalamus striefus). The Laterite that caps the hills and plateau has the common species of butea, carissa and Zizyphus growing on it.
Bamboo, Sal and Mahua trees flourish to form dense forest in southern rugged terrain while Mango and Tendu, Haldu, Khair grow in the northern part. The main crops that are cultivated in the Maikal plateau are rice, kondon, kutki, maize, wheat and pulses.

Besides contributing to the industrial advancement of the state, the vegetation helps in checking soil erosion and conserving the soil fertility it also provides grazing ground for cattle and make the climate more equable and favourable for the rapid growth of agricultural crops of the surrounding plains.

The Fauna

The scanty nature of the forests in this district/Maikal plateau makes it an suitable habitual for large animals. Kanha National Park, one among the major national parks is situated in the Mandla district of M.P. It was established as a wild life sanctuary in 1933. In 1955 it was declared as a National Park. Due to rapidly decreasing population of Indian Tiger, Kanha was grouped under the Tiger Project in 1973. The pack covers an area of 1945 Square kilometre. Apart form having a vast forest resource, it harbours a large variety of wild animals, such as Tiger (Felistigris), the Panther (Felis pirdus), wild dog (Kuon-rutilans), Bear (Melinsus ursinus labiatus), the wolf (cauis pallipes); the bison (Bos gaurus), Deer and antelope (Barasinga)

*Game Birds* - Partridge (ortygornis Pondicerinus), the black breasted (coturnix coromandelica), the green pigeon (harrel), the white and blue
pigeon, the mor (pavo cristatus), the ban murgi (gallus gallinaceus). Snipe, duck and different kinds of fishes abound in the rivers and tanks.

CULTURAL SETTINGS

The hill and forest environment in the Maikal plateau favours development of a rich tribal and rural cultural habitat in this region. Cultural environment is one of the main determinants in the occurrence of many health hazards, culture means values, habits, customs tradition and other routine practices of human being of an area, which is generally associated with personal hygiene, outlook on health and disease. Man's living system is closely related with the physical and cultural environment. He is also a product of it and it is he himself who produces his cultural environment in many ways. The cultural environment is generally transmitted from generation to generation and plays an important role in the activities of man. The modes of life are quite different in each cultural group. Their living standards and other habits are generally determined by their respective traditions. The level of environment deterioration corresponds to the social heritage in terms of standard of living education, development and organisation of the community health agencies.

THE PEOPLE

The landforms also affect the distribution and patterns of settlement. The facilities of transport also affect the settlement. The area having a fertile soil, suitable source of drinking water, river, tank and wells
over the Maikal plateau where good deposits of natural resources are found is characterised by dense settlement while the tops of plateau scarps steeps where soil is not fertile is an example of less settlements area. The town of Maikal Plateau like Mandla, has an urban population while the Bajag, KarANJIYA, Samnapur or Maikal Plateau are characterised by rural population. Due to inaccessibility of the area and dense cover of forests the population in this hilly tract is vary sparse. The district of Mandla which covers the largest part of Maikal Plateau shows an average population density of 97 persons per Square kilometre.

The region supports more than 12.91 lakhs inhabitants, of whom about 92.33 per cent live in the rural areas indicating a predominantly rural character of the people in the region. More than sixty five per cent of the population consists of scheduled tribes and scheduled caste. The following tribes are most commonly found in the hilly region of the Amarkantak Plateau, Agariya, Baiga, Bhumia, Gond, Panika, Majhi etc. Among the higher classes there are numerous castes such as Patel (Kurmi), Pansari, Sonar/Rajput, Dhimar, Kachhi, Sahu, Yadav (Ahir), Lohar, Baniya and Brahmins of Hindu and small minority of Mohammedans. The Patel (Kurmi) Rajput, Kachhi and Brahmins are the cultivating communities while Baniyas are traditional traders of the region. The Dhimars are the fisherman. The scheduled tribes and scheduled castes form the bulk of the agricultural workers. But some of them are cultivators also.
The predominant dialect in the region is the 'Gondi' a branch of Gondwana/Gond S.T. About 88.4 per cent of the total population is Hindu. Other religious communities include small sections of the Mohammedans, Jains, Sikhs and Christians. The Mohammandans constitute about 1.23 per cent of the total population.

Agriculture is the main way of life with more than 90 per cent of the rural workers engaged in agricultural activities except for the Dolomite in Bamhani Banjar, bauxite mining in Amarkantak, Udaypur and Maneri (Niwas) industrial activity in the agriculture is totally dependent on monsoon. Hence failure of monsoons effects the agriculture because the land that they till is not sufficient to feed them.

Gross cropped area in the region is 565871 hectares and net area sown is 473331 hectares in the year 1995-96. Percentage of total irrigated area to gross cropped area is 3.55 per cent. Main crops grown in this region are mainy rice, wheat, maize and gram. Details on area sown production and average yield of major crops in the year 1995-96 are furnished below:

Table - 1.3

Maikal Plateau : Production and Average Yield of Major Crops 1995-96

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crops</th>
<th>Area (in Hectare)</th>
<th>Production (in 000' M.T.)</th>
<th>Average (Kg. Per Hectare)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wheat</td>
<td>84432</td>
<td>64.17</td>
<td>760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>167471</td>
<td>135.65</td>
<td>810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maize</td>
<td>34101</td>
<td>52.52</td>
<td>1540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gram</td>
<td>16156</td>
<td>14.05</td>
<td>870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jowar</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>940</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A greater segment of the population is illiterate (69.89 per cent). The male literacy is about 42.08 per cent, while the female literacy is only 18.01 per cent. There are about 2 literate males per literate female indicating a gap between the two. There are some 2,275 schools (Primary, Middle and High School), covering an average area of 5.83 kilometres or a population of 568 persons. There are 4577 teacher (Primary to High School. There are about 2 teacher per school. There are two BTI, one Plytechnic College, one P.G. College and seven Govt. Degree Colleges in this region.

The medical institutions are also small in Mandla there are 64 allopathic medical institutions each of them serving an average area of 207 Square kilometre or an average population of 20,177 persons. There are 38 Ayurvedic Homyopaithy Unani Medical institution in this area. There are 17 family planning centres each of them serving an average of 76 Square kilometre only one main hospital is in District Mandla.

The males out number the females. There are 988 females per thousand males. Which is higher than the average for the state 932 and the country 929 both. The workers constitute 49.74 percent of the population, indicating that dependency ratio is very high of the total workers about 90 percent are agricultural workers indicating the predominantly agricultural character of the population in the region.

FOOD HABITS

Mandla district is situated in the central part of the Madhya Pradesh. Not only in this region but also in the whole of central part of
India rice is the main crop. Survey of this region also shows that rice is the main source of food as per the data of the Hand Book Mandla, 1995-96. Out of the total cultivated land rice was harvested on 41.9 per cent, wheat on 19.83 per cent, Maize 16.23 per cent, others only 8.79 per cent and pulses only on 13.24 per cent. Hence it is clear that rice, wheat and maize are the main crops of this region. Besides these two crops, kodon kutki is also used in small quantity. As far as pulses are concerned Urad, Gram, Tuar, Mung, and lentil are also used. Financially sound persons use fat, vegetables and milk with food, but poor persons mainly use rice, wheat, pulses and cheep vegetables. Poor persons or tribes mainly use Pej (Maize & Wheat) with salt or seasonal vegetables. Fish is an important food item because of the abundance of rivers and ponds in this region and meat is also an important food item because of the dense forest area with plenty of wild animals.

The skin colour of Indo-dravedian varies from light brown to dark brown. Hair are usually black and slightly wauq, occasionally tend towards curly, head hair are plentiful, while body and face hair are sparse to medium. Head is dolichocephalic (C.I. 73.76); but forehead is usually rounded, Nose is mesorrhine (N.I. Less than 77); some what depressed at the root; usually straight in profile; bridge is moderately high; tip is of medium thickness. Face is narrow and of medium length; with little or no prognathism; borw ridges are moderately developed. The Indo-Dravidians are a medium statured people, having average height 164 cm or 5'4". They are concentrated in South and Central India. The Indo-Dravidians are
predominantly cancasoid. Among them, an admixture of classic Mediterranean and Australoid (Veddoid) is seen.

THE SCHEDULED CASTES

The scheduled castes population has registered a growth of 29.14 per cent during the decade 1971-81 while the scheduled Tribes have recorded a rise of only 18.40 per cent over the same period and the scheduled castes population has registered a growth of 26.30 per cent during the decade 1981-91 while the scheduled tribes have recorded a rise of only 25.14 per cent over the same periods. The growth of population among the scheduled castes appears to be slightly higher than the normal growth-rate. The scheduled castes found in this district are mostly Mahar Mehra, Chamar, Basor, Dom or Dumar and Mehtar Bhangi out of the scheduled castes population living in this district, their density is highest in Niwas-Shahpura Tahsil and least in Dindori tahsil. In the case of scheduled tribes, again Niwas - Shahpura tahsil is having highest concentration with 68.92 per cent of them living and it followed by Dindori and Mandla - Nainpur tahsils with 64.85 per cent and 53.01 per cent respectively.

As per the 1991 census the population of schedule castes is 5.25 per cent of total population of Mandla district in Maikal plateau : out of which 89.98 per cent is in rural areas and 10.02 per cent in Urban areas. The distribution of the schedule in rural areas in Mandla district. Tahsil wise are - 30.76 per cent in Mandla Tahsil, 25.88 per cent in Dindori, 21.36
per cent in Shahpura, 12.95 per cent in Niwas and 9.55 per cent in Nainpur Tahsils. In the urban areas maximum population is 44.95 per cent in Nainpur; 40.65 per cent in Mandla; 07.95 per cent in Dindori and 6.46 per cent in Shahpura Tahsil. The distribution of male and females among schedule castes are 49.73 per cent and 50.27 per cent respectively in the throughout Mandla district.

As per the village wise population data the median value is more than 1.96 per cent in 30.21 per cent villages and 17.68 per cent villages have median value less than 1.96 per cent. In the 52.11 per cent village do not have any schedule caste population. The distribution of schedule caste population in Mandla district (Maikal Plateau) is shown in Map 1.5.

**Mahar or Mehra**

There are 33453 Mehra, out of which 17037 males and 16416 females. This is the most numerous scheduled caste in the district making 60.3 per cent of the total scheduled castes population. The caste is concentrated in the rural areas to the extent of 95.4 per cent of its population. Among tahsils it shows concentration in the north-western Niwas tahsil, which contains almost half of the Mahar population of the district. In rural areas of Mandla, Dindori and Shahpura tahsil it is more or less evenly distributed.

Educationally, the Mehra seem to be better than other scheduled caste. Their literacy proportion is 18 per cent in rural areas
which includes a components of 5.44 per cent those who have passed primary school or higher examination. In urban areas. The Mehra claim a literacy per centage of about 51 per cent. Economically they mostly depend on agriculture, having 92 per cent of their rural working force.

The Basor or Bansphor

The caste derives its name from bans in Hindi meaning Bamboo, phor meaning breakers. Thus one who breaks the Bamboos or the occupational caste of workers in bamboos. Their total population in the district is about 490 persons. About 245 male and 245 females and they mostly live in rural areas. The sex ratio of this caste is 1000 females per thousand males. Their main occupation is cultivation but only few persons are engage in household industry and making baskets and other bamboo articles. The literacy among basor is about 18.77 per cent. The women literacy is very low (13.47 per cent).

The Chamars

There are 1026 chamars out of which 512 males and 514 females. This caste includes Chamari, Bairwa, Mochi or Raidas. These scheduled castes essentially represent the traditional tanners and flayers of hides who also make articles of leather and live, mostly in rural areas. They mostly work as cultivators or agricultural labourers, how only a few persons are engaged in house hold industry works, which consists chiefly of making and repairing leather articles. Some persons among the chamars
play the traditional occupation of tanning and currying of hides. The percentage of total literacy among chamars is very low.

**Dom or Dumar**

This caste makes 2.1 per cent of the district's scheduled castes population, living in rural areas to the extent of 72 per cent. There are 338 dom out of which about 169 males and 169 females. This caste includes - Dumar, Dome, Domar and Doris etc. Economy principally depends on household industry which includes 55 per cent of the workers in rural areas. The nature of their household industry is not ascertainable from the data before us or from available published records.

**Mehtar, Balmiki or Bhangi**

There are 664 Mehtars, out of which 345 male and 319 female. This caste accounts for 1.9 per cent of the scheduled castes, and unlike other casted is concentrated in urban areas to the extent, roughly of four-fifths of its total population. This is because the urban areas stand in greater need to the services scavenging and sweeping - performed by the caste. In rural areas, 94 per cent of the workers are in 'other services' mostly scavenging and sweeping, 4.6 per cent in construction and 1.5 per cent in agricultural labour.

**THE SCHEDULE TRIBES**

As per the 1991 census, the total population of the schedule Tribes is 7,83,601, out of which males 390702 and females are 392899.
Comparatively females are more than males. About 98.48 per cent scheduled Tribes population reside in rural area and about 1.52 per cent in urban areas. In the mandla district population is dominated by the schedule tribes (60.68 per cent) of total population. The distribution of Schedule Tribes Population Tahsil wise is as - 34.11 per cent in Mandla; 29.24 per cent in Dindori, 22.02 per cent is Niwas; 07.38 per cent in Shahpura and 07.25 per cent in Nainpur Tahsil. In the Shahpura Tahsil females are dominating over male and in Dindori Tahsil Males dominating over females. The actual sex ratio is different Tahsils have been shown in Table 7.10.

In the urban areas maximum population of Schedule Tribe is 39.94 per cent resides in Mandla; 23.49 in Dindori, 20.19 in Shahpura and 16.38 per cent in Nainpur Tahsils.

It is very clear from map No. 1.6 that about 60.63 per cent. Villages have median value is more than 71.36 per cent; and in 17.26 per cent villages have median value ranging from 49.95 per cent to 60.60 per cent, in 18.20 per cent village have less than 49.94 per cent and in 3.91 per cent village do not have any schedule Tribe Population. It is very clear from the map No. 1.6 that these scheduled tribe population are living in the forest, hilly and plateau terrains.

**Gond**

This is numerically the most predominant scheduled tribe in the district, constituting 91 per cent of its total scheduled tribes population.
This percentage, however, included component proportions of at least some of the forty sub-tribes which have been bracketed with Gonds in the scheduled tribes list of the district. This bracketing seems to be erroneous at least in case of some of the sub-tribes like Agaria, who appear to be ethnically different from the Gonds. Of the total Gond population of the State, Mandla contributes 13.6 per cent, and is thus a stronghold of the tribes. There are historical reasons for this concentration of the tribe in the district, because along with the Garha country in Jabalpur, Mandla kings. Partly owing to this the Gond are more civilised than other forest tribes, among whom they have a better social status. There are 526902 Gonds out of which 259517 males and 267385 females. There literacy proportion is 7.4 per cent in rural areas which includes a components of 16.3 per cent those who have passed primary school or higher examination. The sex ratio of this caste is 1030 females per thousand males. There traditional occupation is cultivation, and they are referred to as 'Kisan' (Meaning Cultivator) by other tribes in the district. They range from substantial land holders, ex zamindars and fendatory chiefs to ordinary cultivators. Gond economy is dominated over - whelmingly by agriculture, which absorbs 97 per cent of their working force.

**Baiga**

Contributing 7.5 per cent to the scheduled tribal population of the district, the Baiga form the second most numerous tribe in the district. The tribe has been studied by numerous anthropologists and sociologists,
resulting in the contribution of interesting mono graphs on the tribe which may with great personal advantage be studied by officers posted to Mandla district. In Mandla district, the sub castes of the tribe most frequently met with are the Bhumia, Binjhwar, Mudia, Bharotia and Bharia-Baiga. The Bhumia sub-caste of the Baigas live in Maikal hills in the east of the district. Ward had described them as 'finer specimens of humanity', than their brethren in other parts of the district. Mudia Baiga, so known because of their practice to share the forehead, inhabit mostly the Niwas tahsil and adjoining Parts of Mandla tahsil, while the Binjhwars who represent the most acculturated section of the tribe live in parts of Niwas and Mandla tahsils adjoining Jabalpur tahsil. The wilder section of the Baigas, particularly the Bharotias and the Bhumia-Baigas living in and around the Baiga-chak.

There are 44843 Baigas out of which 22580 and 22263 females. The sex ratio of this caste is 986 females per thousand males. The Baigas are very backward in education having a literacy per centage of only 4.7 per cent. Even of these, as many as 86.6 per cent are merely literates without any educational levels i.e. those whom have not passed even the primary school level examination. 13.3 per cent have passed primary school examinations. While the proportion of matriculates and above has the negligable dimensions of 7 in 10,000. Economically. They are also like Gonds, dependent pre ponderantly on agriculture, mostly being cultivators. Other services, 'house hold industry', and mining' etc. Employ respectively 1.8 per cent, 1.4 per cent and 1.0 per cent of the workers.The
Baigas traditionally pursue the household industry of making bamboo artifacts.

Majhi

They are the most primitive scheduled Tribes in mandla district. They live in bank of River, Tank and lake etc. They are mainly fisherman and Boatsman (Boatsman). There are 254 Majhi out of which 127 male and 127 female.
REFERENCES


