

## **Chapter-3**

### **3. Culture and Movement**

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## Chapter-3

### Culture and Movement

#### 3.1 Introduction

This Chapter deals with the cultural life of the people, and how the culture plays an important role in the growth of the Maoist movement at Junglemahal. Drawing from the economic status of the people concerned and their alleged deprivation in the field of development, it has been tried to find out how the simple-minded tribal people in the Junglemahal area came into the forefront of a violent Maoist movement occurred particularly during 2008 - 2011. Culture appears to play a key role in this movement that was initially a tribal movement. There was reportedly social harmony, peace and good relationship among different ethnic groups in the study area before the emergence of this movement. Local tribal people used to participate in the rituals, festivals, other occasions, etc. of the neighboring non-tribal communities and *vice-versa*. Since the beginning of this movement, there appeared a clear division of people into two sections— tribal and non-tribal. It was somehow related to the politically motivated ideologies where most of the tribal leaders came forward to support the Maoist activism and the non-tribal people to support the CPI (Marxist) -- the then ruling party (along with some other left parties) in

West Bengal. Under this political situation, the two sections started to avoid attending the social ceremonies of each other. Thus the local people fell in a dilemma to whether to support the Maoist or not or to support the politically sponsored armed group (commonly referred to as the *harmads*, meaning the hired goons) or the so-called state sponsored counter-insurgency force.

### **3.2 Cultural life in the Junglemahal villages**

Cultural life in Junglemahal area is characterized by diversity of cultural traits. The cultural element is usually viewed as a social construction (of insiders and outsiders) of mutually acknowledging group differences in cultural beliefs and practices (Shils, 1975; Geertz, 1973; Van den Berghe, 1981; Giesen, 1998). There are many communities including tribal and non-tribal groups who have variegated religious beliefs, performances, practices, ways of life, dresses, ornaments, etc. in Junglemahal.

The Santals have the highest population compared to the other tribes in this area. The socio-cultural life of the Santals is strongly attached to their religious beliefs which are associated with two sects, viz., the *Sarna* and the *Sari*. The Santals are the Nature worshipper having no temple, idol or holy book. They use to worship different deities, though not regularly. They do also offer worship to their deceased ancestors or their souls. They have a strong belief in supernatural beings with the *Sing Bonga* as the Supreme Being. This kind of cultural and emotional attachment of the Santals is clearly manifested mainly through the various rites and rituals, supplication, animal sacrifice, offering, involvement of deceased's soul, etc. The principal local deities are the *Maran*

*Buru* and the *Jaher Era* who are strongly believed to be present at their *Jaherthan* – the sacred grove. Moreover, there are other local deities generally named after the *bongas*, who are worshipped by different *paris* (clans). The ritual and cultural performances of the Santals are held generally at two places: (i) *Jaherthan* and (ii) *Majhithan*.

**(i). *Jaherthan* (Sacred Grove)**

*Jaherthan* is the sacred place of the Santals where most of the religious ceremonies of the community are performed. Location of the *Jaherthan* may vary in different villages. In some villages it is located at the end of the village; in other it is located in the middle portion. *Jaherthan* is basically a kind of grove comprising of a cluster of around 20 to 25 *sal* trees (*Shorea robusta*). Within the cluster, there are three main *sal* trees where stones are kept at the base of each tree to represent a local deity, such as the *Jaherera*, *Marang buru* and *Turukomorako*. There may also have an *ashan* tree (*Terminalia elliptica*), where a stone is kept in its base to represent a deity called *Pargana bongas*. The fifth one may be a *mowa* tree (*Madhuca longifolia*) that may grow little away from the other trees. Similarly, there is also a stone in its base that represents a female deity called the *Gosain era*. This *mowa* tree is also known as ‘the Lady of the Grove’. However, it is also noticed that there are such types of stones in some other *sal* trees as well at Shimuldanga and Kashitoria village, which represent some *bongas*.

**(ii). *Majhithan***

The *Majhithan* is an important place for the Santals. It is a raised platform built generally at the center of the village or near the *Majhi*'s (i.e., the village headman) house. There is no fixed size of the *majhithan*. It is found that the Santals in different villages

make *Majhithan* of different dimensions. At Aushabandhi there was a *Majhithan* of twelve feet long, ten feet broad and four feet in height platform, while at Shimuldanga it measures about six feet long, five feet broad, and two and half feet height, for example.

### 3.2.1 Religious ceremonies of the Santal

In Santal villages, there are many religious ceremonies or festivals performed all over the years, and these are cyclical. Interestingly, most of these festivals are connected with agricultural activities. The following ceremonies or festivals are found to be performed in the villages under study:

(i) *Magh Sim*

This Santal festival marks the end of the Santal calendar year. It normally falls in the month of *Mag Chando* (January - February). It is characterized by cutting down or trimming of grass in their habitational and non-habitational areas. *Naike* offers fowls to all the *bongas* of the community. In this particular festival, all the village officials who hold various traditional portfolios resign from their respective posts, and then, the cultivators give up the ownership of their agricultural lands. After a week, the headman of the village use to say in front of the community members that his mind has changed and he would like to continue the post. It is just a kind of formality to inform (or request) the villagers who formally accept it. Likewise, all the others who held different posts earlier will do the same as the headman does. Giving up of the ownership of land only symbolizes the importance of traditional community ownership over land –the most valued natural resource to them. The renewal of assignment to various posts and thereby

assigning responsibilities for the well-being of village is the central focus of this festival. The festival ends up with communal drinking.

(ii) *Baha parab*

*Bara parab*, meaning the flower festival, is one of the most important festivals of the Santal. It is performed in the month of *Baha Chando* as per the Santali calendar (February-March). It takes place when the *sal* trees begin to blossom. Literally, *baha* is a Santali word for 'flower'. This festival of the Santals marks the beginning of a new year. The festival is celebrated fully with drink, dancing, singing, etc. Related rituals are conducted by the *Naike* -- the priest -- at *Jaherthan*. For this festival local youths of the village, as found at Chhotopilia and Shimuldanga for instance, customarily build two temporary sheds at the *Jaherthan* -- one for the deities *Jaherera*, *Turukomoreko* and *Maragburu*, and the other for the deity *Gosainera*. On the first day before taking bath, they wash their hunting implements such as bow, arrow, axe, buffalo horn, etc. On the next day, three assigned persons place these implements before the first three *bongas* in the first shed. Villagers offer prayer to the *bongas* and then spend the night by singing, dancing and playing with drums at the house of the *Naike*. They take out the implements from the shed and run towards the *Jaherthan*. They clean this sacred place on reaching there and place those implements on a mat under the instruction of the *Naike*. Then, the *Naike* performs a prayer invoking the welfare of the village in the coming year.

On the third day, the Santals again use to go to the *Jaherthan*. They try to get a *sal* (*Shorea robusta*) tree and cut a young bud from this tree, where the deity *Marang buru* is believed to reside. The deity is offered prayer with *mohua* (*Madhuca longifolia*) flowers.

The Santals also offer prayer with *mohua* flowers to the other deities at the *Jaherthan*. A fowl is sacrificed there. All these performances are conducted by the *Naike*. The *Naike* then eats the cooked meat of the sacrificed animal with rice, and the rest is eaten by the villagers. After this, they all use to leave *Jaherthan* but usually the *Naike* stays there. Villagers sacrifice fowls and pigs in their own houses and eat cooked food. Later, they go to *Jaherthan* to bring back the *Naike*. Whole day is celebrated with merry making and dances by both men and women.

**(iii) Dishom Sendra**

The *Dishom Sendra*, the hunting festival, is one of the most important festivals in the Santal life. It takes place once in a year, and is normally organized in the month of *Pata Chando* (March-April). As part of the festival the *Naike* carries a big branch of a *sal* tree along with leaves and goes to the *haat* (market place). The local people try to keep distance from the *Naike*. Carrying the branch outside the village symbolizes the act of winding off the danger and misfortune that may come before in forest at the time of hunting. They pray before the *dihri*, the deity of hunting, for good games in forest and invoke her mercy that will save them from the unknown danger within forest. The deity is offered with the sacrifice of a black fowl. The *Naike* officiates the ritual performance.

**(iv) Mak More**

This festival is generally performed at an interval of five years or so at *Jaherthan*. It is performed between *Sendra Chando* to *Jhent Chando* (April-June). But, it can be organized every year if the financial condition of the community permits. They offer fowls and a goat to the deity *Mokreko*, one of the five principal deities of Santals, who is

believed to reside at *Jaherthan*. The meat of the sacrificed animals is eaten by men whereas a small portion is given to the *Naike's* wife. The festival ends with drinking, dancing and singing and is participated by both men and women. However, this festival is celebrated every year in Aushabandhi village in the month of *Baha Chando* (February-March).

(v) *Arok Sim*

The Santals perform this festival before broadcasting of seeds in their field. It is done at the *Jaherthan* in the month of *Ersid Chando* (June-July). Here also the *Naike* performs the rituals. The offerings include flowers and five fowls. After this function, they cook these fowls and eat the cooked meat. The head portions are taken by the *Naike*.

(vi) *Dasai*

It is held in the month of *Danshay* (as per Santali calendar). In this particular festival, the male members of the village can only participate. *Naike* and *Majhi* do the offerings of rice cake, jiggery, flower, etc. to all the village *bongas* at *Majhithan*. The main purpose of this festival is invoking for the betterment of the village.

(vii) *Soharay*

*Soharae* (also known as the *Bandhaparab*) is the harvesting festival. It is celebrated normally between the *Soharay* to *Sakrat Chando* in Santali calendar (October-December). Usually, there is no fixed day for celebration of this ceremony but usually it is performed after the completion of harvesting. However, this ceremony is held nowadays on a fixed day at Chhotopelia village. The date is decided by the *Majhi*, the village



headman. At Shimuldanga, Aushabandhi and Kashitoria the ceremony is held on any day of convenience to them.

**(viii) Sakrat**

This festival is performed on the last day of *Pous* month (as per the Bengali calendar). This is similar to the *Pous Sankrati* festival of the Hindu caste people. A day before the festival only the male members of the Santal community go out for fishing in nearby stream or river, whereas women are found to remain engaged in cleaning the houses and preparing rice cakes. At the start of the festival they offer prayer and rice cakes to their deities and ancestors' souls invoking their blessings. After that, they eat rice cakes, curds and others. On the *Sakrat* day (the first day), the *Jogmajhi*, the assistant to the village headman, use to invite all the male adult members of the community in their local meeting ground or field for a get-together, where various sports competition such as archery, etc. are performed. Then they celebrate the festival with dance, song and drink preferably *handia* (i.e., an indigenous rice beer) and use to spend the whole day with full enjoyment. The women can watch the sports and participate in dancing and singing. And normally, the festival ends up with a fair on the next day. Thus, the *Sakrat* festival usually lasts for two days.

### **3.2.2 Religious ceremonies of the Hari and the Teli**

The Hari and Teli are the lower caste communities. Their socio-cultural practices and beliefs are similar due to adhering to the same Hindu religious belief. The following ceremonies or festivals are performed by the Hari and the Teli communities at Kashitoria.

**(i). *Kali puja***

Kalipuja, also known as *Shyama puja*, is generally held in the month of *Kartik* (October-November). It is performed both in the individual households and at the village level. All members (both male and female) of these two communities participate in this festival, and the neighbouring Santals also participate in it. Prayer and worship is offered to the Goddess *Kali*. The rituals are officiating by a Brahmin priest in late evening. This worship is accompanied by scarifying a goat. The worship is done for the well-being of the entire village community.

**(ii). *Manasa puja***

This is the worship of the Goddess *Manasa*. This is also performed at community level or in the individual households. Generally this puja is celebrated in the month of *Agrahayana* (November-December). This worship is performed normally in front of a *manasa* (*Anemopsis californica*) tree. Most of the Hari and Teli families use to plant this tree in their courtyard. This puja is believed to protect the village community from snakebite.

**(iii). *Tulsipuja***

Every Teli and Hari family of Kashitoria perform this puja everyday. This *puja* is performed in front of a *tulsi* (*Ocimum tenuiflorum*) plant that is implanted on a *mancha* (i.e., an elevated and rectangular platform made of clay) in the courtyard of almost each and every house at the village. The people believe that the *tulsi* plant is bestowed with the supernatural power to kill poisonous insects and evil powers that may enter into the

house. Moreover, the plant has various medicinal properties. Offerings of this *puja* include incense stick, oil lamp, some flowers, etc.

### 3.3 Socio-Economic Status

The question very often raised is that why the districts across the red corridor are more susceptible to the Maoist violence. There are certainly various factors that are responsible for generating such violence. Let us see first the socio-economic background of the affected villages under study.

As per the official assessment in 2011-2012, the erstwhile Paschim Medinipur has the population with high poverty rate (23%).<sup>1</sup>

#### 3.3.1 Family Income

There is hardly a family can be found in the four villages under study, which has an income of more than Rs. 10,000/- (USD144.01) per month on an average. The Table 3.1 shows that the number of families with a monthly income of less than Rs. 3000/- (USD 43.20) is alarmingly high. This is 47.56 per cent, 45.46 per cent and 76 per cent at Chhotopelia, Kashitoria and Shimuldanga respectively. This is, however, relatively low at Aushabandhi (26.03%) where the most of the families come under the family income group of Rs. 3000 to 5000 (USD 43.20 – USD 72.01) per month (Fig. 3.1). No family has an annual income of rupees one lakh in all the villages. Thus, all the village communities are living under extreme poverty. However, the official estimates show that 36.39 percent

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<sup>1</sup>This is as per the Tendulkar poverty level definition (2011-2012)

families in Paschim Medinipur fall under the Below Poverty Line (BPL) category (Government of West Bengal, 2005).

Table 3.1: Distribution of family by monthly family income in the villages

Monthly Income (in Rs.)	Chhotopelia	Kashitoria	Shimuldanga	Aushabandhi
	No. (%)	No. (%)	No. (%)	No. (%)
<3000	39 (47.56)	15 (45.46)	19 (76.00)	19 (26.03)
3000 -5000	26 (31.71)	12 (36.36)	04 (16.00)	34 (46.58)
5001 -7000	11 (13.41)	03 (09.09)	01 (04.00)	11 (15.07)
7001 - 9000	04 (04.88)	02 (06.06)	01 (04.00)	06 (08.22)
>9000	02 (02.44)	01 (03.03)	00 (00.00)	03 (04.11)
TOTAL	82 (100.00)	33 (100.00)	25 (100.00)	73 (100.00)

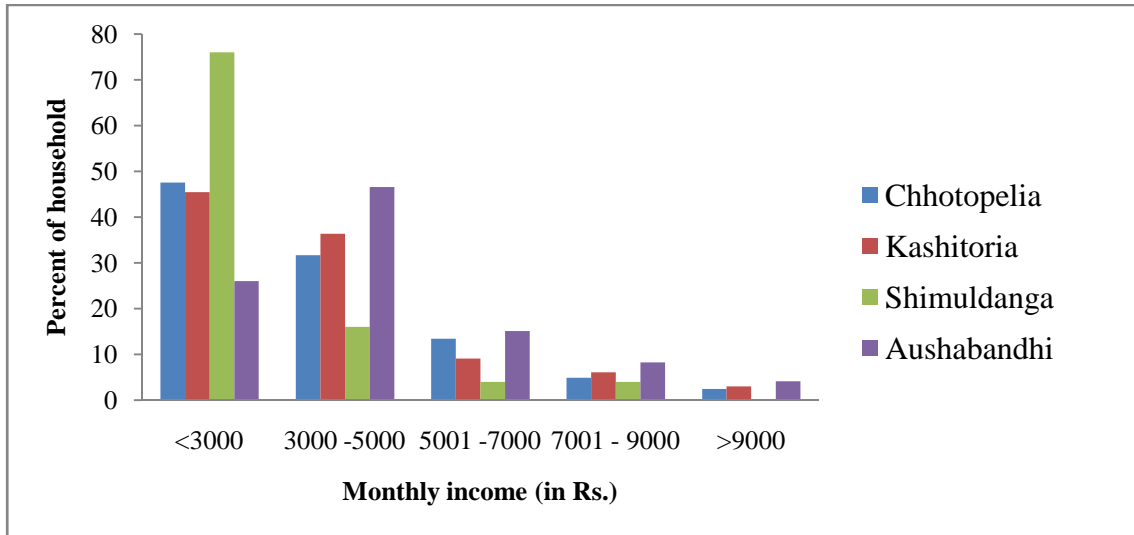


Fig. 3.1: Bar-chart showing distribution of family by monthly family income

### 3.3.2 Land Ownership

Their poverty level can also be substantiated by the area of cultivable land they own or possess. Land is sacred to the *adivasi* as they have a spiritual relationship with the land. It is indispensable for their life and livelihood. Land as a property is a vital instrument for empowerment of a community and it upholds the socio-cultural identity of the community concerned. The Santals and other disadvantaged communities are being continuously dispossessed from their land, forests and other natural resources under the neo-liberal policy.

Most of the families at Chhotopelia (81.71%) have ownership over less than 0.50 acre land. At Kashitoria, Shimuldanga and Aushabandhi about 42, 76 and 48 per cent families have less than 0.50 acres of land respectively (Table 3.2). Ownership pattern is relatively better at Kashitoria where there are 42.42 per cent families have more than 1.0 acres of cultivable land. It may be noted here that though the concerned families are claiming their rights of land ownership, most of them do not have any official record of ownership. The possession of homestead land is apparently better off (Table 3.3), but these lands are either vested land or under the ownership of forest department of the Government of West Bengal. So practically the Santal and other communities have little or no ownership over land. This is no exaggeration that the tribal people have already lost their traditional rights over forest in India since the enactment of successive forest acts and policies.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the indigenous people in Junglemahal area who were traditionally dependent upon land and forest become gradually landless and thereby economically vulnerable.

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<sup>2</sup>These acts include the Indian Forest Act 1927, Indian Forest Act (Amendment) 1933, Forest Act 1972, Forest Conservation Act 1980, Indian Forest Act 2006, and Indian Forest (amendment) Bill 2017.

If we study the land tenure system in the area under study, we would be surprised to know that the most of the land the villagers cultivate or claim to possess are under the ownership of different departments of the Government of West Bengal (Table 3.4). The *patta* land is actually the vested land on which a temporary ownership rights has been given to the so-called 'land holders' for cultivation or residing. The real ownership is bestowed to the Department of Land Revenue and Reforms, Government of West Bengal. A considerable number of the families possess *patta* land. This is 31.71 per cent at Chhotopelia and 15.15, 28.0 and 19.18 per cent at Kashitoria, Shimuldanga and Aushabandhi respectively (Fig. 3.4). The forest land is the land that was traditionally owned and used by the tribal people but became a state property after the enactment of various forest laws and acts. Some families are still occupying such land but this is considered illegal and they can be displaced from such land at any time. At Shimuldanga and Aushabandhi about 48 per cent and 23.29 per cent families respectively are occupying forest land (Fig. 3.4). The share croppers are the cultivators who raise the crops on others' land and have to share the yield in various proportions as per the terms and conditions set forth between the land owners and the share croppers well before the start of cultivation. In the villages the number of share cropping families is massively high. This is 20.73, 15.15, 24.0 and 47.95 per cent at Chhotopelia, Kashitoria, Shimuldanga and Aushabandhi respectively (Table 3.4).

In case of the homestead land, similar land tenure system is apparent. At Chhotopelia, nearly 30 per cent families reside on the *patta* and forest land (Table 3.5). The families residing on the *patta* and forest land at Kashitoria and Aushabandhi constitute about 58 per cent and 49 per cent respectively. At Shimuldanga no family has

its own homestead land. All are residing on the *patta* or forest land. Thus, in most cases the villagers do not have their own homestead land to reside on.

Table 3.2: Distribution of cultivable land by family in the villages

Land possession (in acre)	Chhotopelia	Kashitoria	Shimuldanga	Aushabandhi
	No.(%)	No. (%)	No. (%)	No. (%)
<0.5	67 (81.71)	14 (42.42)	19 (76.00)	35 (47.95)
0.5-1.0	12 (14.63)	5 (15.15)	06 (24.00)	29 (39.73)
>1.0	3 (03.66)	14 (42.42)	-	09 (12.33)
Total	82 (100.00)	33 (100.00)	25 (100.00)	73 (100.00)

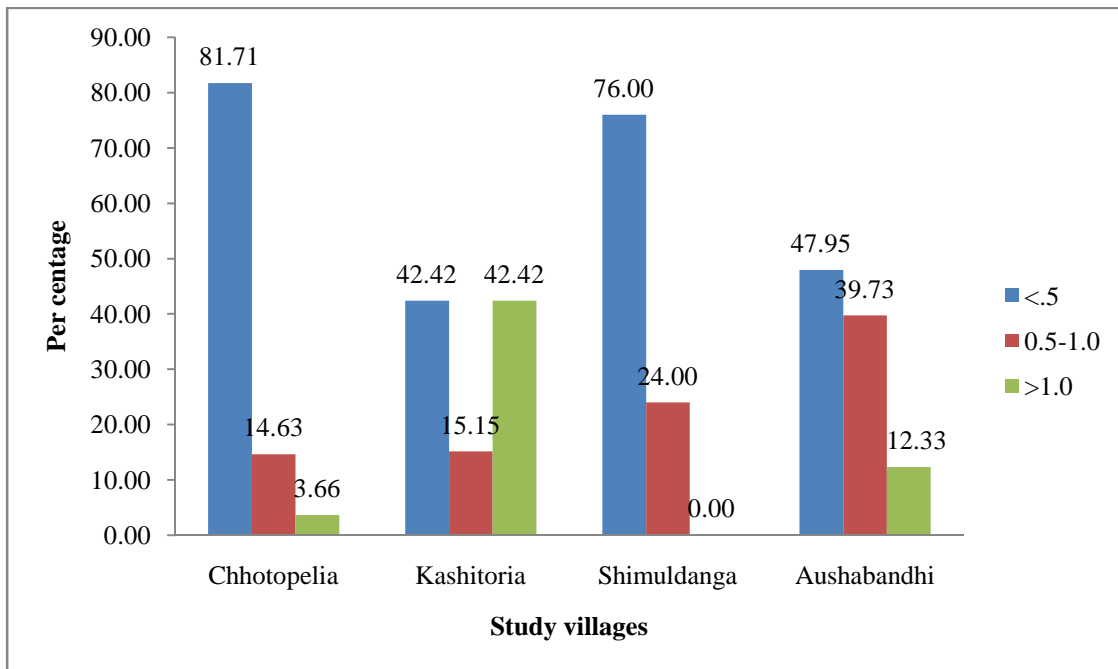


Fig. 3.2: Bar chart showing cultivable land possession (in acre) in the villages

Table 3.3: Family wise distribution homestead land in the villages

Land possession (in Acre)	Chhotopelia	Kashitoria	Shimuldanga	Aushabandhi
	No. (%)	No. (%)	No. (%)	No. (%)
<0.5	75 (91.46)	23 (69.70)	25 (100.00)	48 (65.75)
0.5-1.0	07 (08.54)	07 (21.21)	--	18 (24.66)
>1.0	--	03 (9.09)	--	07 (9.59)
Total	82 (100.00)	33 (100.00)	25 (100.00)	73 (100.00)

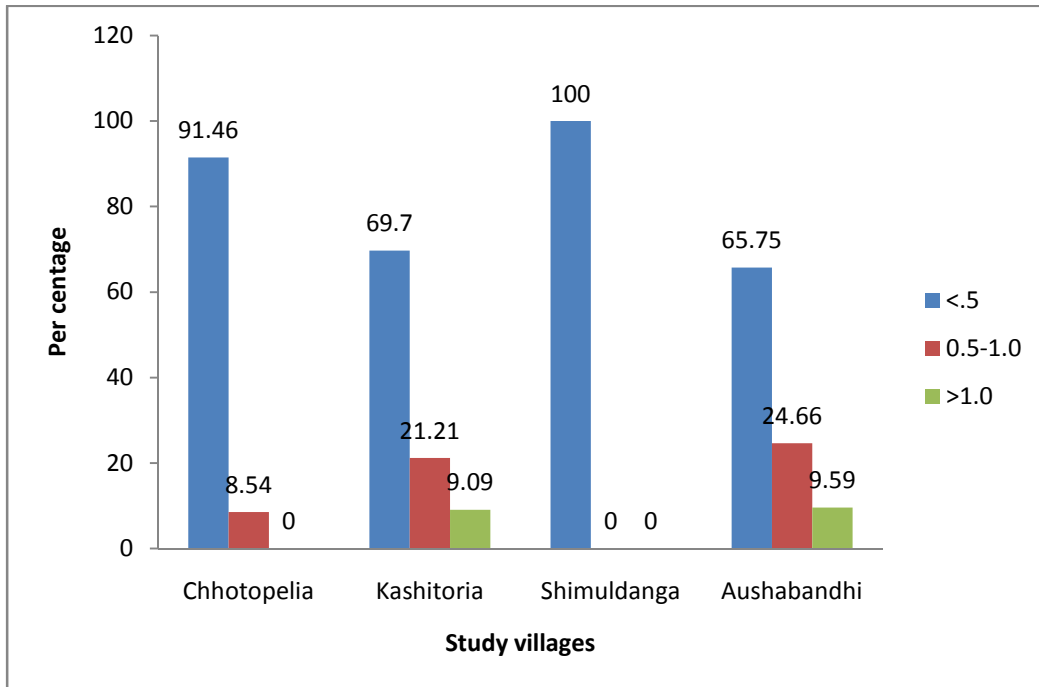


Fig. 3.3: Bar chart showing the homestead land possession (in acre) in the villages



Table 3.4: Family wise distribution of cultivable land ownership in the villages

Land ownership type	Chhotopelia	Kashitoria	Shimuldanga	Aushabandhi
	No. (%)	No. (%)	No. (%)	No. (%)
Own land	32 (39.02)	21 (63.64)	--	07 (9.59)
Patta land	26 (31.71)	05 (15.15)	07 (28.00)	14 (19.18)
Forest Land	07 (08.54)	02 (06.06)	12 (48.00)	17 (23.29)
Share cropper	17 (20.73)	05 (15.15)	06 (24.00)	35 (47.95)
Total	82 (100.00)	33 (100.00)	25 (100.00)	73 (100.00)

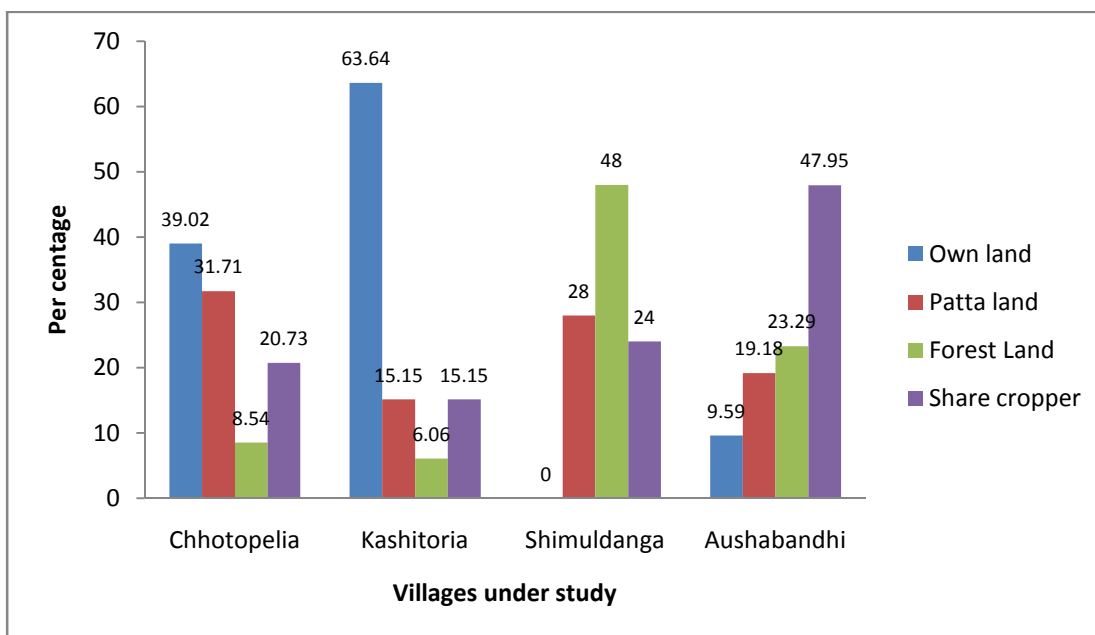


Fig. 3.4: Bar chart showing the family wise distribution of cultivable land ownership types in the villages

Table 3.5: Family wise distribution of homestead land ownership in the villages

Land ownership type	Chhotopelia	Kashitoria	Shimuldanga	Aushabandhi
	No. (%)	No. (%)	No. (%)	No. (%)
Own land	58 (70.73)	14 (42.42)	--	38 (52.05)
Patta land	17 (20.73)	15 (45.46)	07 (28.00)	24 (32.88)
Forest Land	07 (08.54)	04 (12.12)	18 (72.00)	11 (15.07)
Total	82 (100.00)	33 (100.00)	25 (100.00)	73 (100.00)

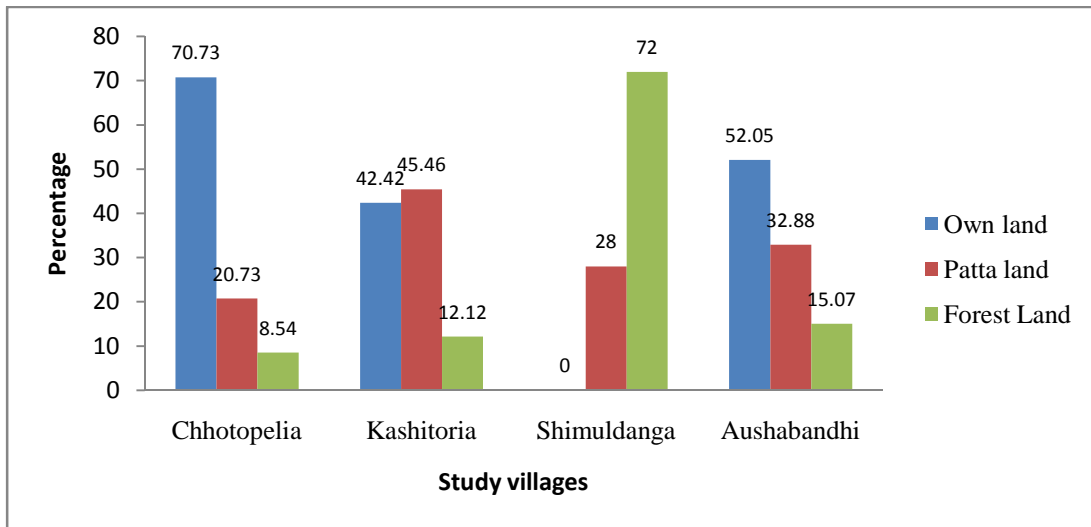


Fig. 3.5:Bar chart showing the family wise distribution of homestead land ownership types by family in the villages

### 3.3.3 House type

House type may reflect economic marginality of the families in a community. In the present study most of the families have mud houses with thatched roof constructed of forest wood. Such house is found for 68.29, 54.55, 56.0 and 63.01 per cent families at

Chhotopelia, Kashitoria, Shimuldanga and Aushabandhi respectively (Table 3.6). *Pukka* house (constructed of bricks) can hardly be found in the villages.

Table 3.6: House types in the villages

House type	Chhotopelia	Kashitoria	Shimuldanga	Aushabandhi
	No. (%)	No. (%)	No. (%)	No. (%)
Mud house	56 (68.29)	18 (54.55)	14 (56.00)	46 (63.01)
Semi <i>pakka</i> house	23 (28.05)	14 (42.42)	11 (44.00)	25 (34.25)
<i>Pakka</i> house	03 (03.66)	01 (03.03)	--	02 (02.74)
Total	82 (100.00)	33 (100.00)	25 (100.00)	73 (100.00)

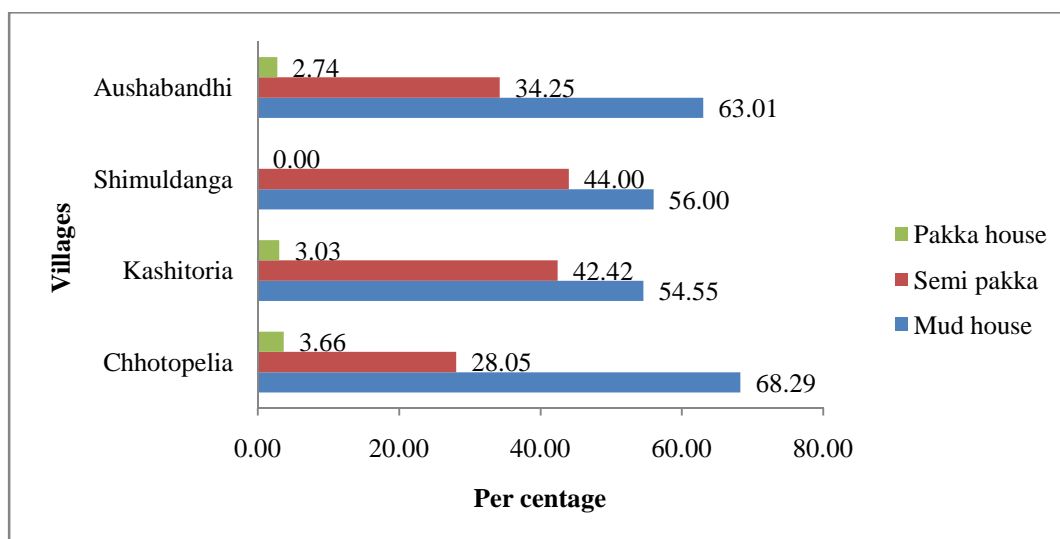


Fig. 3.6: Bar chart showing the house type distribution by family in the villages

### 3.3.4 Sanitation facility

In the World, 42 per cent of its population does not have access to improved sanitation conditions and quite interestingly about 59 per cent of the population who use open defecation live in India (Jadhav *et al.*, 2016). Using the National Family Health Survey-III (NFHS) data Jadhav and others observe that there is a significant association

between household sanitary facilities and non-partner sexual violence (NPSV). For them, compared to women who have access to a toilet in their household, Indian women who have to go for open defecation have 2.14 times the risk of NPSV ( $p < .01$ ) (Jadhav *et al.*, 2016).

The Indian government has introduced the nationwide campaigns to improve sanitation facilities across the country -- first under the *Total Sanitation Campaign* (TSC) since 1999, and very recently under the *Swachh Bharat Mission* (SBM) (Kapur and Iyer, 2015). *Total Sanitation Campaign* (TSC) has identified 58 districts from 9 states in the *Left-Wing Extremist* (LWE) category. The *Swachh Bharat Mission* aims at achieving an "open-defecation free" (ODF) India by 2 October 2019, the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Mahatma Gandhi. However, the lack of improved sanitation remains a major public health concern in India (Travasso, 2014). For the present study, sanitation facility means presence of a toilet or pit in a household.

Table 3.7 shows the sanitation conditions in the villages under study. About 34, 42, 16 and 45 per cent families at Chhotopelia, Kashitoria, Shimuldanga and Aushabandhi respectively have toilets. Moreover, at Chhotopelia 4.87 per cent family use pits. More than half of the families in all villages have to go for open defecation to the nearby jungle. This is also surprising to notice that the families who have toilets do not use toilets regularly. The toilets are of little or no use to many families. About half of such families (having a toilet) do not use toilets (Table 3.8, Fig. 3.8). Their toilets are basically the storehouse of fuel woods, etc.

Table 3.7: Sanitation provision in the study area

Sanitation provision	Chhotopelia	Kashitoria	Shimuldanga	Aushabandhi
	No. (%)	No. (%)	No. (%)	No. (%)
Toilet	28 (34.15)	14 (42.42)	4 (16.00)	33 (45.21)
Pit	04 (04.87)	-	-	-
None	50 (60.98)	19 (57.58)	21 (84.00)	40 (54.79)
Total	82 (100.00)	33 (100.00)	25 (100.00)	73 (100.00)

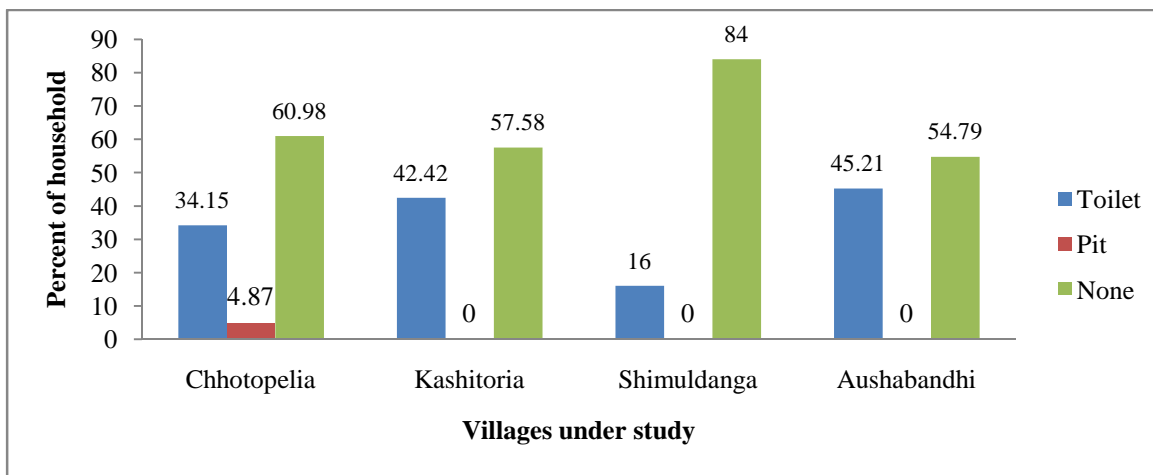


Fig.3.7: Column chart showing distribution of families by the sanitation provision in the villages

Table 3.8: Pattern of toilet used in the study area

Sanitation use pattern	Chhotopelia	Kashitoria	Shimuldanga	Aushabandhi
	No. (%)	No. (%)	No. (%)	No. (%)
Fully used	06 (18.75)	03 (21.43)	-	08 (24.24)
Partially used	11 (34.38)	05 (35.71)	01 (25.00)	14 (42.42)
No used	15 (46.88)	06 (42.86)	03 (75.00)	11 (33.33)
Total	32 (100.00)	14 (100.00)	04 (100.00)	33 (100.00)

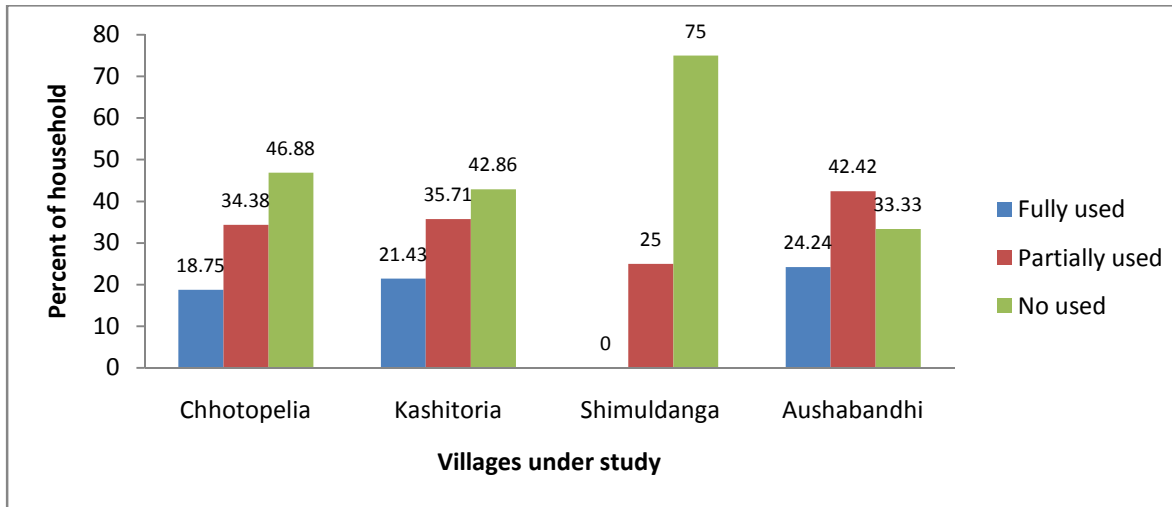


Fig. 3.8: Column graph showing the toilet use pattern in the study area

### 3.4 Access to Developmental Schemes

Various developmental schemes are under implementation in the area under study. These schemes are summarized below:

(i) ***Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G)***

The public housing program started in India with the rehabilitation of refugees in her post-independence period and it has been a major area of focus by the Government as an important instrument of poverty alleviation. Rural housing program started with the *Indira Awas Yojana (IAY)* in 1996. Although IAY addressed the housing requirements in the rural areas, certain shortcomings were identified by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India in 2014. These shortcomings were the non-assessment of housing, lack of transparency in selection of beneficiaries, low quality of housing materials, lack of technical management and convergence, non-availability of loans to the beneficiaries and weak method of monitoring. All these acted as impediments towards

the desired outcomes of the programme. To tackle these gaps, on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 the Government of India undertook the 'Housing for All' by 2022 scheme. Accordingly the IAY has been restructured into the *Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin* (PMAY-G). It aims at providing a *pukka* house with basic amenities to all houseless householder and those householders living in *Kuchcha* and dilapidated house. The cost of unit support is to be shared between Central and State Government in the ration 60:40 in the plain areas and 90:10 for North Eastern and the Himalayan States (Government of India, 2018). In this present study about 25, 33, 16, and 25 percent families became the beneficiary of this scheme (Table 3.9).

(ii) *Geetanjali and Aamar Thikana*

Simultaneously, the Government of West Bengal has undertaken two housing schemes, *viz.*, *Geetanjali and Aamar Thikana* in order to provide proper shelters to the weaker section of the society free of cost. This scheme is being implemented in rural areas by six departments: Minority Affairs & Madrasah Education Department, Backward Classes welfare Department, Fisheries Department, Forest Department, Sundarban Affairs Department and Paschimanchal Unnayan Affairs Department and in the non-municipal urban areas by the statutory housing organizations, *viz.*, West Bengal Housing Board (WBHB), West Bengal Housing Infrastructure Development Corporation (WBHIDCO), etc. The principal objective of the two schemes is to provide proper shelters to the economically weaker section as well as to create additional employment opportunities for construction workers. There was not a single beneficiary of this scheme at Chhotopelia and Shimuldanga. However, at Kashitoria and Aushabandhi village only 6.06 percent and 4.4 percent family got benefit of these schemes.

**(iii) *Integrated Child Development Services(ICDS)***

The *Integrated Child Development Scheme* (ICDS) is one of the most important programmes of the Government of India. This scheme represents one of the world's biggest and distinctive programs for early childhood care and development. Launched on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1975, the scheme is providing assurance to the children and nursing mothers in the country. It aims at ensuring the pre-school non-formal education of the children and overcoming the problems of malnutrition, morbidity, reduced learning capacity and mortality. The beneficiaries under the scheme are the children in the age group of 0-6 years, pregnant women and lactating mothers.

Through providing six basic services including pre-school non-formal education, immunization, referral services, health check-up, nutrition and health education, and supplementary nutrition, ICDS focuses on certain objectives. These are to improve the nutritional and health status of the children in the age group 0-6 years, to lay the foundation for proper psychological, physical as well as social development of the child, to reduce the incidence of mortality, morbidity, malnutrition and school drop-out, to achieve effective co-ordination of policy and implementation amongst the various departments to promote child development, and to enhance the capability of the mother to look after normal health and nutritional needs of the child through proper nutrition and health education.

**(iv) *Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)***

This is the flagship rural development scheme in India. It focuses on the productive inclusion of under-employed and additional labour force in the rural sector –



an essential condition for rural development. There were a number of programmes to provide direct additional wage-employment through public works to the rural poor, such as the *National Rural Employment Programme* (NREP), *Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme* (RLEGP) and *Jawahar Rozgar Yojana* (JRY). However, these programmes failed to ensure employment to the manual labour of every household in the rural areas. Then the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) Government enacted the National Employment Guarantee Act in 2005 under its *National Common Minimum Programme* (NCMP). The act provides a legal guarantee for at least 100 days of employment in asset creating public work programmes every year at minimum wages for at least one able-bodied person in every rural household. The scheme covers the entire rural areas of the country. The scheme is now renamed as *Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act*.

**(v) Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)**

As part of poverty decreasing strategy the Government of India launched the *Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana* (PMGSY) to provide connectivity to unconnected habitations. The primary objective of the PMGSY is to provide connectivity by way of an all-weather road to the eligible unconnected habitations in the rural areas with a population of 500 persons and above in plan areas and with a population of 250 persons and above in hill states, the desert areas and the tribal areas. It is observed that only Chhotopelia and Aushabandhi have been connected through this scheme, though in the post movement phase, to Lalgarh-Ramgarh road and Nayagram respectively.

**(vi) Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)**

*Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana* aims at protecting the health of child and women by providing them *Liquefied Petroleum Gas* (LPG), a clean cooking fuel. The scheme was launched in 2016 by the Government of India to make kitchen healthy and smoke-free in the BPL families by 2019 with a support of Rs. 1600 per connection. The connection is allotted in the name of women member of household for encouraging the women empowerment in a society, especially in rural areas. This scheme became a helpful one to the people under study since about 17, 30, 16 and 21 percent families at Chhotopelia, Kashitoria, Shimuldanga and Aushabandhi respectively have become the beneficiary.

**(vii) Junglemahal Action Plan (JAP)**

The *Junglemahal Action Plan* (JAP) was launched in 2017 by the State Government in West Bengal after losing the Central Government's support under the scheme named Additional Central Assistance for *Left Wing Extremist* (LWE) Block. The State Government has taken up the scheme under the State sector and is providing necessary budgetary support to the LWE Blocks in Bankura, Purulia and Paschim Medinipur (including Jhargram) districts and in some parts of Birbhum district. Most of the families in the villages do not have any idea about such scheme.

**(viii) Sabooj Sathi**

In order to reduce drop-out especially among the girls and to empower the school-going students, the Government of West Bengal launched this scheme in 2016-17. The objective of the scheme is to provide bi-cycle to the students of class IX to XII, who are studying in Government run and Government aided Schools and Madrashes in the State.

Altogether 34.9 lakh bi-cycles have been distributed during 2016-17 and 2017-18 under the Saboojsathi scheme. This is very successful scheme particularly at Chhotopelia and Aushabandhi. Since there are about 43 percent and 44 percent beneficiaries respectively (Table 3.9).

**(ix) Kanyashree Prakalpa**

*Kanyashree Parakalpa* is an innovative scheme of the Government of West Bengal. It aims at creating an environment that will raise the educational, health and nutritional status of girl students throughout State. It discourages early marriage of girls and encourages education of girl children in secondary and higher secondary level through awarding an annual scholarship of Rs. 750/- (rupees seven hundred fifty) only to the students aged 13 – 18 years (class VIII and above) and an additional one time incentive of Rs. 25,000/- (rupees twenty five) only to the girl students after attaining the age of 18 years. This scheme helps to reduce the dropout rates among the girls, especially from poor families, and to prevent trafficking and exploitation of the girl child. Not even eligible students have been enrolled for the benefit of the scheme in the villages under study. Only children of 8 to 19 percent family are enjoying the benefit of the scheme.

**(x) Yuvasree Prakalpa**

Yuvasree is a scheme of financial assistance to the unemployed youth. This was launched by the Government of West Bengal in 2013. Its objective is to provide employment assistance to the unemployed youths by enriching their employment ability and skills. Previously the scheme was known as the *Yuba Utsaha Prakolpo* (YUP). The

scheme is implemented and maintained by the Department of Labour, Government of West Bengal. There is not a single beneficiary of this scheme in the area under study.

**(xi) *Jal Dharo-Jal Bharo***

This programme was launched during 2011-12 by the Government of West Bengal. Its objective is to preserve water by large scale harvesting of rain water in order to avail water resources through construction and management of *Minor Irrigation Structures* (MIS). Now the Department of Water Resources Investigation and Development and the Department of Panchayat and Rural Development, Government of West Bengal are entrusted to re-excavate all kinds of water bodies, viz., ponds, tanks, canals, reservoirs, etc., where water holding capacities have lowered down. This water can be utilized by the poor farmers in agriculture and pisciculture, which will open up further opportunity of income. Availability of water throughout the year will help the local villagers in their domestic works and animal husbandry. This programme is also expected to increase the awareness among the village people about the water conservation and judicious use of water in irrigation. The villages basically do not have the infrastructure to preserve the access rain water, except only a very few cases such as at Chhotopelia and Aushabandhi. The geographical condition is not supportive of such scheme, since the soil in these areas is lateritic with low water retention capacity.

**(xii) *Mission Nirmal Bangla***

*Swachh Bharat Mission* (Gramin) is the restructured form of the erstwhile *Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan* (NBA) of the Government of India. Launched on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2014 the scheme was started with the objective of making the country Open Defecation Free

(ODF) by 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2019. Subsequently, the State Government of West Bengal introduced a similar programme named the *Mission Nirmal Bangla* in order to achieving the goal of making the state ODF and to make a cleaner environment and surroundings. The data in the Table 3.7 shows that nearly half of the families in the study area are still practicing open defecation that not only may invite health problem but insecurity particularly to the women also.

**(xiii) *National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS)***

*Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOPAS)*, also called as the *National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS)*, was introduced in the year 2007 by the *Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India under National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP)*. This programme aims at providing social protection to the eligible old age beneficiaries. The objective of the scheme is to provide non-contributing pension to the senior citizens (i.e., persons aged 60 years and above) of India under the *Below Poverty Line (BPL)* category. Only a few aged persons became successful to be beneficiary of this scheme. There are many victims of the violent movement, who did not get the benefit of such scheme.

**(xiv) *Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS)***

On 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1993, the then Hon'ble Prime Minister of India Dr. P.V. Narasimha Rao announced the MPLADS Scheme in parliament. The scheme is

implemented by the members of Parliament Local Area Development Division. It focuses on dispersed development. It applies the principle of participatory development and persistent development of economic and social infrastructure. Under the scheme, each Member of Parliament (MP) has the choice to recommend to the District Collector for works in his/her constituency for an amount of five crore rupees per annum. However, a member of the *Rajya Sabha*, the upper house of Parliament in India, can recommend for works in one or more districts in the State from where he/she has been elected. Under the scheme a Nominated Member of the *Lok Sabha* can select any one or more districts from any one State in the Country for implementation of their choice of work.

**(xv) *Lok Prasar Prakalpa***

The *Lok Prasar Prakalpa* has been introduced by the Department of Information and Cultural Affairs, Government of West Bengal. The major objectives of the project are to grant dignity on folk artists by issuing them identity cards, to endorse the traditional folk forms of West Bengal, to restore nearly-extinct folk-forms of art and culture and to support the socio-economic conditions of artists associated with folk culture by providing financial assistance. But nobody in the villages under study got the benefit of this scheme.

**(xvi) *Self Help Group (SHG)***

A self-help group is voluntary organization of 15 to 20 women, which is formed to attain a collective goal. The members of this group are homogenous with respect to their

socio-economic background. The very concept of Self Help Group was the brain child of the Noble Peace Prize Winner Prof. Mohammed Yunus who started Grameen Bank of Bangladesh. This was in as early as 1976. Self-help group and Microfinance (MF) have been very potential instruments for poverty alleviation, financial inclusion and women empowerment. The basic principles of the SHGs are group approach, mutual trust of small and manageable group, spirit of thrift, demand based lending, poor-friendly loan, peer group pressure in repayment, and women empowerment (Lalitha, 1998). There are only a few SHGs in the villages, though there is ample scope of forming such groups.

Table 3.9: Distribution of family on the basis of the scheme availed in the villages (2012-2017)<sup>3</sup>

Sl. No.	Name of the Schemes	Villages			
		Chhotopelia (n=82)	Kashitoria (n=33)	Shimuldanga (n=25)	Ausabandhi (n=73)
01	IAY & PMAY	21 (25.61%)	11 (33.33%)	04 (16.00%)	18 (24.66%)
02	Geetanjali & Amar Thikana	--	02 (6.06%)	--	03 (04.11%)
03	PMUY	14 (17.07%)	10 (30.30%)	04 (16.00%)	16 (21.92%)
04	SabujSathi	35 (42.68%)	07 (21.21%)	05 (20.00%)	32 (43.84%)
05	Nirmal Mission Bangla	42 (51.22%)	14 (42.42%)	11 (44.00%)	45 (61.64%)
06	Kanyashri	07 (8.54%)	03 (9.09%)	04 (16.00%)	14 (19.18%)
07	<i>JalDharo-Jal Varo Prakalpa</i>	02 (2.44%)	--	01 (04.00%)	03 (04.11%)
08	Old Age pension Scheme	16 (19.51%)	05 (15.15%)	03 (12.00%)	35 (47.95%)
09	IAP (renamed now as JAP)	02 (2.44%)	01 (3.03%)	--	02 (02.74%)
10	SHG	03 (3.66%)	02 (6.06%)	02 (08.00%)	03 (04.11%)
11	Yuvashree	--	--	--	--
12	Lok Prasar Prakalpa	--	--	--	--

Source: Fieldwork data (2014-2017)

<sup>3</sup>The percentage of families is shown out of the total families in each of the village. One family may avail more than one scheme at a time.

Thus, it is found that the above-mentioned schemes did not reach most of the disadvantaged families in the area under study (Table 3.9).

### **3.5 Genesis and growth of the movement**

Originally, the Maoist movement in India started with the demand for separate statehood of Telangana region from Andhra Pradesh since the early 1940. It originated with an agrarian discontent of the rural population in Telangana region over the issues of landlessness and indebtedness. It strongly opposed the *jaigirdars* (landlord) and *deshmukhs* (large landlord) who owned most of the land in Telangana and were politically and economically the most dominant entity in the region.

Thereafter, similar incidence of discontent occurred at Naxalbari village in Darjeeling district of West Bengal in 1967. In the incidence, in the words of Kujur (2008), a tribal youth having obtained a judicial order went to plough his land on March 1967; the local landlords attacked him with the help of their goons. Tribal peasants of that area retaliated and started forcefully recapturing their land. This led to sudden spread of the conflict between economically (and politically) weaker section and the stronger section of big land holders, causing death of nine innocent people and a police personnel. Incidentally, this conflict led to the birth of the Naxalite movement in West Bengal and, with the passage of time, the movement spread across the country.

However, after more than six decades the conflict intensifies particularly since 2004 with the formation of CPI (Maoists) through the unification of the People's War



Group (PWG) and the Maoist Communists Centre (MCC). At least ten to twelve states in India have been seriously affected by the Maoist conflicts (Table 3.12).

In West Bengal the Maoist extremism has developed basically at the Junglemahal area. The Junglemahal area is geographically located within the so-called *Red Corridor* region of India. This area is historically inhabited by the most disadvantaged people belonging particularly to the tribal groups who have been living with a subsistence economy. They basically depend upon gathering of minor forest produces and selling them in *haat* (i.e., small open-air local market that serves as a trading point for the local people and that is held generally twice a week), hunting of small games in the nearby jungle, and working as daily labourers. Most of the tribal groups in this area are characterized by high rate of illiteracy, high rate of early marriage, daunting poverty, and severe malnutrition (Midya *et al.*, 2012). They are very simple in mind. Each tribal group has its unique culture that adds to the magnificence and diversity of Indian culture and heritage. However, the tribal groups have a feeling of having been deprived of their basic rights over land and forest which become the state resources through enactment of various laws and policies by the Indian nation-state. The Maoists have been trying to gain support of the disadvantaged tribal as well as non-tribal people of the area for long time particularly since 1990s and become successful in their mission particularly in 2008 when the then left Government in West Bengal came out to acquire tribal land for an industrial project at Salboni in Junglemahal. The Maoists were highlighting the question of deprivation of the disadvantaged people of the area in the hands of big land owners and the state power in general and the then ruling party in particular. The tribal and other poor communities came out to support the Maoists in order to fight against their alleged age-

long deprivation and oppression by the state power. The Maoist activists appear to win the support from the landless poor and marginalized tribals and peasants in Junglemahal area as it happens elsewhere since its inception as the Naxalite movement in India (Banerjee, 1980; Singh, 2005). The movement is found to be led basically by the middle-class intellectuals. It mainly focuses on the strategy of ‘annihilation of class enemies’.

In Junglemahal of West Bengal the Maoist activists initially choose Banspahari, Jamboni and Lalgah area for building up their organizational base. According to Midya (2013), their presence this region was felt for the first time during 1996-97 when they were trying to achieve higher price for *Babui (Eulaliop sisbinata)* ;a perennial, clump-forming grass with leaf-blades) rope and *Kendu (Diospyros melanoxylon)* leaves in Banspahari area.

The Maoists came into the forefront in Junglemahal area against the State Government after the incidence of Chhotopelia in 2008. On 2<sup>nd</sup> November of that year, the former Chief Minister of West Bengal Sri Budhadeb Bhattacharya and some dignitaries including the then Union Minister for Iron and Steel Mr. Ram Vilas Paswan were returning in a convoy from Salboni in Paschim Midnapore after inaugurating the construction work of a steel plant of the Jindal Group. The convoy was attacked with mine explosion by the Maoists as they claimed after the incident. It resulted in severe damage of a police jeep and serious injuries of a couple of police men. Following this incident, a huge battalion of police led by the then Superintendent of Police (SP) of Paschim Medinipur District and Inspector-in-Charge (IC) of Lalgah Police station raided and created havoc across 35 villages in the Lalgah-Kantapahari area.

In the early morning of 5<sup>th</sup> November, 2008 police came to raid at Chhotopelia, one of the villages under the present study, to arrest the suspected activists who were believed to hiding in the village. Police tortured the peoples of the village including the children to find out the 'culprit', who were engaged in the explosion. By the time, some students of the Chhotopelia village were coming back from their school at Kantapahari. Police suspected them as Maoist supporters and arrested them. The incident gave rise to a conflict between the tribal people and the police. More than twelve women and four children were injured. One of them, Chhitamoni Murmu was trying to resist police from arresting an innocent person at Chhotopelia and received a blow on her left eye from police and ultimately lost the eye for ever (*Case I*). The incident prompted a tribal movement immediately against the police and the then state administration, and the very movement turned later on to the Maoist movement at Junglemahal. Responding to such police brutality, the humiliated people of the area decided to organize themselves in order to save themselves. On 8<sup>th</sup> November 2008, a mass organization was formed in the name of People's Committee against Police Atrocities (PCPA). The organization consisted of the representatives from nineteen affected villages across the Junglemahal area. The PCPA started an agitation against police atrocity on tribal women at Dalilpurchawk in Chhotopelia under Lalgah Police Station, after which the movement became famous later on as the Lalgah movement. Their principal demand was that the police officers responsible for the assault on women and children must come to the spot and offer an apology before the public. The inhuman policemen have to beg a pardon in the manner familiar among the tribal people by holding ears and doing sit-ups and rubbing noses on the ground. The police and the then state administration readily rejected the demand and

came forward with retaliatory measures across the Junglemahal area. The Santal leadership issued the *sarjam gira*. This is an emergency call to the community members over a larger region to attend a meeting or do something. The Santal people communicate the message through handing over a little bunch of *Sal* leaves to each other in this indigenous communication system. All roads were blocked by felling trees and cutting of roads so that police could not reach the villages. The PCPA called for a police boycott till their demands were met with. The movement spread like a prairie fire to the far corners of Junglemahal and generated a great deal of thirst and interest in the whole country. Sooner this tribal movement became a movement of all disadvantaged people of the area. Incidentally, Chhotopelia became one of the epicenters of the Maoist movement in West Bengal. To counter the situation, the Union and State Government deployed counter-insurgency forces in Junglemahal.

<i>Case I</i>	Informant: Chhitamoni Murmu, W/O – Gorachand Murmu Age: 55 Years      Sex: Female Village: Chhotopelia Ethnic group: Santal
<p><i>She used to live in a dilapidated earthen hut located at the northern-most end of the village Chhotopelia, which is close to the Modhupur forest. On 5<sup>th</sup> November, 2008 early morning (at about 04.00- 05.00hrs) police came to raid her house to finding out whether there was any an arms or Maoist activist(s). Having failed to find out any evidence, the police went to raid the house of Tapan Mahata, a resident of Melkheria village – a neighbouring village. Incidentally, they got one person named Samsheer Ali who was spending night at Tapan Mahata’s house. According to Chintamoni, Samsheer Ali was a</i></p>	

*labour contractor and used to supply labours from Chhotopelia and its surrounding villages to namal (i.e., the plain areas of Purba Medinipur and Burdwan districts) for the past few years. Samsher who was originally a resident of Jara village in Hatpukur, Chandrakona Road, came to that place on the day before the incidence to make a contact with the prospective labourers. But the police on raid suspected Samsher as a Maoist activist and dragged him out ruthlessly. Samsher was trying to convince the police but his all effort went on vain. He was then trying to draw attention of the villagers to rescue him by uttering that he had been helping the people of the villages of that area for years by providing them an earning opportunity and they should save him from police oppression. The incidence prompted Chhitamoni and other villagers to follow the police to rescue him. On the road that leads toward Joypur, the villagers came out to protest against police atrocity and tried to take back Samsher from the police custody. The police retaliated on the mob and in the incidence Chhitamoni received a severe blow of bayonet on her left eye and she was rushed to the Lalgarh Hospital by the villagers. After primary treatment, she was advised to consult good eye specialist in Kolkata. Being a very poor woman, she could not find any way to visit Kolkata for the purpose and ultimately lost the eye. Even she was not offered with any financial support or compensation from the state government till date.*

After formation of the PCPA in a meeting at Lalgarh the movement spread out across the Junglemahal area of West Bengal. It took no time to make Jhargram as one of the important epicenters of the movement led by the PCPA. Interestingly, the Maoists

came out to back the movement against administration. They provided the logistics, arms and strategic knowledge to resist the counter-insurgency forces. They tried to convince the people of the area to support them. Initially, the tribal people of Aushabandhi did not agree to receive support from the Maoists in order to avoid the attack from the counter-insurgency forces. The villagers became divided into two groups, viz., the counter-insurgency supporters and the Maoist supporters. The Hari and Teli communities were supporting the counter insurgency programme but the tribal people were supporting the Maoists. But on the situational compulsion and pressure from the activists and from the *Majhimahal*, the traditional regional political unit of the Santals, they came forward to support the Maoists. The people of Kashitoria also came forward to support the movement as it was projected to save their rights and dignity as a tribal folk.

At Shimuldanga the situation was quite different. Before 2007, the houses in the village were located within the present premises of the Shalboni steel plant. At the time of land acquisition by the Government for the plant, the agricultural and some residential plots of Shimuldanga and other eighteen villages were taken over. Most of the villagers lost their agricultural land in lieu of a mere compensation of one lakh rupees per *bigha*. The residential lands of a few villages were also taken over. Shimuldanga was one of such villages. The steel plant area basically comprised of the forest land. The villagers who were residing on the forest land obviously did not have any deeds and eventually failed to receive any compensation or rehabilitation. When the Government issued notice to them to vacate the place, they were not in a position to protest against Government action since they did not have proper land records. With a nominal monetary help, the families compelled to migrate to another neighbouring village and some families settled

down at the adjoining area of the main factory. Under this situation, the Maoists came forward to support them in their protest against the Government action. The Maoists tried to convince them in the meetings convened at night within the forest or its adjoining villages. Initially the villagers did not have the courage to support them. But when the members of their *majhimahal* started supporting the Maoists, they had no other option but to support them (*Case II*)

<i>Case II</i>	Informant: Relamala Saren (name changed) Age: 32 Sex: Female Village: Shimuldanga Ethnic group: Santal
<p><i>She used to live in a dilapidated mud house located beside the sidewall of Salboni Steel plant. At the time of land acquisition by the Government, her residential and agricultural land was taken over. She got only one lakh rupees as compensation. Now she has a hut on the forest land. She had no deeds. During the Maoist movement, especially after the Shalbani incident in 2008, the torture over the villagers was increasing gradually. Police became aggressive and intensified their activities against the poor tribals. She was tortured about 10 to 12 times. During the day time police used to torture her suspecting her as a Maoist or a supporter of the Maoist organization. And, at night the Maoist cadres used to force her to support their movement and to attend their meeting. She did not have the power to deny the Maoist cadres. Ultimately she became a Maoist supporter in order to having a mere survival against the police oppression.</i></p>	

At Aushabandhi village, the people supported the Maoist activities on the issue of deprivation and underdevelopment. They were deprived of Government schemes; they had inadequate infrastructure, poor economic condition, absence of development facility,

inadequate drinking water facility, joblessness, harassment from the counter-insurgency forces, having practically no access to the forest after enactment of the forest right acts, etc. Initially, they were hesitant to support the Maoists. After attending some meetings with the Maoists, they appreciated the Maoist agenda in favour of their rights and became interested in the Maoist activities. Thus, in the process the leadership of the so-called Lalgah movement was taken over by the Maoist activists.

Many of them became a Maoist supporter owing to the torture and violence by the hired goons or the security forces (Cases-III & IV).

<i>Case -III</i>	Informant: Joyram Saren (name changed) Age: 59 Sex: Male Ethnic group: Santal Village: Aushabandhi
<p><i>He was the Majhi of the village. Everybody in the village respected him. One day he was threatened by the harmads, who were housed in a camp in the neighbouring village, to inform them about the Maoist activists. He felt insulted. Eventually after some days he attended a meeting convened by the Maoists. They were talking against police oppression and how get rid of that. He was moved with their pro-people approach and decided to support the Maoists.</i></p>	

<i>Case -IV</i>	Informant: Jhimli Saren (name changed)
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	Age: 37 Sex: Female Ethnic group: Santal Village: Shimuldanga
<p><i>She was a widow who had lost her husband about 3 years ago. Her husband was suffering from cancer. After the mine explosion near Midnapore, police came to raid her house to find out the suspect or arms. When they did not find out anything within her house, they checked her body if she stashed any weapon in the inner part of her body. There was no lady police in that team. For her, while the primary duty of police was to protect people they were misusing power. At that situation it was the bonparty (Maoists) who offered help and protection from such harassment. So they had no option but to support the bonparty.</i></p>	

The growth of the Maoist movement in Janglemahal witnessed four phases, viz., formative, organizational, arms struggle and terror operation (Midya, 2014: 47). The formative phase witnessed preparation for the Maoist movement in the area through some popular agenda like (i) raising question on the lasting poverty of the people of the area and their unending misery under the neoliberal economic policy in India, (ii) fighting for the causes for tribal and other disadvantaged people, (iii) encouraging women to resist their drunken husbands, (iv) eliminating gambling in village fair and other cultural programmes, etc. These activities garnered spontaneous support towards the Maoists. The organizational phase, the second phase, aimed at taking control of the area keeping political leaders and administrative machinery under pressure. Popular activities

undertaken during this phase included (i) initiative to eliminate strongholds of big landholders and contractors who were for the most cases the shadow actors of some political leaders in power, (ii) protecting local people from police harassment, and (iii) attempt to eliminate political patronage in every sphere of life. During the arms struggle phase, regular mass mobilization programmes of the Maoists brought in administrative collapse on the part of the then government. The Maoists became the political authority in the Junglemahal area. This phase exhibited the programmes such as (i) organization of rallies at night, (ii) attacking ration shops that were allegedly responsible for siphoning off rice and wheat into the black market, (iii) demolishing offices of the CPI (Marxist), the ruling party at that time, and the houses of its leaders. And finally, during the terror operation phase, the people became terrorized and frustrated over the Maoist activities which included (i) delivering instant justice through setting up of *ganaadaalat* (i.e., people's court), (ii) compulsory participation from each and every house in the night rallies, especially of women (iii) discrediting independent tribal protest, (iv) extortion of money, (v) involvement in kidnapping and forced disappearance of common men, (vi) killing of poor men, etc.

The then State Government and the Union Government deployed counter-insurgency forces at Junglemahal area to finish the Maoists and to bring the situation under control. The basic principle of the counter-insurgency forces was to 'clear and hold' the area. The forces were also sometimes assisted by the armed goons hired for retaliation by the then ruling party. This measure resulted in increased violence at Junglemahal villages and killings of poor disadvantaged people. This happened during 2008- 2010 in particular (Table 3.10).

It is observed that though initially the peoples of Junglemahal area appreciated the positive attitude of the Maoists and came forward to support them. But when the Maoists adopted terror operation and forced the women to attend the night rallies, the tribal people became frustrated and were trying to keep distance from the activists. This was because the tribal people were basically peace loving people and they had high value for the women. This was completely unacceptable to them to allow their women to face the aggression of the Maoists or the counter-insurgency forces. The villagers were not willing to leave their young children to be involved in the destructive activities led by the Maoists. They could not think of a situation that could invite killing of their own fellows and neighbouring poor people.

By 2011 a new government came into power in West Bengal. The Communist Party of India (Maoist) Politburo and Central Military Commission member Mallojula Koteswara Rao, commonly called as Kishenji, was killed on 24 November, 2011 by the counter-insurgency forces. Another important leader Shasadhar Mahato was also killed. These killings definitely weakened the Maoist movement. Simultaneously, the new government came with inclusive development approach. Educational institutions and administrative offices were opened. Deserving families were allotted with BPL cards. New schemes (e.g., *Khadya Sathi*, *Annapurna Yojana*, *Antyodaya Yojana*) were launched to provide rice and other basic amenities to all needy families in Junglemahal area through the Public Distribution System (PDS). The local Maoist cadres got social or political rehabilitation. Some Maoist leaders were compelled to surrender with arms before the security forces and got suitable jobs and one time incentive that was varying with the ranks and profiles of the leaders and the type of arms they handed over. Now the

situation is under control and the administration has regained its authority. And, the Maoist violence has become weak in West Bengal. Year-wise number of fatalities in West Bengal as well as in Paschim Medinipur, for example, has reduced (Tables 3.10 and 3.11). The Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India observation is also reflecting the similar trend (Table 3.12). However, the counter-insurgency force is still in operation in the affected areas.

Table 3.10: Fatalities in left-Wing Extremism in West Bengal: 2008-2016 (MHA)

Years	Incidents	Civilians	Security Force Personnel	Naxalite	Total
2016	0	0	0	0	0
2015	0	0	0	0	0
2014	0	0	0	0	0
2013	1	0	0	0	0
2012	6	0	0	1	1
2011	92	43	2	5	50
2010	350	223	35	42	300
2009	255	144	14	8	166
2008	35	19	7	0	26
Total	739	429	56	55	543

Source: [www.satp.org](http://www.satp.org)

Table 3.11: Fatalities in Left Wing Extremism in Paschim Medinipur

Years	Civilian	Security Force	Terrorists	Total
2010	289	34	50	373
2011	32	1	8	41
2012	2	0	2	4
2013	0	0	1	1
Total	123	35	61	419

Source: [www.satp.org](http://www.satp.org)

Table 3.12: State wise extent of LWE violence during 2010-2017

State	2010		2011		2012		2013		2014		2015		2016		2017	
	Incidents	Deaths	Incidents	Deaths	Incidents	Deaths	Incidents	Deaths	Incidents	Deaths	Incidents	Deaths	Incidents	Deaths	Incidents	Deaths
Andhra Pradesh	100	24	54	9	67	13	28	7	18	04	35	08	17	06	26	07
Bihar	307	97	316	63	166	44	177	69	163	32	110	17	129	28	99	22
Chhattisgarh	625	343	465	204	370	109	355	111	328	112	466	101	395	107	373	130
Jharkhand	501	157	517	182	480	163	387	152	384	103	210	56	323	85	251	56
Madhya Pradesh	7	1	8	0	11	0	1	0	3	0	0	0	12	2	3	1
Maharashtra	94	45	109	54	134	41	71	19	70	28	55	18	73	23	69	16
Odisha	218	79	192	53	171	45	101	35	103	26	92	28	86	27	81	29
Telangana	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	8	4	14	5	11	2	7	0	5	2
Uttar Pradesh	6	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>West Bengal</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
Others	5	0	6	1	8	0	7	0	8	0	10	0	6	0	1	0
Total	2213	1005	1760	611	1415	415	1136	397	1091	310	1089	230	1048	278	908	263

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs (Government of India), Annual Report 2017-2018