SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION
CHAPTER-XII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In the first few Chapters of this dissertation I have been mainly concerned with the task of fixing the Kora in space and time and also of ascertaining the ethnic base-line of the acculturated Kora of Pargannah Barabhum. In the rest of the Chapters, I have attempted to present the processes of interaction between the Kora and the surrounding tribal and Hindu groups. In the absence of reliable historical records, the process of ethnic integration has been pursued mainly on the basis of contemporary observations. In this concluding Chapter, I shall try to summarize the whole matter with the expectation that this will extend our understanding of the process of caste-formation through absorption of tribal groups.

There is a great deal of controversy regarding the ethnic and linguistic affiliation and the history of migration of the Kora which has already been discussed in Chapter-III. The authorities of different census operations since the time of Risley, were somewhat perplexed in placing the Kora either in the tribal or in the caste category. Risley classified them as a (racially) Dravidian tribe, probably an off-shoot from the Munda of Ranchi, who specialised in earthworks (Risley: 1891, 506-507). S.C.Roy tried to trace their origin from the Craons of Chotonagpur and had mentioned that the 'Modi' like the name 'Kora is related to their skill in earthworkings (Roy: 1915, 10). Coupland described them as a tribe or caste of earthworkers and referred them to be the representative of the Kolarian race (Coupland: 1911, 81). According to Coupland, the original Kora dialect is quite akin to the Mundari language in all essential points. Grierson also accepts the Mundari affiliation of the Kora language (Grierson:
1931 (67), p.107). Das has recently remarked that the surname 'Kora' probably stands for a generic name, signifying a number of tribals with the occupation of earth-digging (Das: 1964, 20).

In Barabhum we find them at present within the fold of the Hindu social system. They regard themselves as a Hindu caste and are so accepted by the standard Hindu castes in the region. In Barabhum, the Kora speak the common local dialect, Kanbhuia thar, a corrupt form of Bengali. The Kora are regarded as specialists in earthworking. They also work as agricultural labourers and are experts in the digging of tanks. They themselves claim it to be their caste britti or traditional occupation. They also assert that some other castes like the Santal, Bauri and the Orang Mudi are trying to encroach upon their traditional calling. They supply good number of labourers to the agriculturists of the area, although they own small plots of cultivable land and kitchen garden. As mentioned earlier, they enjoy some preference over other groups of day-labourers in digging tanks and embankments. Moreover, the specific ritualistic role of bandh-biha (marriage of newly excavated tanks) is assigned to them which is beyond the reach of day-labourers of other castes. The Kora tradition tells us that they had come from Nagpur side i.e. Chotonagpur. The Kora migration into these territory probably took place around the middle of 18th Century. Physically the Kora stands very closely to other Proto-Australoid groups living in Barabhum.

In order to find out any clue for the understanding of the real ethnic and linguistic affiliation of the Kora and to verify the comments made by Rasley, Roy and Grierson, discussed above, a sample survey on this particular group outside Barabhum has been made at four different places, namely, Mudi-dih (P.S. Jhalsda, Dist. Purulia, West Bengal), Chandi-dih (P.S. Sili, Dist. Ranchi, Bihar), Khezurdanga (P.S. Bolpur, Dist. Birbhum, West Bengal) and Keundi (P.S. Jhargram, Dist. Midnapore, West Bengal). From a close look into the contents of the culture of the Kora of Barabhum Fargannah, the tribal origin of the group becomes obvious in
spite of their pronounced Hinduization and adoption of local Indo-Aryan tongue. This has been discussed in detail in Chapter-III.

On the basis of comparative study of the Kora of Chandi-dih (Ranchi), Jhalda (Purulia), Khezurdanga (Birbhum) and Keundi (Midnapore), it has been conclusively proved that though the Kora are known by different names at different places they are derived from a single stock belonging to Mundari linguistic family. The Kora of Santal Pargannah (Bihar) and adjacent district of Birbhum (West Bengal) have retained their original mother tongue, Kora *Mudi thar* while the major population of them who are found to be scattered in various districts of West Bengal and Bihar have almost given up their original dialect. The sample collected by the present author from Khezurdanga (Aliabagh), P.S. Bolpur, District Birbhum, West Bengal, gives us ample scope to believe in the correctness of Grierson's analysis of Kora *Mudi thar* which he classified as a dialect within the 'Kherwari' group, an important branch of 'Mundari' under the great 'Austro-Asiatic' family of language. Moreover, after comparing the 'Kora' sample with that of 'Santali' (collected from the same place) it can be concluded that the former is more closely connected with 'Mundari' as compared to 'Santali'. Finally, the custom of stone-burial practised by the Kora of Chandi-dih (Ranchi) provokes us to suspect strongly the Mundari origin of this group which was suggested by Risley about 80 years ago. The Santal or the Oraon do not practise stone-burial like the Munda (Banerjee: 1962a). Moreover, the surname 'Mura' or 'Mura Mudi' used by the Kora of Chandi-dih (Ranchi) and Mudi-dih (Jhalda, Purulia) also points towards their Mundari origin. From a comparative study of the Kora in Jhalda, Ranchi and Birbhum, it is obvious that whereas the Kora in most of these areas are land-owning farmers, it is only in Barabhum that they have specialised in the britti of earthwork. It is significant that the Kora living in these areas outside Barabhum do not have the right of performing the ritual act of bandh-biha which is connected to all newly excavated tanks (for details, see Chapter-IX).
As far as it could be ascertained that the bulk of the Kora migration into Barabhum took place around the middle or the last quarter of 18th Century i.e. about one hundred and fifty to two hundred years ago.

When they appeared in the demographic scene of Pargannah Barabhum, they found it to be the estate of the powerful chieftain, Barabhum Raj, probably of the Bhumij descent (Sinha: 1962). This hilly tract covering an area of 634 square miles was quite inaccessible and was overspread with dense forest and was inhabited mainly by the tribal groups like the dominant Bhumij, and the Kharia, Pahira together with a few lower artisan castes. Then came the Kora Mudi, Orang Mudi, Santal, Mahato and other artisan groups subsequently. The rapid exposure to the outside world since 1866 brought a large influx of the immigrant population from Bengal, Bihar and Crissa.

At the time of our over-all survey of Barabhum Pargannah during 1957-60, we found it to contain 576 villages. About 64 castes live in the Pargannah with a total population of 244,733. Various ethnic groups, starting from the level of the hunting and food-gathering tribal groups like the Kharia, Pahira to sacerdotal castes like the Brahmin and the Vaisnava are living here. The numerical dominance is shared by the following groups: the Mahato (30%), Santal (16%) and the Bhumij (15%). The Kora possess a small numerical strength of 2677 people and form 1.09% of the total population of the Pargannah and are comparable in number to the ritually significant groups like the Brahmin (3.44%), Vaisnava (1.72%), Napit (1.79%) and the Dhoba (.07%). All these castes and tribes, including the Kora Mudi, have been sharing 'a single land tenure system, an economic system primarily based on cultivation of rice, crafts and weekly markets, a more or less agreed system of regional power hierarchy and caste ranking, gods, festivals and a local dialect' for more than a Century (Sinha, et al: 1961).

Though a fragmentary section of the Kora own small plots of cultivable lands and still less number of them are substantial
cultivators, the majority of them are landless labourers in Barabhum (it might be true if we consider the entire Kora population of West Bengal and Bihar). In Barabhum, as mentioned earlier, they are specialists in earthworking and in digging tanks, embankments etc. Under this circumstance, they are forced to scattered in different villages and to live interspersed among the other wealthier groups as a subservient caste. Constant source of securing job is absolutely vital for this labourering class who lead a more or less 'hand-to-mouth' existence mainly as wage-earners. It holds probably true for those who live partially on agriculture.

From the earlier reports on Barabhum and from the local situation, we can easily surmise that the major earning of this estate of Barabhum used to come from agriculture. The substantial portion of the best quality of cultivable lands was under the khas possession of the Raja (chief). Even now, a large portion of the best quality land in the khas taraf of Gortoli is under the direct possession of the lineage of the former chief. It was customary for the cultivators of this Pargannah to give one day's free labour in the khas land of the chief with their own ploughs. Thus in order to raise the income of the estate, the chief of Barabhum was largely bent upon successful outturn from the agricultural fields. As this success, in its turn, was dependant upon successful irrigation, a large number of artificial irrigation dams, tanks were constructed. Very old artificial irrigation dams of this area some of which are still there, provide us with the definite proof of it. In making a village-to village survey in 49 villages covering an area of 28.2 square miles around Ragma we get an average figure of 7 artificial tanks (of various categories) per village and 12 such irrigation dams per square mile.

From these, we can have an idea about the immense importance, the local cultivators attached to the artificial irrigation dams in order to stabilize their agricultural income.

It appears that the Kora got the monopoly over bandh-excavating service only during the time of late Raja Ramkanai Singh Deo Bahadur. The generous Raja also offered small plots of land to those Kora families, who did not have any land under
their possession and asked them to settle in Gortoli taraf. Even now, it is customary on the part of the cultivators of this Pargannah to call at least three Kora labourers to offer the ceremonial opening strokes with a new pick and hoe in digging up any tank. Each of them gets a new set of pick and hoe, a cloth, and a basket for the ceremonial opening of the excavation of a tank. If they continue the digging work they shall get the usual remuneration for their manual labour. We have already mentioned about the preferential treatment which the Kora earthworkers get from the local cultivators.

Thus it is at the initiative of the Hindu Raja of Barabhum, that the landless Kora labourers got somewhat economic security and thereby they found a place in the Hindu productive and social system. The Kora of Barabhum have thus been integrated with the Hindu social system under unique set of circumstances.

In Barabhum, the Kora constitute only a minor fraction of the village population. In a village of average size, they form only 1/10th or 1/12th of its population and on an average we find maximum 6-10 families of the Kora living in a multi-ethnic village of Barabhum. The 570 Kora families with a population of 2,677 constitute about 1.09% of the total population of Barabhum Pargannah. They are scatteredly distributed in 65 villages. That is, in every 9th village we meet the Kora. In these villages, the average number of the Kora families and their population per village comes to 8 and 41 respectively; and in the context of entire Pargannah it will come slightly below than 1 family and 4 persons per village. Density of Kora population in Barabhum per square mile is 4.2 as against the real density of general population of 386 per square mile.

The small size of Kora settlements in Barabhum may be due to the fact that while agricultural economy encourages a larger population to live together in a somewhat compact manner (which is the case with the Kora of Ranchi and Birbhum), the wage-earners like the Kora of Barabhum, who are constantly in search
of manual jobs, cannot live in a compact fashion. They are widely dispersed in different villages.

The first thing to impress upon us about the nature of inter-relationship between the Kora and the other groups of the region is that the Kora numerically form a minority community. They belong to the class of poor farmers and landless labourers and have very little influence on the regional power structure. Although they do not usually form a village all by themselves, in the various multi-ethnic villages they tend to live somewhat segregated. The interaction situation therefore place the Kora in a multi-ethnic environment on the Pargannah as well as in the village level where the Bhumij and the Mahato form the dominant castes, seeking association with the Hindu upper castes, while they themselves are essentially a subordinate minority community.

The major economic role of the Kora in the region is as landless labourers or as poor cultivators who have specialised in digging tanks. They exchange the agricultural products from the small plots they own for local craft products such as basketry, pottery, smithy and weaving. Like the other castes in the region, the Kora are in close economic relation with a number of groups including the Brahmin and many other established Hindu castes for payment of revenue for their cultivable lands, securing day-labour to earn their major livelihood, sending their boys to the contractual service of the Bagal, taking loan in order to tide over the occasional crisis, giving their lands in share-cropping. At the weekly markets, the Kora meet with a number of castes for brisk economic transactions. These markets also provide opportunities for social interaction with the various regional castes.

Beside living with other castes in the same village and developing economic relations of varied kinds with different castes in the region, they have also varied modes of social relationship with the Hindu castes. Their ceremonial friendship tie them with a number of castes including some upper caste Hindus. Their occasional contacts with the wandering sadhus and the Vaisnava singers
may also be considered as the important channels of Hindu-Kora social interaction. In communal festivals in and outside the village including the Hindu regional festivals, the Kora meet many other castes and tribes.

It may be mentioned here that though the service of Brahmin priest, Vaisnava preceptor, Barber, Washerman, Midwife is extended to the Kora of Barabhum and its neighbourhood, the Kora of Chandidih (Ranchi), Khezurdanga (Birbhum), Keundi (Jhargram) do not have the access to the service of the above Hindu ritual specialists. The Chandidih Mura have only the Vaisnava preceptor and according to the advice of the Gosein they put on sacred thread (jonau) at the time of their marriage and from then they use it constantly. They have no food and drink restrictions.

In the field of political interaction, the most important aspect to note is that the Kora remain as a subservient group surrounded by a number of dominating castes and they share very little in the regional power structure. But they meet the other regional castes and tribes on the same ground in the matter of showing loyalty to the local chieftain. We may mention here that the Kora of Barabhum meet the members of other castes through their common participation in the council of the elders or the Panchayet organization on village level. Even then, their main attachment lies with their own caste council. It is at the initiative of this caste council that the Kora aspire for a higher social status in the regional caste hierarchy.

Though the Kora are found to be involved in various nature of interactions with the different castes, they rate the different groups at different points of socio-cultural distance based upon their feeling of intimacy and frequency of contacts. Starting with the closest groups, they may be classed as follows:- (i) Orang Mudi, Santal, Bhumij, Bauri, Silkata Hari, various artisan groups, Barber, Washerman, Midwife (Sahis) and the like; (ii) Mahato,
Gorain (oil pressers), Gop (milkmen); (iii) Brahmin, Vaisnava; (iv) 'Bengali' castes (like Kayastha, Kshatriya, Vaidya, and 'floating' population of the Bengalees who come here through services), 'Bihari' castes (Hindi speakers), Baniya, Marwari and the like.

In order to ascertain the regional pattern of caste-ranking and the socio-ritual status of the Kora in the ethnic background of Barabhum, a total number of 5 different categories of castes were interviewed regarding their notion about the relative rank of the 20 castes in the neighbourhood of Ragma. Let us focus on the notion of the Brahmin only with regard to the status of the Kora. Our Brahmin respondents rate the Kora slightly above the level of 'untouchables' and also of the Orang Mudi, Santal and the Sahis but below the ranks of nine other castes including the Brahmin, Kshatriya, Moira (sweetmeat sellers), Goala (milkmen), Gorain (oil pressers), Beney (sellers of spices and grocery articles) and the Vaisnava. The Mahato and the Bhumij, according to our respondents occupy a bit higher status than that of the Kora. Among the untouchable castes, they include such groups like the Dhoba (washermen), Silkata Hari (manufacturers of stone mortar and pestle), Kamar (blacksmiths), Luchi (leather workers), Tanti (weavers) and the Bagal (herdsmen). When asked, our respondents put the following rationals in favour of the Kora. The Kora have the right of performing the ritual act of jal-chalan (i.e. bandh-biha) and have the access to the service of Hindu ritual specialists which the Santal, Orang Mudi, Sahis and the untouchables do not have. They even go further to add that these groups along with the Kora, Mahato and the Bhumij were formerly ranked very low in social order actually within the fold of untouchables. But they have managed to come out of it by leaving some 'unclean' social customs and food-habits which are looked down upon by the higher Hindu castes (for details see Chapter-X).

The Kora rate themselves higher than the Brahmin's notion of their status in the regional caste-ranking. They try to rationalize their evidently low position by inverting the status of the
well-established and relatively prosperous Hindu groups like the Moira (sweetmeat sellers) and the Gandho Banik (sellers of spices and grocery materials). Such rationalization in terms of inverse order of reality of stratification is just an effort to attain a make-belief status. A similar craving for high status by the inversion of hierarchy has also been marked in the case of the Kharia vis-a-vis the Brahmin in the area (Banerjee: 1959).

From the above description, it will be apparent that the Kora have been drawn well within the Hindu system in terms of social interaction. Now, let us also examine the sphere of Religion. Hinduism has left its successful impression upon the Kora religious beliefs and rituals. Yet the Kora have not assimilated the core of upper caste pattern of Hinduism and they retain elements of their original tribal religion. They participate in the Hindu festivals of the region while they also maintain some festivals exclusively of their own. Along with worshipping the gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon the Kora retain their traditional deities of hills, sacred grove and forests. Although idolatry and anthropomorphism, typical traits of Hinduism have gained acceptance among the Kora in the form of participation in the Hindu festivals, these are altogether absent in their own way of worshipping of the traditional tribal deities. The Kora worship the deities of physical nature without associating them with the emblems of superior moral qualities, another characteristic feature of Hindu religion. The doctrine of Karma is apparently absent among them. Their religious pursuits are mainly guided by the concern of getting happiness in life. To a Kora, magico-religious rites have purely utilitarian considerations. Although the average Kora express their vagueness and controversy with regard to the seat, form and function of the Hindu gods and goddesses, yet a few of them, who gained knowledge of the Hindu religion through their contact with the higher Hindu castes, try to conceptualize them in a reinterpreted way. The moral connotation of supernaturalism is found to be only feebly present among the Kora. The supernaturally oriented moral life supported by the puritanical concept of ascetism has no value to an average Kora, as yet. They, however, mention the names of some of the Hindu gods and goddesses
along with their own tribal deities during worship. In Sarhul festival, they invoke the names Bhagaban and Dharitri Mai at first and then the names of the different deities and spirits of their own. Fowl sacrifice and offering of rice-beer to the traditional deities together with the utterance of non-sanskritic mantras (spell) are still found among the Kora.

Though the Kora have the access of the ritual service of the Brahmin priest in their sradh or post-funeral rites, they are refused to take active role in the ritual part of the Hindu festivals initiated by the high caste Hindus. They are not allowed to come near to the platform of the deity. They are also aware that their mere touch may pollute the whole affair. They subscribe in these communal festivals and give their active service mainly in form of manual labour.

Although the corporate status mobility movements of the Kora of Pargannah Barabhum have not been sponsored by powerful land-holding groups as among the Bhumij (Sinha: 1959), the Mahato (Dasgupta: 1962) or the Santal (Banerjee et al: 1959b), yet they have made some positive moves in this direction. It was first initiated by a few literates of the group and they formed a reformistic society like Adim Mudi Swajatiya Samaj Sanskar Panchayet around 1345 B.S. i.e. about 30 years back. This localized movement soon took a larger shape in the form of Desh Panchayet mobility movements initiated by a more organized and larger body of Mudi Jatiya Manbhum and Hazaribagh Jela Desh Panchayet around 1349-50 B.S. Here also the literate section of the tribe took the leadership. This bigger reformistic society had chalked a detailed programme to condemn all social customs which are not 'good' in the eyes of the Hindu and to recommend a number of Hindu socio-cultural traits in the form of written resolutions taken in different caste-meetings. They went further to punish the offenders who would violate the specified codes of the reformistic society. In this matter the caste-leaders received the physical and economical assistance and active support of the Rajas (chieftains) of Barabhum and Kashipur. With the disintegration of feudal estates of Barabhum
and Kashipur, the chieftains have lost the former control over the people, which in turn, not allowing them to give that much of attention on the internal affairs of individual groups in the area. According to the caste-leaders, this above important political change along with the non-cooperative attitudes of the fellowmen are responsible to restrict the activities of their reformistic society mainly on papers in recent years. Moreover, their lack of political and economic control in the area as well as their dispersedly distributed very small numerical strength may also be responsible for the half-hearted appeal of such social movements, initiated by the literate section of the tribe who have comparatively closer contact of the theology and world-view of the upper caste Hindus (for details see Chapter-XI).

It is interesting to note that the social mobility movement which was first initiated by the Mudas of Barabhum, Manbhum, Purulia had some reflection on the Mudas of other places. Father of Jhalu Mura (Chandi-dih, Ranchi), and father of Jagannath Kora (Khezurdanga, Birbhum) along with a few villagers attended only one meeting held at Hazaribag (exact time and date cannot be ascertained from their versions) sponsored by "Manbhum-Hazaribagh Adim Mudi Samaj". They have heard the name of Kalipada Mudi of Krishnanagar (Barabhum). Jagannath Kora of Birbhum, an Arts graduate from Visva-Bharati University, now working as Food Supply Inspector, Mollarpur Sub-Division, Birbhum, admits that Manbhum Kora are much advanced than the people of this area. He along with a few under-graduate and Matriculate Kora is trying hard to drive out evil habits and customs from their Kora Samaj, but they have not yet succeeded much in this affair. The Kora of Chandi-dih and Jhargram are found to be least concerned about conscious mobility movements to raise their social status.

It has also been marked that the literate section of the Kora find it more convenient to leave the bulk of their Kora brethren behind and to aspire for recognition as Hindus. They try to intensify 'sanskritization' in their ways of life. They are found to follow the directives of Samaj Sanskar Panchayet quite rigidly. They give more emphasis in sending their children to school and try to consolidate their economic position by accumu-
lating more land and by doing white collar jobs.

It is also interesting to note that the impact of Sadhus on the life of the Kora has already crept in. After taking sacred initiation (diksha) from the Vaisnava religious preceptor a fraction of the Kora community has started a holy life by refraining themselves from killing of animals and by keeping themselves aloof from all earthly affairs. They sing nam-gan of Lord Hari to get mukti (freedom) from the earthly sufferings. According to the advice of the guru, they practise the art of withholding the discharge of semen at the time of sexual intercourse. A similar act is also followed by the Bhumij disciples as pointed out by Sinha (Sinha: 1961, 1965).

The Kora of Barabhum are not very much concerned about the political situation or the recent political changes of the State of West Bengal. The political opinion of the Kora is entirely guided by the local influential peoples of other castes. They are not very much eager even to cast their votes. To a Kora, it makes no difference if his supported candidate wins in the election contest or not, as it does not help him in any way. Yet, pre-election campaigns of different political parties have made the Kora quite conscious about their importance as voters. A few progressive Kora are found to work for different political parties for certain monetary gain or for some sort of physical benefit.

If one goes to a Kora village of Barabhum at present he can feel a state of fatigue which is quite apparent from their modes of behaviour and their present way of thinking, in spite of their aspirations and mobility movements to achieve a high status in Hindu social system. They have come to realise that even if they get a corporate status in the regional caste hierarchy, that will not help them in their present state of economic hardship. As they have not gained much and they stand on the same footing where they were, prior to such prolonged mobility movements to come within the threshold of Hinduism, they are found in a state of psychological depression and feel fatigued. Moreover, most of them are found to lead a life of 'hand-to-mouth' existence by earning something in exchange of hard manual labour. They get
hardly any spare time to think over such things which do not offer them any material gain.

In spite of their aspiration for higher status in the regional caste-hierarchy, the Kora are somewhat isolated from the sophisticated Hinduism, through their economic backwardness, social segregation and a general lack of direct access to literate Hindu Tradition. Certain symbolic traits of the Kora also do not support their above-mentioned aspiration and pull down their claim to the level of 'very low' castes. Amongst these, mention may be made of social drinking of liquor, taking of chicken, beef, pork, group-dancing by women, widow-remarriage, junior leviration, sororate, non-sanskritic clan-names etc. In fact, they are ranked just above the level of 'lowest' castes of untouchables.

Although the Kora of Barabhum regard themselves as a Hindu caste and are so regarded by the dominant Hindu groups of the region, yet there is scope for viewing the contemporary phase of Kora socio-cultural system in terms of some analytical polar categories distinguishing the tribals from the Hindu castes (Risley: 1915; Bailey: 1960, 1961; Sinha: 1965; Das: 1960). In this connection, we may briefly compare the position of the Kora with a few other groups like the Mahato, Bhumij, Kharia and the Pahira.

Risley had proposed four major processes by which the tribals are drawn towards the Hindu social system. Attention of our readers are hereby drawn to the first and fourth propositions of Risley as we can test them in the context of Barabhum. In the first proposition, Risley had pointed out that the progressive and economically established section in a tribal community try to declare themselves as a caste (preferably as a section of the Rajput) and to establish their aspired social rank by inventing fictitious genealogies with the help of the Brahmin priest. The fourth one runs as follows:— a whole tribe or a larger part of it gradually converted to Hinduism without aban-
From our discussion in this dissertation we can safely say that the Kora satisfy to certain extent the fourth proposition of Risley, mentioned above. They aspire for a higher and stable status in the regional Hindu caste hierarchy. They have taken certain 'sanskritic' rituals as well as participate actively in the worship of the Hindu gods and goddesses. They have also achieved to secure the services of the ritual specialists. Side by side they retain independent social and religious rites as yet, which are quite free from Brahmanical influence. But the Bhumij and the Mahato, the two major land-holding groups of the same area are, in a way, lend support to the first proposition of Risley. Both these groups have organized consorted mobility movements (Ref: Bhumij-Kshatriya (Sinha: 1959) and Kurmi-Kshatriya (Dasgupta: 1959) to secure a stable status within Hinduism abandoning their tribal designation. In this matter, these groups enlist the support of a section of the established castes who are allured by the economic solvency of the former groups. From the point of economy and numerical strength the Kora could not approach the Hindu social system from such a strong homebase. As such, they have followed a distinct trail in the process of integration with the Hindu system in comparison with the Bhumij and the Mahato. Yet, the Kora have the feelings of superiority over the Kharia and the Pahira (food-gatherers and hunters occupying foot-hill 'regions of Dalma) in the matter of integration with the Hindu social system. Both these groups have very feeble contact with Hinduism.

We may now examine the position of the Kora in terms of the two models of 'caste-tribe continuum' developed by Bailey (1960; 1961) and Sinha (1965). Bailey distinguishes the 'segmentary' tribal from the 'organic' caste society restricting his analysis mainly in the fields of economics and politics. According to Bailey, direct access or indirect access to land (achieved through a dependent relationship) by the major population is the main criterion of judging a group closer to 'tribal' or 'caste' poles. Bailey's characterization does not prove suitable if we try to apply this test to the cases of the Kora, Kharia and the Pahira hunters and food-gatherers and also of the Bhumij and the Mahato
of South Manbhum. Bailey's proposition will bring the less Hinduized groups like the hunting and gathering Kharia and the Pahira and the Kora closer to the 'caste' pole as their rights on lands depends largely upon other castes. Conversely, the dominant groups like the Bhumij and the Mahato who have larger and extensive articulation with the Hindu social system come nearer to the tribal pole as the major land-holdings of this area are in their hands. Thus the correlations between (1) the 'tribe' and the direct access to land; (2) 'caste' and indirect right on land achieved through a dependent relationship, do not hold good at least in the cases of the above ethnic groups of South Manbhum. Taking a lead from Bailey, Sinha has given emphasis on systems of social relations in developing his model of continuua. According to him, movement from the tribal pole towards those of the caste and peasantry "involves a progression towards ethnic heterogeneity in social interaction, role specialization, social stratification and in the enlargement and diversification in networks of relationship with civilized centres" (Sinha: 1965). The case of Kora transformation may be pursued as a case of development of a tribal society to the level of Hindu peasantry through the gradual removal of ecological barrier that was there between the forest clad inaccessible hilly tribal zone and rural and urban centres of the Hindus. The Kora live in an area which is by no means ecologically and demographically isolated and homogenous. Their articulation with the larger sphere of Hindu world in economic and social matters also puts them quite far from the tribal pole. In the sphere of cultural system also we find them under the influence of the ethical and partly puritanical theology and world-view of the upper caste Hindus. The wandering Sadhus serve as mediators in percolating the Hindu Concepts to the Kora through their messages. While the above factors place the Kora near the caste pole, their strong 'in group' sentiment, general lack of intra-group stratification, non-puritanical ethic and retainment of a good deal of traditional socio-religious customs bring the Kora near to tribal polarity. By an overall assessment of the present socio-cultural system of the Kora it can be very well said that the Kora as a social group is more inclined towards the caste-pole. Here they tend to belong basically to the category of the lowest castes (see also Das: 1960).
So far we have talked only about the analytical position of the Kora in various models of 'Tribe-Caste Continuum'. We may now discuss the various factors involved in the absorption of the Kora in the Hindu socio-cultural system.

In 1941, Bose presented a series of general propositions on the Hindu mode of tribal absorption (Bose: 1941). According to Bose, the main factor leading to the integration of the tribes in the Hindu social order is the pull of the superior production organization of the Hindu. The Hindu society not only provides the tribals with a higher productive organization but also allows them to secure a bṛttī and offers them certain degree of freedom to retain their own tribal cultural traits. Bose, however, felt that the flow of cultural norm is basically uni-directional, namely, from the superior Hindu level to that of the weaker tribal groups. Moreover, Bose has proposed the following four major indications which may be considered as the positive tests for complete assimilation of a tribal group within the socio-cultural system of the Hindus. Such indications are, firstly, by assigning a specified bṛttī or economic role in the form of a monopoly and thereby offering them a place within Hindu society; secondly, by allocating certain ritual roles to them; thirdly, by offering ritual services to the tribals by Brahmin or Vaisnava priests and by giving a stable status in the Hindu caste hierarchy; and finally, by allowing them to live in close proximity with other higher caste Hindus in an interspersed manner i.e. by lifting up the barrier of physical isolation (gathered from Prof. Bose through the personal communications by the present author during the course of this study).

Though the above model of Bose does provide us with a definite clue to the understanding of tribal integration, yet it cannot explain why all the groups are not equally integrated in the Hindu caste system. The Kora and the Bhumij or the Mahato represent the different stages of assimilation with the Hindu society though they remain in the same geo-ethnic environment and economic setting. But for our purpose, it is very useful in the understanding of the Hindu-Kora intersectional situation as revealed from the following facts. In spite of their relative iso-
lation and very low position in the local caste-hierarchy, the Kora have managed to secure certain ritual roles as found in the case of bandh-biha. Beside this, they are provided with a more or less specified britti of earthwork. It was at the initiative of the local chief, as noted earlier, the Kora of Barabhum, could get the specified britti of earthwork in the form of occupational monopoly and a ritual role of bandh-biha about a hundred years ago. The then chief of Barabhum offered them a tamar-pat (copper plate inscription containing his written sanction) and on the strength of it, the Kora could easily monopolize the occupation of earthwork. Even now, it is customary for the local cultivators to call at least three Kora labourers to offer the ceremonial opening strokes with a new pick and hoe in digging up any irrigation dam. Each of them gets a new set of pick and hoe, a cloth and a basket for the ceremonial opening of the excavation of a tank. We have already mentioned about the preferential treatment the Kora earthworkers get from the local cultivators. Moreover, at present they receive the ritual services of Brahmin priest, Vaisnava preceptor, Barber, Washerman, Midwife (Sahis) etc., although of degraded classes, in all of their rites of passage. There are clear indications that the Hindu religious ideas have penetrated deep into their religion. The Kora also aspire for a corporate status in the regional caste-hierarchy. Of course, they have not succeeded in their latter move for gaining a stable status and they are ranked on an equal footing along with other lowly placed "beef-and-pork-eating" castes of untouchables. But the Kora are found to rate themselves above these groups of untouchables. In this connection they firmly point out that these 'lowest' groups do have access to the services of Barber, Washerman, Vaisnava or the Brahmin priests like them.

It can be said with certain amount of avidity that in nearly all respects discussed above, excepting their relative physical isolation from the higher Hindu castes, the Kora have come within the pale of Hinduism. They regard themselves as a Hindu caste and are accepted by the Standard Hindu Castes in the region. Of course, they are offered a very low place in the regional caste-hierarchy. Moreover, we do find that the Kora are integrated into the local caste system primarily through the process of economic
integration whereby their traditional low productive level merged into the higher mode of production of the Hindus in which they feel some sort of economic security in the form of occupational monopoly. This process of integration has been stabilized by the Hindu ideology of inter-cultural tolerance as revealed from the act of assigning them a specific ritual role *(bandh-biha)* by the Standard Hindu Castes and also from the provisions of the services of Hindu ritual specialists. Thus we find that our data on Hindu-Kora interactions actively support the model of Bose in nearly all respects.

But that is not the whole story. From the model of Bose, we get the idea of uni-directional flow of socio-cultural elements from the higher level of the Hindu to the lower level of the tribals. But if we consider the social field of Barabhum as a whole, we find that a reciprocal flow of cultural elements from the tribal level towards the level of the Hindu is also present. The regional Hindu castes are found to imbibe some of the tribal elements in their own socio-cultural system and it has led towards forming a cultural matrix in which the individuals caste-groups are embedded with their residual cultural characteristics. There may be some difference in the speed of both the flows. It can be very well conceived that the former one will be slightly rapid in contrast to the latter. Our previous observations on different castes and tribes of Barabhum also support this statement. It can be very well said that different castes and tribes of Barabhum, starting from high caste Brahmin to low tribes like the Kora, Santal, Bhumij, have been sharing 'a single land tenure system, an economic system primarily based on cultivation of rice, crafts and weekly markets, a more or less agreed system of regional power hierarchy and caste-ranking, gods, festivals and a local dialect' (Sinha: et al, 1961).

Recently Martin Orans has suggested some interesting propositions in the field of Hindu-tribal integration. He has indicated how the contrary pulls of economic rank path and political rank path may lead the acculturated members of an encysted tribe towards 'emulation-solidarity conflict' with regard to the surrounding dominant Hindu society (Orans: 1965). He has found
that the most acculturated section among the Santal are trying to conceal their pronounced Hinduization by abusing the latter group and to breed a strong 'in-group' solidarity feeling. They have even initiated a series of "nativistic" movements with the aim to produce "a literate and reflective Great Tradition in contrast to the previously conservative Traditional Culture". This new proposition of Orans explains that though the Santal exhibit an advanced stage of acculturation, are able to maintain their own identity as a social group. But this contrary pulls of economic and political rank path as pointed out by Orans are not evident among the Kora of Manbhum. Their dispersed population, smallness in number, humble economic and political status are not at all favouring them to breed a strong 'in-group' political solidarity feeling and to offer positive resistance in Kora-Hindu transformation. They have conceded rank in all counts, but only maintain a residual sentiment for ethnic identity as a socio-cultural group.

Now let us see how far the Kora have participated in the new general trend towards secular class mobility. A recent trend has been marked among the literate section of this tribe who find it more convenient to have the major bulk of their Kora brethren behind and to aspire for recognition as Hindus. They try to intensify 'sanskritization' in their ways of life. They try to follow the codes of their Samaj Sanskar Panchayet quite rigidly. They give more emphasis in sending their boys to the school and to consolidate their economic position by accumulating more land and by doing white collar jobs. Moreover, it is true that among the general mass of the Kora we could notice a recent trend to educate their children but the other important factors like the aspirations to raise their political and economic class is entirely lacking among them. They have accepted their low economic and political position quite ungrudgingly. They are to accuse their ill-fate for their poverty. They do not even feel jealous about the well-established economic groups including the mahato and the Bhumij. So, we find that the Kora are involved in gaining a stable status among the Hindu to some extent by only 'sanskritization' and not by 'secularization' or 'westernization'. Their population size and distribution pattern, economic status, group
solidarity and socio-ritual status in the regional caste-hierarchy are not at all favourable for the latter processes.

Let us sum up our findings in the following lines. The tribal communities of Pargannah Barabhum have been in a state of transformation for a long period and at the time of our observation most of them have come within the fold of the regional Hindu peasantry through centuries of active contact, through a number of institutional arrangements, one of the most important of which is the traditional network of weekly markets. Even then, the nature and the extent of this change varies from tribe to tribe who are living in the same geo-ethnic setting. We have already discussed the case of Kora in the constrastive perspective of the other major tribal groups of the area. The Kora settled here from their home land in Chotonagpur plateau and were interspersed among the dominant Hindu and tribal population with whom they developed systematic dependent economic ties. So, judging from the different angles discussed above, we can say with certain amount of avidity that the Kora as a social group have definitely come within the Hindu social fold. They have moved even further in the line of transformation from the stage when Risley studied them around the last quarter of 18th Century. In spite of some age-old traditional non-sanskritic customs, still retained them, they offer hardly any difference with the lower Hindu castes. Instead of 'secularization' as pointed out earlier, they have started 'sanskritization' in getting into Hindu social fold which is easier for such a poor economic and small dispersed social group. The Kora of Brabhum, though possessing the varied channels of articulation with the social world of the Hindus, retain some independent and typical social and religious rites of their own as yet, which are quite free from the Brahmanical influence.

It is really interesting for us to observe that the Kora who started from a tribal base, got integrated with the Hindu system in a special way. Unlike the Bhumij who dominated the landholdings and became stratified and controlled the core organization of the Brahmanic hierarchy here and subsequently emulated the
Rajput-Kshatriya model, the Kora became converted into a minority labouring lowly ranked caste.

The varied patterns in tribal integration in Barabhum may be classified as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tribe</th>
<th>Pattern Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bhumij</td>
<td>Stratified aristocracy and dominating the core Hindu system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santal</td>
<td>Tribal solidarity plus contrary trend towards Hinduization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kora</td>
<td>Dispersal and absorption as a labouring caste.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kharia and Pahira</td>
<td>Isolation in the foothills and withdrawal.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It thus appears that the Kora pattern of migration and their numerical distribution have been the decisive factors in their unique pattern of integration with the Hindu systems.