

CHAPTER III

LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY IN INDIA

1. *INDIAN LANGUAGES : SOME GENERALITIES*

India is one of the most diversified and multilingual countries of the world in which more than a thousand of mother-tongues were recorded by the census of India. All these languages of India belong to various families and are found at various stages of development. Some of them are highly developed, possessing a rich literature and fairly long literary tradition while others are dialects only and do not have any literature of their own. Further, there are some languages spoken by a large number of people distributed over a large and contiguous geographical region while many of them are spoken by a very small number living in pockets of the compact linguistic areas (Mazumdar, 1970:1-2). The census of India 1961 reported that there were 210 mother-tongues having not more than one or two speakers each. Further, a little more than 3 lakh speakers declared 113 mother-tongues classified as foreign languages. The following table has been prepared by Hiremath (1969) in order to see the number of mother-tongues according to their numerical strength in various class groups .

TABLE 3
MOTHER-TONGUES WITH NUMERICAL STRENGTH

Mother-tongues	No.of speakers
73	1
137	2-10
173	11-100
109	101-500
41	501-1000
87	1001-5000
30	5001-10,000
73	10,001-100,000
59	100,000 and over

Source: R. C. Hiremath, *Language and Society in India* (1969 : 261)

At the national level, 15 languages have been recognized by the Constitution of India as national languages. These 15 languages of course do not present by any means all the languages of India but constitute more than 95 per cent of its population (table 4).

TABLE 4
NATIONAL LANGUAGES AND THEIR PERCENTAGE TO THE TOTAL
POPULATION

Language	Percentage	Language	Percentage
1. Hindi	39.94	9. Malayalam	3.92
2. Telugu	8.20	10. Oriya	3.46
3. Bengali	7.72	11. Punjabi	2.81
4. Marathi	7.50	12. Kashmiri	0.48
5. Tamil	6.76	13. Sindhi	0.29
6. Urdu	5.34	14. Sanskrit	--
7. Gujarati	5.02		
8. Kannada	4.06		

Source: *Census of India, 1981, Social and Cultural Table, Ser.1, pt.IV-A.*

2. DISTRIBUTION OF LANGUAGES IN INDIA

All the languages/dialects of India may be classified into four distinct language families i.e. Austric, Sino-Tibetan, Dravidian and Indo-Aryan. The Indo-Aryan languages are the most important accounting for more than two-thirds of India's total population. The second most important family is that of the Dravidian languages whose speakers'

constitute about one-fourth of the total population of the country. The Austric and Sino-Tibetan speaking people can be classified into third and fourth categories respectively (Chatterji, 1963 : 13).

TABLE 5
LANGUAGE FAMILIES AND THEIR POPULATION IN INDIA

	Population	Percent
Austric	7,705,011	1.16
Tibeto-Burman	4,071,701	0.62
Dravidian	157,836,723	23.86
Indo-Aryan	491,086,116	74.24
Foreign and unclassified	429,102	0.10

Source: *Census of India, 1981 Social and Cultural Table*, Ser.1,pt.IV-A.

2.1 AUSTRIC

The speakers of the Austric family of languages are by and large confined to the tribal people of the country. The languages belonging to this family are considered to be the oldest of the Indian sub-continent and believed to be spread

over the whole of India at one time (Chatterji, 1963:14). *Austronesian*, a sub-family of the Austric is spoken in Malaya, Indonesia, Hawaii and Malagasy islands. The *Austro-Asiatic*, another sub-family of the Austric is confined in India. The *Austro-Asiatic* consists of two main branches - *Munda* and *Monkhmer*. There is a further sub-division of *Monkhmer* into two groups i.e. *Khasi* and *Nicobarese*.

In India 65 mother-tongues were returned as belonging to the *Austro-Asiatic*. Of these, 7 mother-tongues belong to the *Monkhmer* branch and 58 to the *Munda* branch. The dominant speech communities are Santali, Mundari, Ho, Bhumij, Korku, Kharia, and Savara belonging to the *Munda* branch having more than one lakh speakers each. Among the *Monkhmer* branch, the *Khasi* was returned by 3 lakhs while *Nicobarese* by about 14000 speakers only.

The speakers of the *Munda* branch are highly unevenly distributed. Their distribution by and large found in contiguous area over almost 70 districts in central and eastern India. The region extends from the Vindhyan hills in the west through the Chotanagpur plateau to the north-east India. (Grierson, 1967:28). Broadly speaking the western part of the region is dominated by the Korku, and Nihali,

the central by Mundari, Ho, Bhumij, and Kharria, the eastern by the Santali, the south by Savara, and Gadaba, and the north-eastern by the Khasi while Nicobarese is spoken in the Nicobar islands only. Languages like Santali, Mundari, Bhumji, etc. are not only spoken by large number but they occupied a vast geographical area also. On the other hand Asuri, Birjia, Turi Muasi, Thar, etc. are highly compact and confined to one or two districts only (Nigam, 1971).

2.2 SINO-TIBETAN

As many as 226 mother-tongues have been returned in 1961 with a total speakers of 4 million accounting for 0.62 per cent to the total population in India. The languages belonging to this family are by and large spoken by the tribal population of the country over a vast geographical area from Ladakh and Baltistan in the west to the north-eastern frontiers of the country.

The Sino-Tibetan family of languages is divided into two sub-families, namely *Siamese-Chinese* and *Tibeto-Burman*. The languages belonging to *Siamese-Chinese* are spoken outside of the country except one that is khampti/Khamti. It would thus appear that the remaining 225 mother tongues are to be classified under *Tibeto-Burman* sub-family. The Tibeto-

Burman sub-family has been divided into three distinct branches namely, *Tibeto-Himalayan*, *North Assam*, and *Assam-Burmese*. The *Tibeto-Himalayan* branch has been further divided into two groups i.e. the *Tibetan or Bhotia* group and *Himalayan group*. The *Tibetan or Bhotia* group of languages are spoken by more than 2 lakh speakers mostly spread over the states of Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, West Bengal, and Sikkim. *Bhotia*, *Tibetan*, *Balti*, *Ladakhi* and *Lahuli* etc. are important languages belonging to the *Bhotia* group. The another group is known as the *Himalayan group* having with as many as 71.9 thousand speakers and found in Himachal Pradesh. Important languages are *Chamba*, *Limba*, *Lepcha*, etc.

The languages included in the *North-Assam* branch cover approximately the geographical area now delimited as Arunachal Pradesh. Important languages are *Aka*, *Dafla*, *Miri*, *Mishmi*, *Mishing*, etc. Total speakers belonging to this branch are more than 1.4 lakh persons.

Numerically and culturally the *Assam-Burmese* languages are the most important spoken by about 2.8 million people. This branch is divided into five groups viz. *Bodo*, *Naga*, *Kachin*, *Kuki-chin*, and *Burma*. The majority of mother-tongues

are included under Bodo, Naga, and Kuki-chin groups while Kachin and Burma groups fall outside India. Only six mother tongues (2 from Kachin and 4 from Burma groups) are found in India. The Bodo group of languages are the most important and spoken by about 1.23 million people. Important languages of this group are Bodo, Garo, Tripuri, Mikir, Reang, Kachchari, Rabha, Dimasa, etc. The Naga group of languages are mainly returned from Nagaland, Manipur and Arunachal. Important languages of the group are Sema, Angami, Lotha, Tangkhul, Konyak, etc. The Kuki-Chin group of languages have been represented by the largest number of mother-tongues. The area inhabited by the speakers of these languages extends from the Naga hills to Cachar hills and along the Indo-Burma border. Important languages are Manipuri, Mizo, Thado, Hmar, Kuki, etc.

2.3 DRAVIDIAN

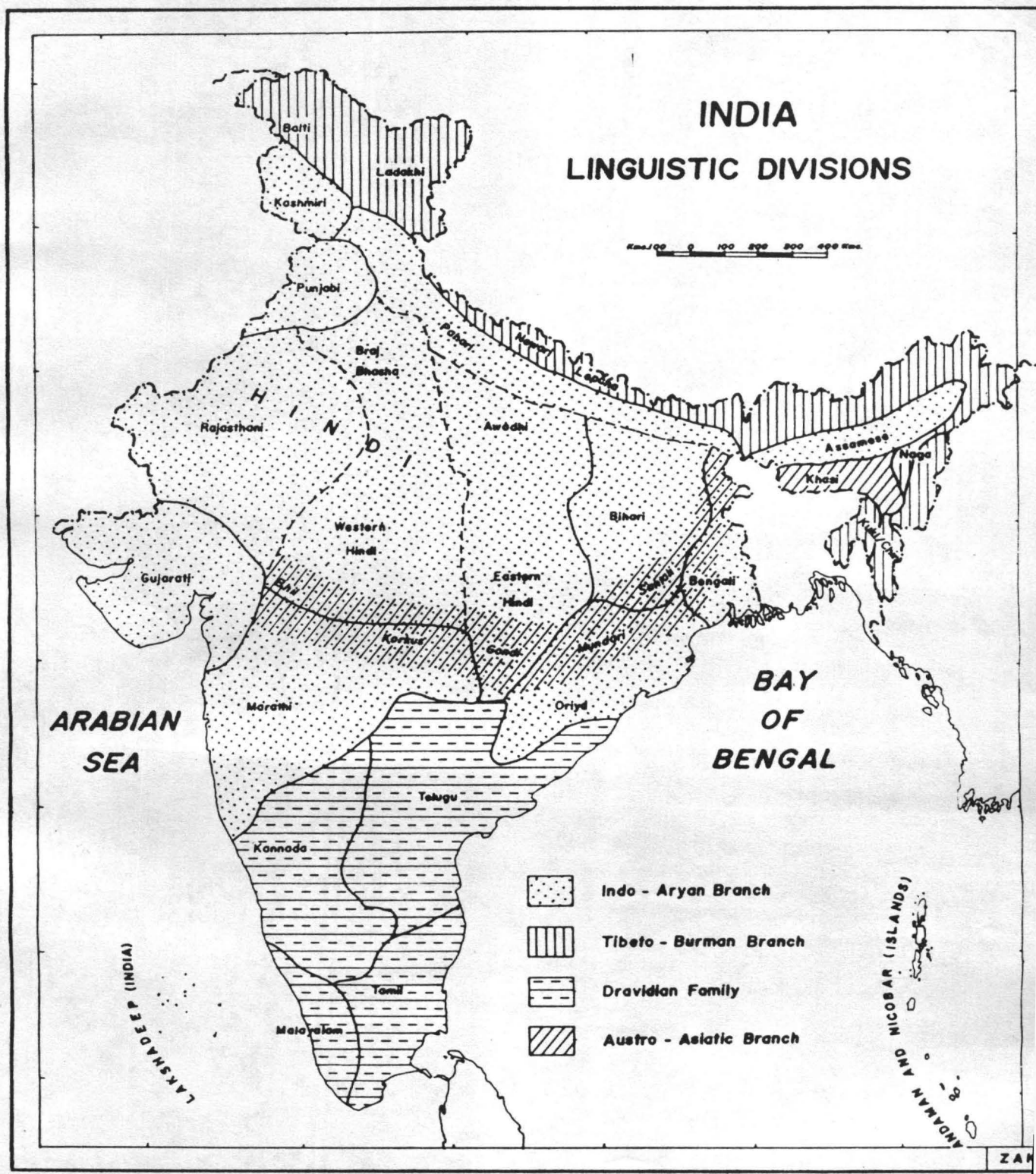
It is already mentioned that the Dravidian language family is represented by 157 million speakers which accounted for about 24 per cent of the total population of the country. In India, it is represented by 153 mother-tongues. Out of the total, 104 mother-tongues have been attested and 49 have been tentatively classified. There are 4 well known literary languages like Tamil, Telugu, Kannada

and Malayalam accounting for almost 96 per cent of the total speakers of this family. All these 4 languages have been specified in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.

The area in which the Dravidian speakers are spread over has been divided into three broad geographical regions such as *the southern, the central and the northern plateau*. The southern group or Dravida includes three important languages i.e. Tamil, Kannada, and Malayalam. All these languages are official language of the states such as Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala. Besides, there are some tribal languages such as Yerukala, Yerava, Kuruba, Tulu, Toda, Kota, Coorgi, etc which have been classified under this group. *The Central or Intermediate* group includes Telugu, the important and official language of Andhra Pradesh. Besides this, there are large number of mother-tongues belonging to tribal people. Among them Gondi, Khond, Koya, Kui, Parji, Kolami and Konda are important spread over the states of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa. *The northern group* is represented by tribal languages such as Kurukh and Malto languages which are mostly found in the state of Bihar.

2.4 INDO-ARYAN

The speakers belonging to this family of languages are distributed over the vast area of the country. The whole central, northern, eastern and western India is occupied by the people belonging to this sub-family of languages (Fig. 4). As many as 574 mother-tongues have been classified under this sub-family which have been returned by 491 million persons accounted for 74.2 per cent to the total population of the country. It consists of some of well known languages which have had great traditions of literary activities and on which there is no dearth of philological literature. The sub-family may be divided into three branches i.e. *Eranian*, *Dardic* and *Indo-Aryan*. Eranian branch of languages is now found outside the geographical limits of India. The Dardic branch is represented by three groups such as *kafir*, *khovar*, and *Dard*. The only group found in India is *Dard* group mainly represented by *Shina*, *Kashmiri* and *Kohistani*. Thus, it is obvious that most of the languages belonging to the sub-family in India can be classified under the *Indo-Aryan* branch. This branch is further divided into three sub-branches i.e. *Outer*, *Inner*, and *Mediate*. The *Outer* sub-branch consists of three distinct groups i.e. *North-western*, *Southern* and *Eastern*. The *North-western* group is represented by *Lahnda* and *Sindhi* languages. The majority speakers of



SOURCE :- Baldev Raj Nayar, NATIONAL COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE POLICY IN INDIA, New York.

Fig. 4

these languages are found in Gujarat and Maharashtra though its original seat lies in Pakistan. The southern group includes two major languages such as Marathi and Konkani along with some tribal languages. Marathi is the state language of Maharashtra while konkani is the state language of Goa. The Eastern group includes four important language i.e. Oriya, Bihari, Bengali and Assamese spoken mostly to the east of Varanasi. Except Bihari, the remaining languages are official language of Orissa, West Bengal and Assam respectively. Bihari includes three main local dialects i.e. Bhojpuri, Magahi/Magadhi and Maithili spoken in different geographical regions of Bihar.

The Mediate sub-branch includes Awadhi, Bagheli, and Chhattisgarhi altogether known as *Kosali* or Eastern Hindi. It is spoken in the eastern Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. The *Inner* sub-branch is divided into two groups i.e. *Central* and *Pahari*. The central group includes Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Rajasthani, and Gujarati. All these languages are spoken in the territory covered by the states of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana, Punjab, Western Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. Besides, these, there are Bhili and Khandeshi dialects spoken by large member of tribal population spread over central and western India. The *Pahari*

group is divided into three geographical regions i.e. Western, Central, and Eastern. The Western group includes languages like Sirmauri, Mandi, Bhadrawati, Gaddi, Chamba, Churahi, Jansauri etc. returned especially from Himachal Pradesh. The Central Pahari includes Kumauni and Garhwali from the Himalayas. The Eastern is represented by Nepali, the most important language of the Pahari group. It is spoken in India by more than one million people. Majority of them are found in the districts of West Bengal, Assam, and north-east states of India.

3. TRIBAL LANGUAGES/DIALECTS IN INDIA

It is difficult to define tribal language because there has not been clear-cut definition evolved by linguists. In fact, linguistically no language is superior or inferior and backward or forward. Some languages may be tribal in one region while the same may be a well-developed language in another region. Further, some language has been very important and dominant in one period while the same may not be popular in recent times. All this depends upon circumstances and socio-political atmosphere prevailing at places suitable to flourish and develop for a language. But to explain the tribal languages one may agree that languages having no literary tradition of their own, spoken by people

belonging to ethnic groups and living in relatively under-developed parts of the country may be grouped under the category of tribal languages.

3.1 CLASSIFICATION OF TRIBAL LANGUAGES/DIALECTS

In India, majority of tribal languages belong to the *Austro-Asiatic* branch and *Tibeto-Burman* branch of language families. Altogether these two families account for about 12 million speakers. Besides, there are 3 million speakers of the tribal languages like Gondi, Kui, Khond and Kurukh etc. belong to the *Dravidian* languages and another million speakers of tribal languages like Bhili, Banjari etc. belong to the *Indo-Aryan* are also considered tribal language. (Royburman, 1969:251).

The number of tribal languages varies from time to time. In 1960, the number was 56 only. It rose to slightly above 100 during 1961 census. These 100 tribal languages include 367 mother-tongues classified under four language families of India besides 46 tribal mother-tongues which have been returned by the tribes and could not be classified (table - 6).

TABLE 6

TRIBAL MOTHER-TONGUES UNDER DIFFERENT LANGUAGE FAMILIES

Sino-Tibetan	226	Indo-Aryan	36
Austro-Asiatic	65	Unclassified	46
Dravidian	40		

Source: *Census of India, 1961, Language Table, vol.I, pt.II-c(ii).*

4. DISTRIBUTION OF SELECTED TRIBAL DIALECTS

It is necessary to mention here that the four tribal languages have been selected for this study. These languages are Santali, Mundari, Korku and Bhili. Santali and Mundari are spoken by and large in the Chotanagpur plateau and its surrounding areas and belong to the Austric language family. Korku also belonging to the Austric family of languages, is confined to the hills of the central India i.e. Satpura, Maikal and Mahadeo. On the other hand Bhili belongs to the Indo-Aryan and spoken in the western parts of India including parts of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.

4.1 SANTALI

Literary meaning of Santali is the language of Santals spoken at least in 37 districts of eastern India. Grierson has delimited its boundary which extends for about 300 miles from the Ganges in the north to the Baitarni in the South. Linguistically Grierson treated it as one of the dialects of Kherwari language (Grierson, 1967 : 31). According to 1981 Census total speakers classified under this speech was 4.2 million. Out of which Bihar accounted for more than 2.1 million followed by West Bengal 1.6 million and Orissa 0.62 million speakers.

Santali is a comparatively well known language and about 57 per cent of the total Austric tribes declared it as their mother-tongue. It has reached a much higher stage of development than any other Austric languages. Though it is the principal language of Santals, there are other tribes who also declared it as their mother-tongue. It is considered a remarkable uniform language. There are two dialects and the discernible dialect difference in the south and north may be noticed because of certain recognised cultural differences but these do not differ much from the standard form of speech. The dialect division corresponds the two major territorial groups recognised among the

Santals. The first is towards the north of the Damodar river which includes Santal parganas and its adjoining areas. The second lies to the south of the Damodar river comprising parts of south Bihar, north of Orissa and south west of West Bengal. Linguistically the north Santali is considered pure and the purest form of Santali is spoken in Santal Parganas while the southern Santali is considered corrupt (Kochar, 1970:24).

Since Santali had no script of its own, it has adopted the Roman script under the influence of Christian missionaries. These missionaries encouraged the Santals to write in Santali also. The introduction of Hindi script and Bengali script by the influence of neighbours in respective territories is a recent phenomenon. Of late, the introduction of Alchiki script, has aroused a great debate (Sen, 1984:24).

The distributional pattern of Santali in Santal Parganas district is uneven. Except Sahibganj anchal, Santali is reported from all the anchals but its share varies from 3 per cent in Deoghar to 71.6 in Gopikander anchal. There are 5 anchals such as Amrapara, Pakuria, Kathikund, Shikaripara, and Gopikander in which more than 60

per cent of the total population registered themselves as the speakers of Santali as mother-tongue. In another 15 anchals the share of Santali speaking population ranges from 40 to 60 per cent. There are altogether 12 anchals in which its share is less than 20 per cent. There are 8 anchals in which the share of Santali varying between 20 and 40 per cent (table - 7)

Santali language is highly concentrated in 12 anchals of the district. These are Borio, Boarijor, Maheshpur, Poreyahat, Ramgarh, Masalia, Jama, Dumka, Pakuria, Shikaripara, Nala, and Jamtara found almost in a contiguous belt located in the southern part of the district. Another 16 anchals where the index value ranges from 0.50 to 1.00 have been classified as medium concentration zone. It surrounds the high concentration zone. The low concentration was found in 12 anchals where the index value was found less than 0.50 (Fig. 5)

4.2 MUNDARI

It is the second most important tribal language of the Chotanagpur plateau and is the principal language of the Munda tribes. The principal home of this language is in Ranchi district where it is spoken in its purest form in the

TABLE 7
DISTRIBUTION OF SANTALI IN SANTAL PARGANAS 1961

Percentage	No. of anchals	Name of anchals
< 80	-	
60-80	5	Amrapara, Kathikund, Gopi Kander, Pakuria, Shikaripara.
40-60	15	Borio, Boarijor, Sunderpaharia, Taljhari, Pathna, Littipara, Hiranpur, Maheshpur, Masalia, Jama, Dumka, Ranishwar, Nala, Jamtara, Ramgarh.
20-40	8	Pakur, Poreyahat, Saraiyahat, Jarmundi, Karon, Paljori, Kundahit, Narayanpur.
> 20	12	Meherma, Mahagama, Pathargama, Godda, Rajmahal, Barhait, Barharwa, Mohanpur, Sarwan, Deoghar, Madhupur, Sarath.

Concentration of Santali in Santal Parganas 1961

Index value	No. of. anchals	Name of anchals
< 1	12	Borio, Boarijor, Maheshpur, Poreyahat, Ramgarh, Masalia, Jama, Dumka, Pakuria, Shikaripara, Nala, Jamtara.
0.5-1	16	Godda, Sunder Paharia, Taljhari, Barhait, Pathna, Littipara, Hiranpur, Pakur, Amrapara, Jarmundi, Paljori, Kothikund, Gopikandar, Ranishwar, Kundahait, Narainpur.
> 0.5	12	Maherma, Mahagawa, Pathergawa, Rajmahal, Barharwa, Saraiyahat, Mohanpur, Sarwan, Deoghar, Madhupur, Karon, Sarath.

DISTRICT SANTAL PARGANAS SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION & CONCENTRATION OF SANTALI, (1961).

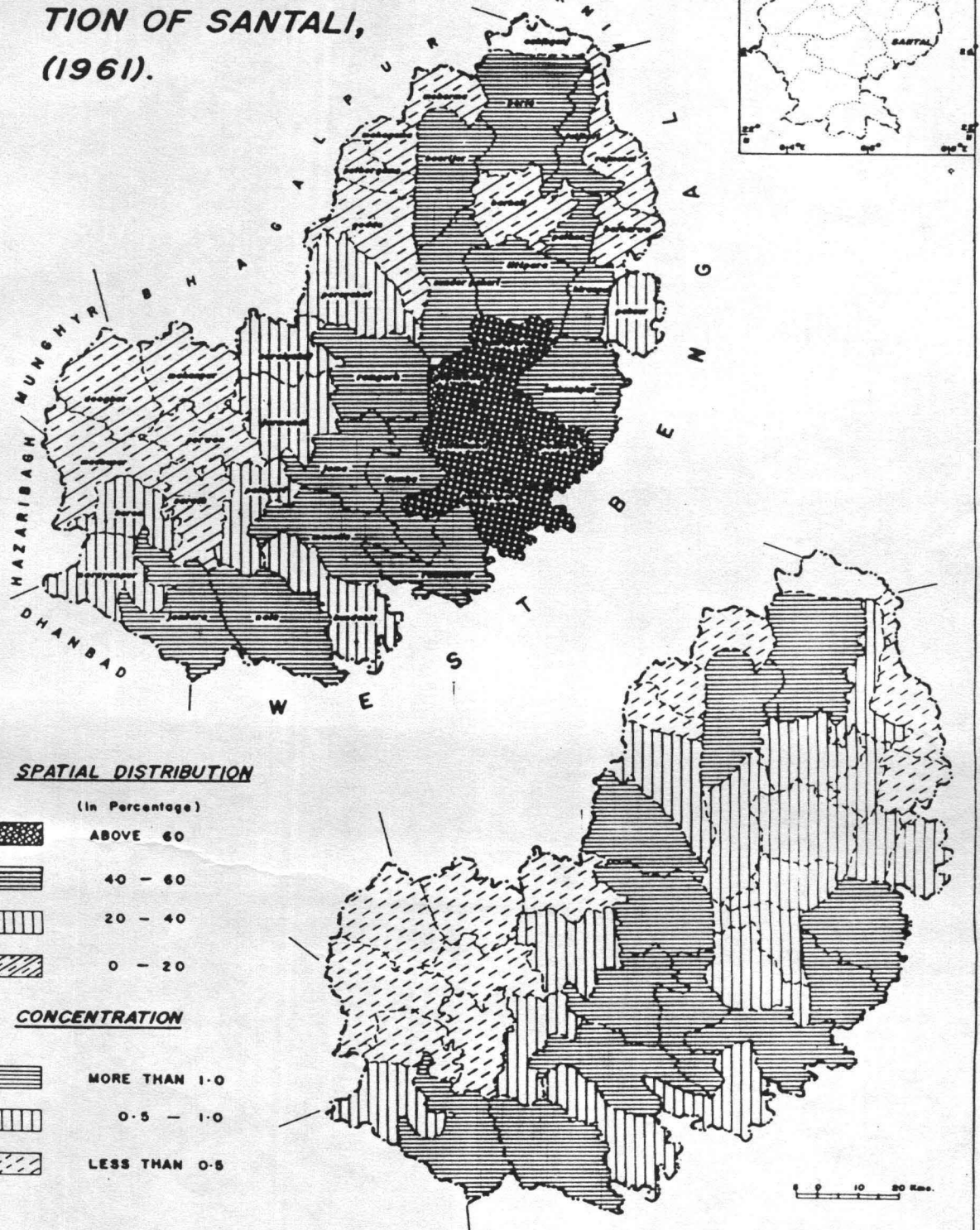


Fig. 5

Khunti sub-division which lies in the south-east of Ranchi town. Besides Chotanagpur plateau, emigrants have further brought this language to Jalpaiguri, Dinajpur, Tripura, and Tea gardens of Assam. Altogether it is spoken at least in 41 districts of eastern India with a total population of 1.1 million population. Out of which 6.5 lakh speakers reside in Bihar only. The second and third places occupied by the states of Orissa and West Bengal with 3.6 and 0.7 lakh speakers respectively.

Like Santali, Mundari is also a uniform language and everywhere in the Chotanagpur the language remains almost identical. The difference is mainly to be found in the vocabulary borrowed from Aryan forms of speech. On the basis of such difference, Mundari may be classified into four types i.e. *Tamari* found in the anchals of Tamar, Bundu, Sonahatu, etc. *Hansda*, spoken in the anchals of khunti, Murhu etc.; *Naguri*, spoken in Torpa, Gobindpur etc. and lastly *Kera* spoken around Ranchi town. It is important to mention here that a large section of Oraon tribes in Ranchi district has adopted Mundari as their mother-tongue and they are known as Kera Mundari.

The distribution of Mundari is also not uniform in Ranchi district though the district is the home of this language. Out of 38 anchals, there are only 4 anchals in which the share of Mundari is more than 50 per cent. The share reaches a little more than 81 per cent in Tamar II (Erki) anchal whereas in Murhu anchal it is returned by 78.7 per cent people. There are 18 anchals in which Mundari has been registered by less than 5 per cent of the total population (table - 8).

Mundari is highly concentrated in 7 anchals in which the value of index is more than 4. These anchals are Tamar II, Murhu, Khijri, Kalebira, Bano, and Topra found in a contiguous area lying in the south and eastern part of the district. There are 9 anchals in which the index value ranges from 1 to 4 encompassing the western and northern parts of the district. The value of concentration index is less than one in 22 anchals, may be considered the low concentration of Mundari language (Fig. 6).

4.3 KORKU

It is the western most dialect of the Munda branch of languages which is spoken mainly by the Korku tribes. The home of this language lies in the Satpura, Maikal and

TABLE 8
DISTRIBUTION OF MUNDARI IN RANCHI DISTRICT-1961

Percentage	No. of anchals	Name of anchals
<80	1	Tamar II
60-80	3	Murhu, Khunti, Torpa.
40-60	2	Khijri, Kolebira.
20-40	6	Tamar-I, Bundu, Lapung, Basia, Konbir, Thethaitnagar.
>20	26	Burmu, Kanke, Ormanjhi, Angara, Silli, Sonahatau, Gamharia, Ratu, Mandra, Bero, Kerra, Palkot, Gumla, Sisai, Kuru, Lohardaga, Kisko, Bishunpur, Ghagra, Dumri, Chainpur, Raidih, Simdega, Kurdeg, Bolba, Bano.

Concentration of Mundari in Ranchi district-1961

Index	no. of anchals	Name of anchals
< 4	7	Tamar-II, Murhu, Khunti, Khijri, Kolebira, Bano, Torpa.
1-4	9	Kankes, Tamar-II, Bundu, Lapung, Kerra, Basia, Konbir, Ghagra, Thethaitnagar.
> 1	22	Burmu, Ormanjhi, Angara, Silli, Sonahatau, Gamahria, Ratu, Mandar, Bero, Palkot, Gumla, Sisai, Kuru, Loherdaga, Kiska, Bishunpur, Dumri, Chainpur, Raidih, Sindega, Kurdeg, Bolba.

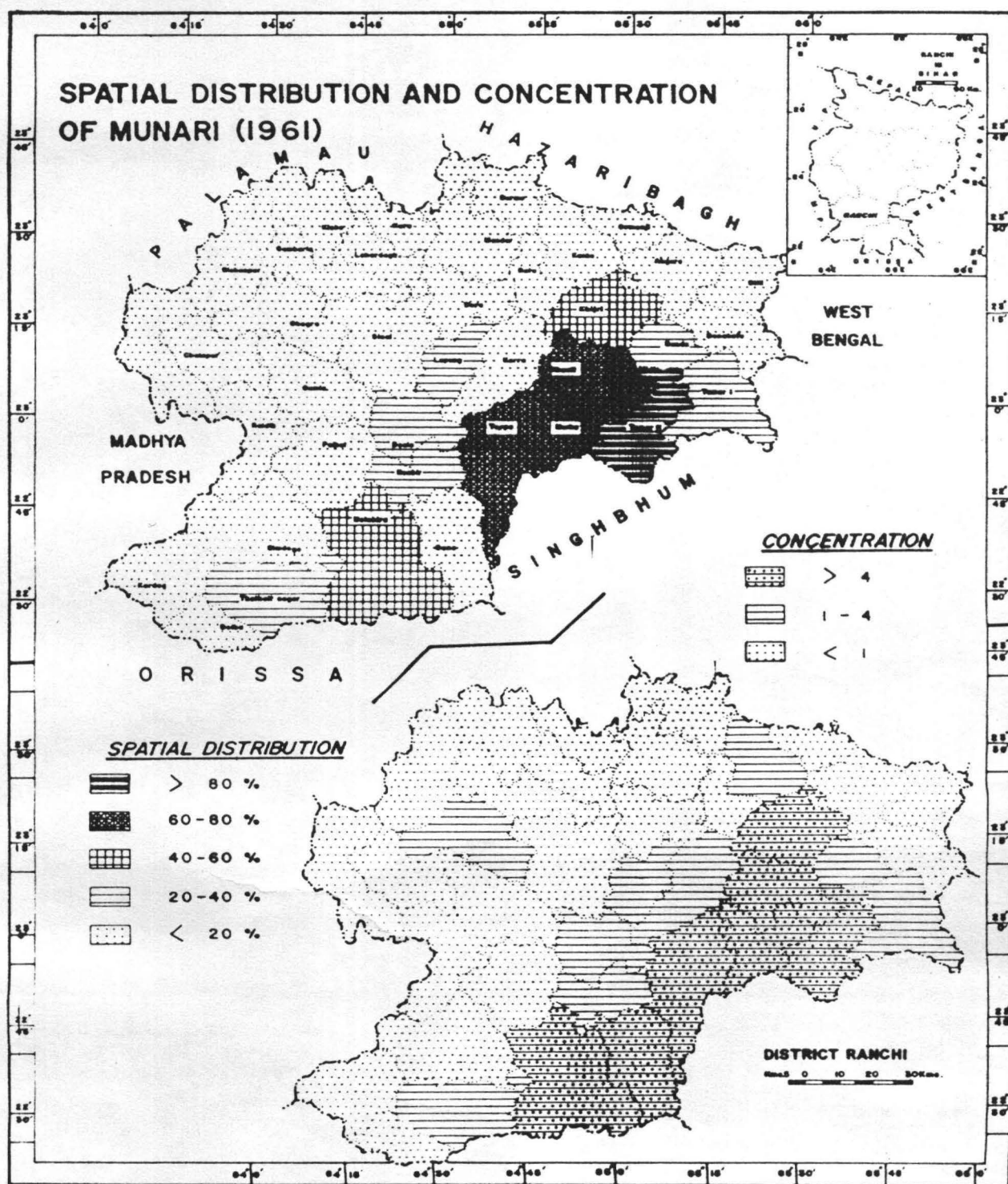


Fig. 6

Mehadeo hills. It was returned from 8 districts of Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh with a total population of 3.6 lakh speakers. Out of which, Madhya Pradesh alone accounted for more than 2.5 lakh speakers. Proceeding from the west it is spoken in Nimar to Chhindwara district in the east and Amravati in the south to Dewas district in the north.

Linguistically it is also a uniform language. There is only one dialect of Korku i.e. Muwasi, spoken in Chhindwara. It does not differ much from ordinary Korku (Grierson, 1967 : 167). Nearly 90 per cent of the Korkus were returned as speaking their own language. Many old songs have been preserved. It is a language of the same kind as kharia and Juang but it has not, however, been influenced by Aryan speeches the same extent as those form of speeches. It is more closely related to kherawari than Juang and Kharia. But investigations showed that the language is in a state of decay and Hindi and Marathi terms have crept into its vocabulary.

The distribution of Korku language in East Nimar district is almost uniform in Hersud and Burhanpur tahsils. It is spoken as mother-tongue by one-fourth of the total

population in Hersud tahsil and by about 22 per cent of the total population in Burhanpur tahsil. Both these tahsils have high concentration of Korku language with the concentration index of 23.4 for Hersud and 21.3 for Burhanpur. The Khandwa tahsil which lies in the north of the district, accounts for only 2 per cent of its total population who declared Korku language as their mother-tongue. This tahsil may be classed as the least concentration of Korku language with the index score of 3.3 only (Fig. 7).

4.4 BHILI

It is the principal language of the Bhil tribes. It is mainly derived from Gujarati, but influenced by Marwari, and Marathi. In Nimar it becomes a corrupt form of Marathi. Bhili contains a number of non-Aryan words, some of which appear to come from the Mundari, and others from the Dravidian languages (Russell, 1916:293).

The distribution of Bhili may be described as an irregularly shaped triangle, with the apex at the Aravalli hills in the north and the base roughly corresponds the border areas of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra including 53 districts of these states having a total

DISTRICT KHANDWA

(EAST NIMAR)

SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION &

CONCENTRATION OF
KORKU (1961)

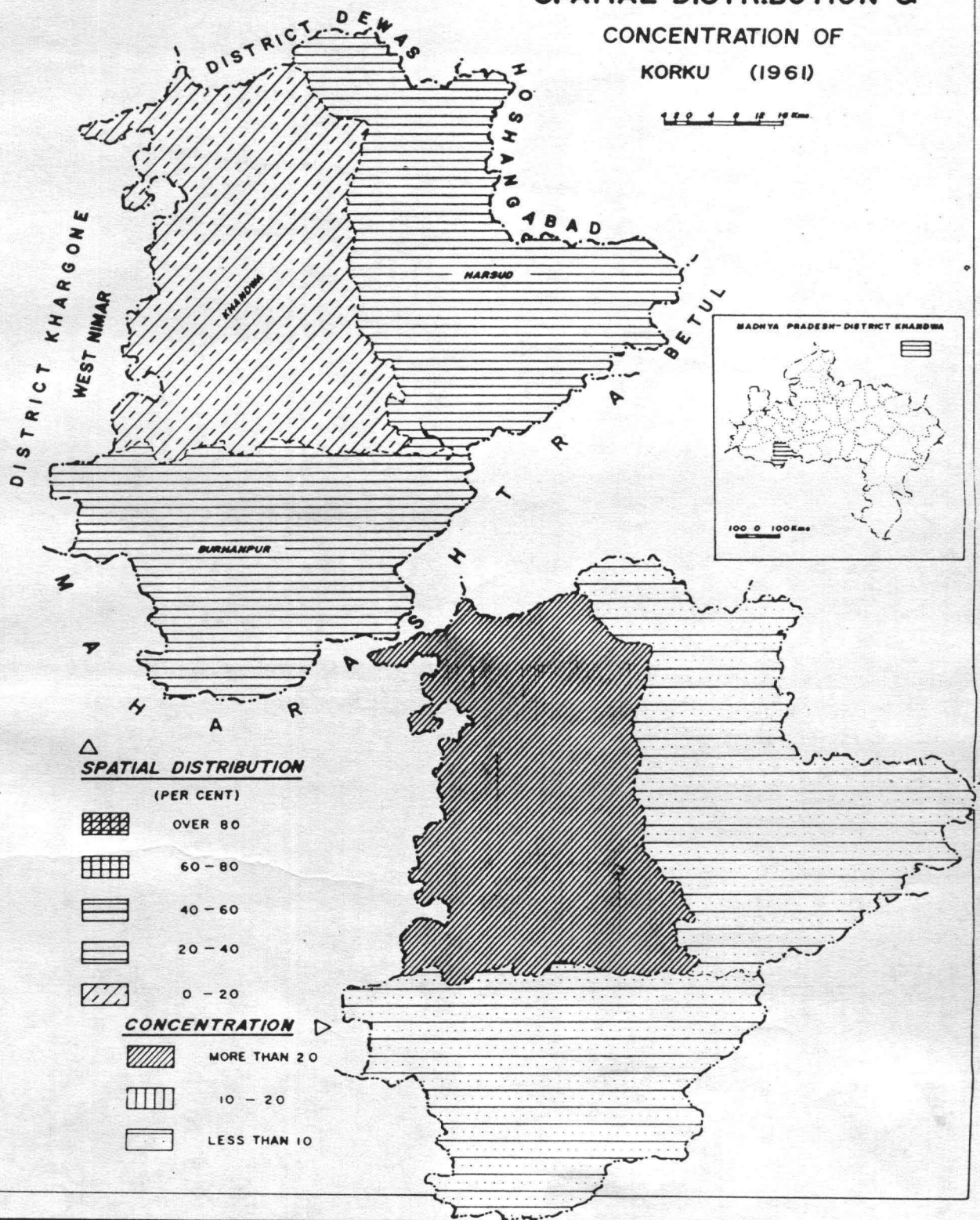


Fig. 7

population of about 4.5 million speakers. Out of the total, 1.6 million speakers of this language is returned from Rajasthan, 1.6 million from Madhya Pradesh and 0.8 million from Maharashtra and 4.3 lakhs speakers from Gujarat.

The territory which Bhili occupied is rather extensive one, and there are, as might be expected, differences of dialect in the different parts of the Bhil country. Towards the north and east it gradually merges into the various forms of Rajasthani. In the west and south, the influence of Gujarati and Marathi gradually increases. More towards the east, it gradually approaches Khandesi. Bhili therefore, form a continuous chain between Rajasthani, through Gujarati and Khandesi and Marathi. Bhili of Mahikantha is considered the standard dialect from where one can see the ramifications in all directions (Grierson, 1967 : 7). There are altogether 36 dialects which have been classified under Bhili language. Important among them are Bhilala mainly returned from Madhya Pradesh, Bhilodi mainly returned from Gujarat and Wagdi mostly returned from Rajasthan.

The distribution of Bhili is more or less uniform in the district of Banswara. Except Garhi tahsil in which a little less than one-fourth of its population declared it as

their mother-tongue, the remaining four tahsils account for more than 62 per cent of their population registered it as their mother-tongue. The share of Bhili language reaches to 97 per cent in Bagidora tahsil which is followed by 95 per cent in Ghatol tahsil. The population of Banswara and Kushalgarh tahsils declared it by 62.4 per cent and 78.3 per cent respectively. It is highly concentrated in Bagidora and Ghatol tahsils. The least concentration of the language is found in Garhi tahsil whereas Banswara and Kushalgarh tahsils may be grouped under medium concentration (Fig. 8).

The languages/Dialects of India have been classified into four language families by linguists while anthropologists have divided them into the speeches of aborigines/tribes called as tribal languages/dialects and the speeches of non-tribes known as non-tribal languages. Speeches belonging to the former group accounted for about 3 per cent whereas the remaining 97 per cent belong to the latter group. Out of 1,652 mother-tongues in India, 572 have been attested in the Linguistic Survey of India. The remaining 400 mother-tongues have tentatively been classified, 103 have classified as foreign languages and 527 have been left unclassified.

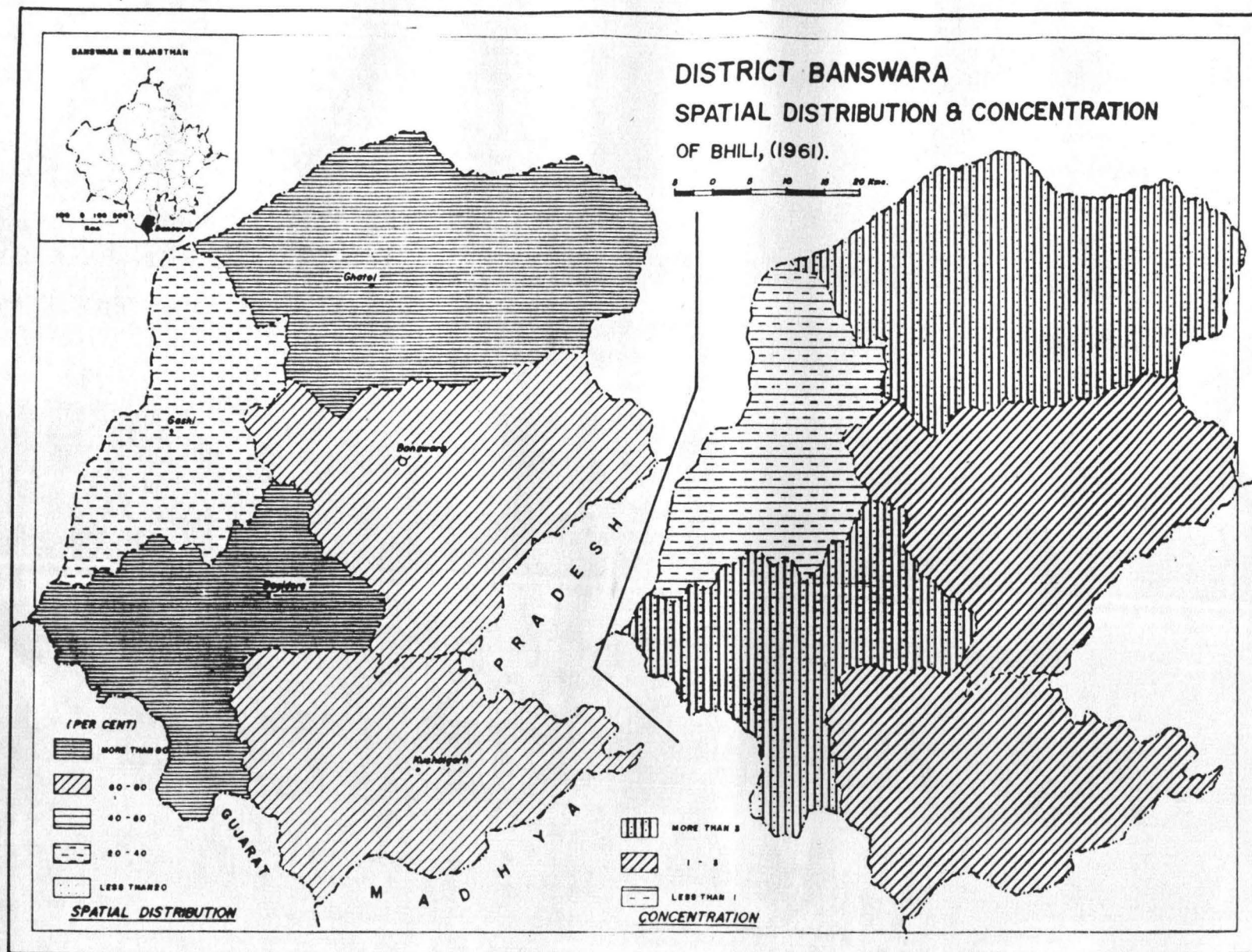


Fig. 8

Each language/dialect occupied a distinct geographical region in which core (where a language is spoken by majority) and the periphery (where the language is outnumbered by another language) may be marked out. The study reveals that the Santali is highly concentrated in 12 anchals of Santal Parganas district, Mundari in 7 anchals of Ranchi district, Korku in 2 tahsils of East Nimar district, and Bhili in 2 tahsils of Banswara district may be considered the core of these dialects whereas the remaining tahsils/anchals in these districts form periphery of these dialects.

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