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# Races and Cultures *of* INDIA

*By*  
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KITABISTAN  
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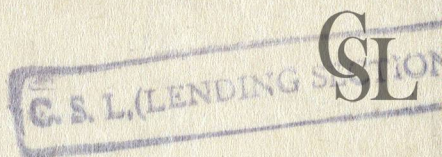


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PRINTED BY J. K. SHARMA AT THE ALLAHABAD LAW JOURNAL  
PRESS, ALLAHABAD AND PUBLISHED BY KITABISTAN, ALLAHABAD





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## INTRODUCTION

(1)

Fifty years ago, Sir Herbert Risley wrote his book on the 'Peoples of India.' This was an outstanding contribution to the study of races and cultures in India. Since then a number of books have been written by eminent scholars who have directed our attention to particular phases of Indian culture and pointed out the various limitations of Risley's methods of study. The Census Reports have also added to our knowledge of Indian races, tribes and castes. Besides, several trained investigators have studied various primitive peoples and institutions and much of the anthropological theories are being reviewed today in the light of new evidence.

Anthropological studies have in recent years in the West been largely devoted to problems of administration of primitive and backward communities under the political control of European peoples and also to various problems of acculturation and decay arising from the clash of cultures and contact of races. In India such vital issues concerning about 30 million persons have not as yet attracted the scientific attention these deserve. What is happening among the primitive and backward communities of India today? What is the condi-





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tion of those who move from fields to factories, from the tribal villages of Chota Nagpur and Chhattisgarh to the liminal towns, and distant plantations? How do these periodical movements affect the life, customs and modes of settled agricultural tribes?

As a field worker I have from time to time, investigated problems of collective living and adjustment of the major primitive and backward peoples of India. I have had opportunities to live among them, see the working of their tribal beliefs and customs and the imponderables of their culture, and also the marked effects of economic transition and cultural maladaptation. Several current theories about the origins of marriage, dormitory and the social structure could be reviewed in the light of new data. Materials on social anthropology have also been supplemented by systematic racialological data derived from serological and somatological investigations. An attempt has therefore been made to define precisely the racial backgrounds of cultural life, and assess the respective rôles of race and environment departing from the usual exclusive emphasis of ethnological materials in the study of social origins. The preliminary results of many such enquiries have already been published by me in the pages of scientific journals and periodicals, both Indian and foreign.

In April, 1943, I was invited by the Government of India to deliver a course of lectures to the I.C.S. probationers and minor chiefs who receive their training at Dehra Dun. I planned to put before



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on the assumption that the fighting qualities are inbred and hereditary though geneticists have never commented in favour of such claims. Constitutional differences no doubt are found to exist but the classification appears to be based on prejudices for which politicians have from time to time sought the sanction of genetics and of physical anthropology. In fact racial types have not shown any positive correlation to qualities necessary for survival, but stamina, grit, temperament even diligence and perseverance, can be affiliated to particular social groups, though a classification on provincial or linguistic basis may not give any definite idea as to their distinctive cultural equipments. Be that as it may, a study of race and race elements in Indian population will equip the social scientist and the politician, the social reformer and the average citizen alike with the necessary knowledge of some of the fundamentals of social life. Race, although it may not be the determinant of cultural progress, certainly does enter into culture, for it is a constitutional equipment which no doubt largely accounts for the higher energies and adaptations of man. In any case a simple presentation of certain aspects of the biological evidence could be usefully employed to discourage false caste claims in India while the facts of human biology will certainly mitigate caste and communal antagonism as well as untouchability if these are made popular to the people concerned.

A knowledge of customs, practices, art, religion, morality and law is of great practical importance





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to those who deal with people in course of their multiple contacts with them. A study of civilisation is not enough, for while the records of our achievements are available, those of the savage and semi-savage groups are only orally transmitted among them from generation to generation. That is why anthropologists distinguish between culture and civilisation and study the latter as including those whose life and achievements are already known in writing and literary records.

Indian administrators must know how to tackle such urgent problems of tragic mismanagement of primitive areas and decline of tribal populations, as has been evident in many tracts of India. In Africa, Oceania and other parts with primitive and backward populations, anthropology has helped the administration of these countries by throwing light on habits and prejudices which might present obstacles to economic development or the improvement of farm practices and the standards of public health and native dietary. In India the land law and money-lenders' impunity have often been responsible for the wholesale expropriation of tribal groups. The ubiquitous contractors' methods of recruitment and employment of labour in forest areas have been the fruitful source of detribalisation and loss of morale. Tribal peoples in mining and other industrial centres have also shown greater susceptibility to epidemic infections. Hindu ideas have affected their food habits and the once varied dietary of the aboriginal population has become narrowed and ill-balanced. Investigations on these and similar



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lines can aid the administration in meting out justice to the primitive and backward peoples and in devising various welfare measures and programmes. An acquaintance with the methods and techniques of anthropology will in fact be of great help to the administrator, the magistrate, the police, and even to the merchant.

While provision has been made in the important British Universities to train probationers in the Colonial service, the Colonies have made it obligatory for its civil servants to equip themselves with a training in anthropological theory and practice. The Indian government with a large primitive population, with extensive tribal areas has not yet strongly felt the need of such training for its officers who are responsible for law and order, also for the welfare of the people. The injustice, hardship and oppression that have been the lot of primitive and aboriginal elements in Indian population for want of such knowledge in the officials entrusted with their affairs, have been voiced by men, both Indian and European who know them and understand their points of view. It now rests with the administration to take a genuine practical interest in the study of primitive life and its problems.

Even if it be a post-war measure, one expects to see our administrators, the police officers and even the teachers of schools and colleges to take an informed interest in the study of Indian culture both primitive and advanced. This can be realised if anthropology is made a subject for study also for all examinations which recruit men for the services.





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In one province in India alone, in the U. P. for example, we have 14 lakhs of criminal population in settlements and outside given to a life of crime from birth, about whom very little is known except from the police administration report wherein we are told that in one year alone they were responsible for 34,000 cases of burglary and 3,400 cases of cattle-lifting and for a half a million worth of property destroyed or seized by them.

I cannot close this preface without mentioning my debt to Sir Theodore Tasker, Kt., C. I. E., O. B. E., I. C. S., Supervisor I. C. S. training, Dehra Dun, who has been taking a keen interest in anthropological study and research. He had attended all my lectures, and was very kind enough to go through the manuscript. I am also thankful to my students at Lucknow who have from time to time pressed me for putting my lectures into print till I could postpone it no longer. I am grateful to all the authors whose work I have referred to in the chapters, whom I have mentioned in the bibliography. It was my intention to give full record of literature on the subject and any omission therefore must be through oversight and not deliberately intended. Some of the materials in the book appeared as articles in periodicals and scientific journals and I must thank the editorial boards of these publications, particularly of *Man In India*, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Bengal*, *Journal of the Gujrat Research Society*, of the *American Oriental Society*, for permitting me to reproduce these in essentials sometimes. I am thankful to my pupil Miss Hawa



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## INTRODUCTION

Bai Rehman, M.A. for preparing the index to the volume and to my wife Mrs. Madhuri Devi, B.A. for general help in the preparation of the manuscript for the press. I would also like to thank Messrs Kitabistan, and the Law Journal Press, the publishers and the printers respectively for making a good job of it in times such as these.







## CHAPTER I

## RACE FACTORS IN INDIAN CULTURE

(1)

"The racial concept " according to Huxley, "is almost devoid of biological meaning as applied to human aggregates." This is because the word 'race' as popularly used in literature or in the social sciences possesses no definite connotation. For example, it may be used to denote a class of population determined by the possession of a common trait or certain constellation of traits. The white race contains at least three distinct racial strains who own various shades of white skin. Very often a group of persons who "ancestrally have lived in a country for a number of generations," like the English, the French, or the Chinese, are called races. We even speak of the 'human race' meaning a group of people all of whom, as viewed by the monogenists, i.e., those who believe in single origin, have descended from a common ancestor. Any culturally homogeneous group of people is also known as race. We also speak of martial and non-martial races, as if the fighting quality is inborn and not acquired through years of instruction and tutelage. It is because of the various uses to which the word 'race' is put to that we have today a Jewish race,





an Anglo-saxon race, a German race, an Islamic race. Anthropologists take the word 'race' in its zoological sense. 'If the people of one race could be distinguished by physical markings, then they constitute a race'.

Much confusion exists in anthropological literature regarding 'race' and 'nation'. While some anthropologists find no difference between 'race' and 'nation', others find the two categories separate and distinct. Sir Arthur Keith finds no difference between race and nation. The same factors that are responsible for the evolution of nations, viz., patriotism, herd instincts, consciousness of kind, are also indispensable for race formation. The Finns, he cited as an example. The Finns are of the same stock as the Swedes. Every tenth man in Finland speaks the Swedish language and they are of the same physical type as the Swedes. The Finnish language is of Asiatic origin and it is tending to be separate from the European family every year. Today the "Finns are a nation and are evolving a race as well. They will sacrifice every economical consideration to enhance their status and independence. The recent Finno-Russian clash is an example of this 'race struggle', a 'race for race-building', a 'process' which receives the euphemistic name of 'self-determination'."

Sir Arthur Keith takes race and nation as synonymous, but H. G. Wells and Dr. Piddington take them as distinct categories. To the former, nationalism is a manifestation of qualities, 'deeply seated in the functional constitution of the human



brain'; the latter consider it 'as superstition,' an 'anachronism' which man would do well to get rid of. Exaggerated nationalism has expressed itself in violent racialism in Europe, and it is no wonder that the objective evaluation of racial traits has been abandoned for racialism which is a 'dangerous myth' in the words of Julian Huxley and A. C. Haddon!

— Diametrically opposed though the views are, 'race' and 'nation' will remain and exercise their influence in the growth and development of world order and civilisation. Nation is a regional concept; it is artificial in its make-up and subjective in its ties. The common elements in nation formation are the contiguity of the people forming a national group, a regional background to which from generations the people have been used to, and a 'group sentiment—one of the most primitive emotional stimuli encouraged by the requirements of modern state-craft.' A nation may comprise a number of different racial elements; it may represent a hybrid stock like the English. It may as well represent two racial types, the Nordic and the Alpine, as in Germany, or it may be composed of a solid Mediterranean base with Alpino-Nordic top-dressing as in Italy. The geographical setting largely determines the nature of the material elements of a national culture, what food should be taken by the people, what dress should be worn, what kind of festivals to be observed, what types of shelter to be raised. A consciousness of homogeneity which develops an understanding between individuals





Composing the group, a mutuality of obligations and a reciprocity in economic transactions, all have engendered a national outlook much more exaggerated in Europe and Japan than elsewhere. All these give a stamp to the regional group, and perhaps more.

If a group of people who by their possession of a number of common physical traits can be distinguished from others, even if the members of this biological group are widely scattered, they form a race. The racial differences must be based on significant 'hereditary traits not affected by any environmental influences.'

(2)

The absence of standard techniques of measurement and want of definite knowledge about the racial significance of the various physical traits in man, explains diverse schemes of classification formulated by ethnologists. Thus Linnaeus and Cuvier divided the human group into three races. Blumenback classified it into five races. Haeckel established 12 races in 1873, but increased the number to 34 in 1878. Denniker found 13 races and 30 sub-races. Sir Arthur Keith simplified the task by introducing a fourfold classification on the basis of skin colour, viz., white, yellow, brown and black races and traced them to the functioning of the glands. Eickstedt and Eugen Fischer distinguish three main races, Europid, Negrid and Mongolid, which the former subdivide into 18 sub-races. Most of these schemes are based 'partly on morphological traits and partly



on geographical location'. Some classifications are based on descriptive features. Duckworth on the basis of cephalic index, prognathism and cranial capacity divided mankind into seven races: Australian, African Negro, Andamanese, Eurasiatic, Polynesian, Greenlandish and South African. Ronald B. Dixon went into details and found fundamental types within the same racial stock. In recent years, G. Elliot Smith divided mankind into six races, Australian, Negro, Mongol, Nordic, Alpine and Mediterranean and this classification has provided a working scheme for further analysis. Judging from the various schemes into which human groups have been classified, the problem of racial classification appears to be insoluble. But if we develop a technique by which the people of the world could be divided into distinct groups, allowing for hybridisation of course, the races will be different from regional groups, from the nations of the past, or of today.

The ancient people were organised on the basis of hordes or tribes; the tribes were political groups within a geographical setting. The members of a tribe all spoke the same language. The headquarters of the tribe developed into cities and the political power of the tribes was transformed into 'city states, which today are nations'. In the words of Sir Arthur Keith 'nations are big tribes welded together by force.' But the same race was split up into various tribal groups and thus 'tribe' and 'race' are not synonymous. While the central authority of the tribe could shape the city states, and ultimately





evolved the present-day nations, the disintegration of tribes has favoured fission into clans and smaller territorial units developing independent dialects and scattering away from the original tribal moorings. The various vagrant and criminal tribes in India like the Sansiyas, Bhatus, Karwals, Geedhias, Haburas, all could be traced to the same or allied racial stock, but they have separated by fission into endogamous clans with distinct linguistic labels sometimes, each led by strong gang leaders. The nature of the region has had much to do with the shaping of the forces that cemented or disintegrated the tribal bonds. Thus the forests and inhospitable hills in India where the tribal groups settled down due to inaccessibility and lack of communications encouraged fission and fragmentation into smaller units, into totemistic or eponymous clans. With the development of agriculture, the original clearers of forests became the owners of the soil, and others who came after them or their camp followers were conceded inferior status as tenants or serfs thus developing a sort of dual organisation of economic classes in the tribal regions.

In the plains where pastoral life flourished or agriculture secured a stable control over food supply, the lure of the plains attracted new hordes and compact living and the needs of protection and defence established a strong tribal organisation with political ambitions. The absence of natural refuges and hiding-places encouraged the forging of new tools and implements for offence and defence



and laid the foundation of civilisation. While the hills and fastnesses have nourished and still nourish scattered communities, the plains of Egypt, Europe, and India have seen merging of races and fusion of cultures wherefrom has diffused in all directions the arts of life and living. Thus several tribes have come together and developed a common culture, a uniform set of rules and restrictions, a common language and a consciousness of kind, all of which have forged a patriotism identified today with a regional complex.

The measurement of the crania and the bony structure of living persons, for example, provides comparative material and the degree of accuracy in measurements obtainable has led to their adoption by anthropologists. The skeletal remains of pre-historic man and his handicraft are the only available evidence of man's ancestry. The requirements of comparative anatomy have encouraged the use of anthropometry and craniometry, and different techniques have been evolved. In recent years, attention has been directed to the study of soft parts, 'blood groups' and even the chemical functions and physiology of the organism; but, as yet, no standard technique has been agreed to, and comparative material is scanty and insufficient.

There are two types of anthropological characters. These are definite and indefinite. The definite characters are those which submit to quantitative estimate, and can be expressed in mathematical terms; while indefinite characters like the colour of the skin, of hair, of the eye are difficult





to measure and they are not expressed by figures. Attempts have been made to measure colour, or the texture of hair, but they remain more or less descriptive for obvious difficulties.

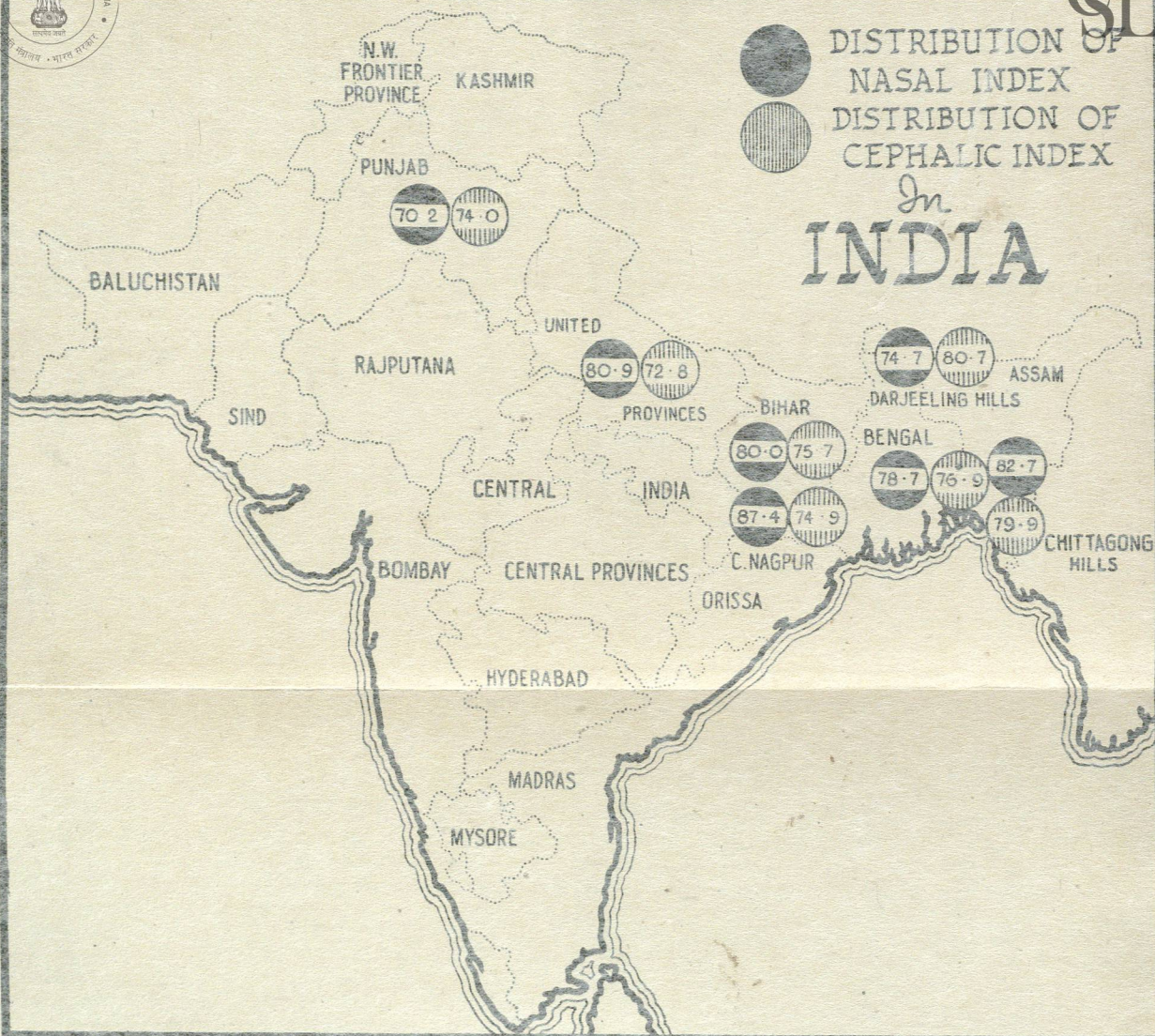
## (3)

Inheritance of physical characters in man has not been studied with respect to the important somatological traits which are believed to possess racial significance, as for example, the length and width of the head, the shape or form of the nose, or even stature. "If ever the genetic analysis of man sufficiently progresses we shall be able to make frequency maps for all the more important genes which distinguish human groups." Certain abnormal traits like brachydactyly or cacogenic mental traits like feeble-mindedness or insanity have been studied and they have been found to follow Mendelian laws of inheritance. Experiments with animals and plants stand on a different footing to those on man, who is difficult to experiment with. The effects of race crossings, for example, cannot be studied beyond the first or second hybrid generation, and that too if the interests of the investigator do not disappear in the meantime. The usual method is to compare the traits of parents and their own children, of brothers and sisters growing up in similar or different surroundings, or the study of twins. Boas's famous inquiry into the physical character of the descendants of immigrants into America referred to the anthropometric study of the immigrants born in Europe and their children



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and grand-children born in America, in other words an inquiry into the physical traits of three generations. Unfortunately all the physical characters used in anthropological classification have a complex multiple factor inheritance each being determined by more than one pair of genes or unit factors so that even if the characters are studied in inheritance they may not adequately be of diagnostic value.

The recognition of group differences in metabolism and reproduction, in the number of red corpuscles and the amount of haemoglobin in the blood, the rate of pulsation, the vital capacity and muscular strength has led some anthropologists to view them as racially significant, but clinical researches have established these differences as due 'partly to the amount of proteid consumption,' to habits of diet and nutrition. The growth of the body and racial traits are controlled to a certain extent by the 'endocrine glands which produce hormones having growth-controlling properties.' Doubleday traced the decrease in fertility to the same conditions which led to a reduction in the death rate. He suggests, 'that the hormones assist in regulating the fertility of the germ-cells, that the output of hormones by the endocrine glands is regulated by the nervous system which responds to action of the environment, and that the variations in the degree of fertility in response to the direct action of the environment will bear an inverse proportion to the development of nervous energy.' Sir Arthur Keith traces racial differences to the functioning of the different glands. The greater



activity of the pituitary gives the Caucasian his height of stature, bulk of body, prominent chin, strong eye-brow ridges; a greater activity of the interstitial gives the Caucasian a more robust appearance, a quicker development of physical character and luxuriant growth of hair on the body. Even if we admit that such differential functioning of the gland does explain race differences, we have to explain why such functional differences do exist between different racial groups.

## (4)

Although we possess little authentic data on the inheritance of somatological traits or what traits are racially significant, we have a lot of raciological literature which extols or underrates the various observable physical features of man. Systematic efforts have been made by raciologists to show that the 'foundations of civilisations are to be sought in the differential qualities of races'. They contend that the 'Aryan branch of the white race (Nordic race) is the superior race, as superior to some other races, as is a grey hound to a poodle dog'. Those belonging to the Nordic race have great wishes and incessantly work to satisfy them. They are physically and mentally superior and as such they are the fittest to survive the struggle for existence.

The raciologists claim that cultural differences are determined by differential racial heredity and equipment. The superior races can create superior cultures. The Aryan branch of the white race





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are the superior race, have superior wishes and are therefore creators of civilisation. Race mixture has today produced blends and combinations which has created indifferent stocks, incapable of fulfilling the task for which they were meant, so that civilisation is bound to decay due to diseugenic selection. Racism based on principles of eugenics is the panacea for all the ills which the various national groups are suffering from. Against this we are told by the culturologists that races had been subdivided into sub-races. The Caucasian race contains at least three distinct strains, if not more. Inter-racial differences are often found less pronounced than intra-racial differences ; we also know that the same race has participated and does participate in different cultures in space or time. Different races also are found to shape the same culture pattern. Racial traits are relatively constant but culture has undergone complete transformation in most cases. Culture grows by accumulation, it is cumulative, it is our social heritage. Therefore the explanation of cultural progress should be sought not in race but in the environment.

Scientific opinion, however, lies somewhere between the two extremes. Some, for example, cannot ignore the scientific evidence of heredity, yet find little justification for 'ardent racial appeal.' Huxley and Haddon agree that in the early stages there were isolated types but today these have mixed. We see before our eyes the effects of crossing. 'The cross does not become an average of two types but produces a great diversity of races.' Blending



of types makes it difficult to speak about pure ethnic type. Cultures cannot be associated with racial types; the effects of migrations and diffusion of cultures are too obvious to need any proof. Besides, no single scheme of classification can explain the physical features of the people of the world. Intelligence tests and various physiological studies have failed to differentiate human groups. Therefore 'the Nordic hypothesis is a myth,' it is 'mere wishful thinking.'

The best that we can say today is that it is useless to tack cultural or national characters to physical types as has been done by Günther. To quote Penniman "until it is possible to develop a standardisation of criteria for physiological and psychological data similar to that employed in physical measurements and to treat such data quantitatively by statistical methods, we cannot possibly connect psychological and cultural traits with somatic forms and develop Captain Pitt-Rivers' science of Ethnogenics, the study of human history in terms of changing race, population, and culture." (Man, 1936, 107)

True, races have mixed, blended and segregated, producing diverse ethnic types, even homogeneous ones, as in the case of some hybrid groups. Mahalanobis on the evidence of anthropometric data collected by the late Dr. N. Anandale came to the conclusion that the Anglo-Indian population in Calcutta were tending towards homogeneity. Neither have races remained constant, as the culturologist would assert. From the prehistoric times on-





ward, racial traits have continued to modify themselves due either to race admixture or to the effects of selection, natural, sexual or lethal. After the French revolution, the average stature of the army recruits in France fell by one inch, and today stature in all European countries has increased by an inch or more. Eugenic measures, conscious or unconscious, public opinion, and race consciousness have encouraged a new attitude towards mate selection, and racial heredity is expected to improve or be stabilised. "As long as ability marries ability," wrote Galton, "a large proportion of able offspring is a certainty and ability is a more valuable heirloom in a family than mere material wealth, which moreover will follow sooner or later". The future of nations may not be distinct in the near future, but that of family strains appears brighter in spite of the crises the war has brought to the world.

(5)

Risley recognised three principal racial types in India, the Dravidian, the Indo-Aryan and the Mongolian. The first two mixed in varying proportions in the different provinces with each other and with the Mongolian elements while the third was confined to the north-east frontier and Assam. Risley's 'Dravidian' like the 'Aryan' is a linguistic group and not racial and 'at least 3 races have been found to constitute it'. The Scythians who were originally Mongolian had little influence in western India and the extent of Mongolian infiltration in Bengal has been exaggerated. Risley



traced the brachycephalic element in India's population to the Mongolian or Scythian sources. The brachycephaly in Bengal and Gujarat is difficult to derive from the Mongolian sources as all Mongolian people are not brachycephals; besides the Mongolian epicanthic fold, though found in the Darjeeling and Chittagong hills, is absent in the Bengal castes, the higher strata composed of Brahmins and Kayasthas are free from it.

Prof. A. C. Haddon disagreed with Risley's racial classification and put forward his own analysis of racial elements. The oldest existing stratum according to him is represented by various Pre-Dravidian jungle tribes. "The Dravidians may have been the original inhabitants of the valley of the Ganges in Western Bengal, after many wanderings, apparently across India, they settled mainly in Chuta Nagpur." "The Aryan-speaking people first migrated into India early in the second millenium B. C." Their infiltration was slow and gradual and probably extended over centuries. They first occupied the fertile lands of the Punjab, their progress south-east being barred by the deserts of Rajputana. Their expansion eastward for a long time was hindered by the dense forests which then covered the middle plains, but eventually they spread along the valleys of the Jumna and the Ganges. The brachycephalic element in Indian population is traced by Haddon to Alpine immigration and the history of this immigration has yet to be written. From the east and north-east the first Indo-Chinese invasion appears to have been





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by Tibeto-Burmans. The Shans from the headwaters of the Irawaddy began to conquer Assam at the end of the 8th century A. D. Thus the Pre-Dravidians, the Dravidians (brunet dolichocephals) the Indo-Aryans (fair dolichocephals), Indo-Alpines (brachycephals) and Mongolians constitute the racial elements in the population of India.

J. H. Hutton without claiming that his views are the final word on race in India has given a scheme into which "the fact at present known about race will fit without distortion," as he puts it. The earliest occupants of India were probably of the Negrito-race but they have left little trace on the mainland or the peninsula. These are followed by the Proto-australoids whose earliest ancestors could be traced to Palestine. Next came an early branch of the Mediterranean race, speaking an agglutinative tongue from which the present Austroasiatic languages are derived. These are credited with a crude knowledge of agriculture and a megalithic cult. From eastern Europe, came a later wave of Mediterranean immigration, more advanced than the earlier hordes, equipped with a knowledge of metals and 'who developed the city states.' These were connected with the Indus valley civilisation.

The brachycephalic element in the Indian population, is derived from an earlier immigration of the Armenoid branch of the Alpine race, those who developed a high standard of civilisation by the end of the 4th millenium B.C. These probably spoke the Dravidian language



and had much in common with the prehistoric peoples of Mesopotamia. "This civilisation was flooded in the west during the third millenium B.C. by an immigration from the Iranian plateau and the Pamirs, of a brachycephalic race speaking perhaps an Indo-European language of the Pisacha or Dardic family." From the east there was a widespread movement of the southern Mongoloids southwards to the Bay of Bengal, and into Indonesia which had some reflex influence on India from the east. Finally the dolichcephalic Indo-Aryan race entered the Punjab about 1500 B.C.

Dr. B. S. Guha distinguishes the basic Mediterranean element common to Brahmins and upper caste population from a 'superimposed Alpine strain in western India and Bengal, a very early immigration into India and also from a proto-Nordic element connected according to him with, the Aryan invasion of north-west India. He also finds four types among the aboriginal population of India: (1) A short, long and moderately high-headed strain with often strongly marked brow ridges, broad short face, the mouth slightly inclined forwards and small flat nose with the alae extended. (2) A dark pigmy strain having spirally curved hair, remnants of which are still found among the Kadars and the Pullayans of the Perambicullan hills. (3) A brachycephalic Mongolian type constituting today, the main component of Assam and north Burma. (4) A second Mongoloid strain characterised by medium stature, high





head and medium nose but exhibiting like (3), the typical Mongoloid features of the face and the eye. This element constitutes the major strain in the population of the hills and not inconsiderably of that of the Brahmaputra valley.

The first of these types according to Dr. Guha is predominant among the aboriginal population of central and southern India, and also have penetrated into the lower strata of the Indian caste groups. C.S. Venkatachar affiliates the Gonds of the Central Provinces with the Pre-Dravidians of the south on whom the Dravidians have imposed their language and 'due to some causes in the regions of north-east Madras, there must have been a large-scale displacement of the tribes into the interior of the central regions. The Pre-Dravidians of which Venkatachar speaks in this connection are a 'dark Negroid race of low culture characterised by a physical type of very short stature, low forehead and flat face and nose.'

There has been of late some support for a Negrito substratum in India. Haddon referred to a low dark race in Susiana which is usually regarded as allied to the Pre-Dravidians who may have been a true Negroid stock. Dr. B. S. Guha has drawn attention to the existence of a Negrito substratum in India (Nature, May, 19, 1928 and June 27, 1929).

"Though we have no direct evidence", wrote Dr. Guha, "of the Negrito race in the old skeletal remains of India, the skull of a victim of human sacrifice found in a cairn at Jewargi is unmistak-



ably negroid." Dr. J. H. Hutton has gone still further, for he writes, "In any case the Negrito seems to have been the first inhabitant of south-eastern Asia. As already indicated, traces of this stock are still to be seen in some of the forest tribes of the higher hills of the extreme south of India" and similar traces, he argues 'exist in the inaccessible areas, between Assam, Burma and elsewhere' (Man In India Vol. VII, 257-62). Dr. Eickstedt, however, does not admit the existence of Negritos in India (Die Rassengesctuctite Von Indian mit besonderer Berucksichtingung Von Mysore. Zeits. Morpp, Anthropol. Bd. 32, pages 77-124, 1933).

Lapicque carried out some raciological investigations among the Kadars, Pullayans and Malsars in the Annamalai hills and found traces of brachycephaly which Quatrefages considers a 'negrito trait.' Guha finds a tendency among the Kadars, those of them with frizzly hair and mesocephaly, which made him think that the basis of this negrito type was probably brachycephalic or at least meso, as in the Semangs, but large admixture with a primitive dolichocephalic race had affected the general shape of the head. Lapicque did not get any evidence of a pure negrito race in India and his Negro-Paria race was sub-dolichocephalic in head form which he thought had disappeared by prolonged and gradual intermixture. The occurrence of a few individuals, brachycephalic in head form, or of a few skulls brachycephalic according to length-breadth index among the Kadars and Pullayans would not





necessarily prove the existence of a submerged negrito strain. Guha becomes academic in insisting on the existence of the Negrito, for there is no race with a cephalic index of 75 and below who does not produce a few brachycephals just as the typical brachycephals also show an incidence of dolichocephaly in the population. Recent investigations have proved the futility of emphasising the craniometric characters alone, for limb proportions, somatological and integumental characters, etc., need be considered in determining racial types. In this connection it would be worthwhile quoting Sir William Turner who came to the conclusion that "judging from the racial characters of the skull one draws the conclusion that there is no difference of moment in the form and proportions of this part of the skeleton between the Dravidian and Kolarian (Munda) tribes and support is given to the view of their essential structural unity as advocated by Mr. Risley." Anthropometric data available in India so far, including those recorded in the 1931 census report are too insufficient to prove any of the raciological theories mentioned above. Even if we accept the claims of the investigators about the scientific value of the data collected by them, the size of the samples on which such momentous hypotheses have been worked out is extremely inadequate, often meagre.

To be brief, definite statistical evidence is lacking in support of a negrito substratum, but here and there, existence of wooly or frizzly hair and other Negrito features have been found. In a recent tour



of Guajrat and Kathiawar States we found submerged pockets of Abyssinian immigrants whose arrival must be placed somewhere in the tenth or eleventh centuries. These have mixed with the Bhils and other aboriginal groups and an interesting mixed population has resulted from such mixture. The existence of a Negrito substratum does not mean that there has been much of Negrito infusion in the Indian population. The Negritos, even if they existed, must have restricted their contacts, and as in other parts, might have died out, the few traits that still appear in the tribal population and which affiliate some of the tribal groups like the Kadars with the Negrito sub-race, require to be carefully studied by trained investigators before a Negrito substratum can definitely be identified.

Excluding the doubtful Negrito, we do not think it is necessary to distinguish the various tribal groups included under the Pre-Dravidian elements in the Indian population. The Mundas and the Oraons though speak different languages, do not differ much in racial traits. The Malpaharis have recently been intensively studied and they have been found to exhibit statistically significant racial difference with the Oraons with whom they have cultural as well as physical ties. Such significant differences exist between the various branches of the 'White' or 'Caucasic' races. The Alpine, the Mediterranean and the Nordic are the various branches of the white race, but in spite of many differences in mental and racial traits, they represent a homogeneity, and can be grouped under one





## RACE FACTORS IN INDIAN CULTURE

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large racial type. The various tribes like the Mundas, the Santhals, the Juangs and the Korwas, the Saoras and the Parjas, the Khonds, the Chenchus the Irulas, the Panyans and many jungle tribes in the south, particularly in the larger native states can be affiliated to the same racial stock and may not be independent races. Professor R. B. Dixon measured about 40 individuals, analysed them into what he called 'fundamental types' and found several such types within the same social group, a method which would provide similar results even among homogeneous groups.

Linguistic differences should not be considered insuperable barriers to the identification of these tribes as units of the same race, for race and language may not be interdependent though phonesis is believed to be a physical function by many. The Brahui dialect in Baluchistan is an example on the point, and many advanced languages in India bear traces of Austric and Dravidian affinities. The Bhil language has been identified with the Munda sub-family of the Austro-Asiatic family of languages but the Aryan affiliation of the Bhili language is not denied by competent authorities, and physical features of the Bhils, their 'blood groups' cannot be explained if they are identified with the Munda tribes.

Dr. Hutton refers to the speed with which the Nagas change language and how the latter splits into dialects not even mutually intelligible (The Sema Nagas, by J. H. Hutton, p. 266). Seven Semas, for example, happened to meet by the



Roadside one evening each coming from a different village. They asked one another what they had with them to eat with rice. Each mentioned a new thing, *atusbeh*, *gwomishi*, *mugishi*, *amusa*, *akhetre*, etc. but when they opened their respective bags, they all produced chillies.

The tribal groups, particularly those whom Risley affiliated to the 'Dravidians' are dolichocephals and platyrrhine. There are others who speak the Dravidian family of languages, who are dolichocephalic but not platyrrhine. Guha on the basis of coefficients of racial likeness finds the Telugu and Malayali closely related, and similar relationship does exist between the Telugu and Tamil. The Telugu 'forms a link between the Malayali and Tamil who between them do not show much affinity.' The Kanarese and the Malayali are at the two ends, the former representing the broad-headed and the latter the long-headed type. But if we base our arguments on linguistic evidence alone, both these types must be affiliated to the same stock for both the languages can be traced to the Dravidian family.

The dominant racial type in the south is represented by a dolichocephalic leptorhine stock of medium stature and brownish complexion which has mixed in varying proportion with the tribal groups on the one hand, and a brachycephalic mesorhine element whose influence is well marked among the Kanarese and also the Tamils. This brachycephalic element is Dr. Haddon's Alpine type which must have filtered into India in pre-





historic times as supported by the Harappa finds. It is found pretty widespread throughout the central belt of India from Gujarat through Central Provinces to Bengal. To the north this type has mixed with a fair dolichocephalic type known as the 'Indo-Aryan' type of Risley, to the east the brachycephalic type has been assimilated by the mongoloid tribal groups. It is difficult to believe that the Indo-Aryans were all dolichocephals, for in the area from which they have migrated, the existence of a brachycephalic element has already been proved and the needs of an invading race must have caused a dilution of the Indo-Aryan blood. Nor is it a fact that all Mongolian people are brachycephals.

A note of warning has been sounded against the Alpine theory by Codrington (Man 1934, 153) for according to him 'brachycephaly, as an isolated fact, means nothing.' As 'Indian brachycephaly in the Deccan is associated with extreme microcephaly, a point of great significance and interest, for certain sub-types of the dolichocephalic 'Dravidian' type are also microcephalic' (*Ibid*) the distinction based merely on head form requires to be corroborated by morphology and general characteristics. Intensive raciological surveys should be able to unravel the degree of intermixture in particular geographical regions, and the effects of such race mixtures. Another fruitful study would be to map out the distribution of the various physical traits which behave as unit characters like the blood groups, or are supposed to do so that



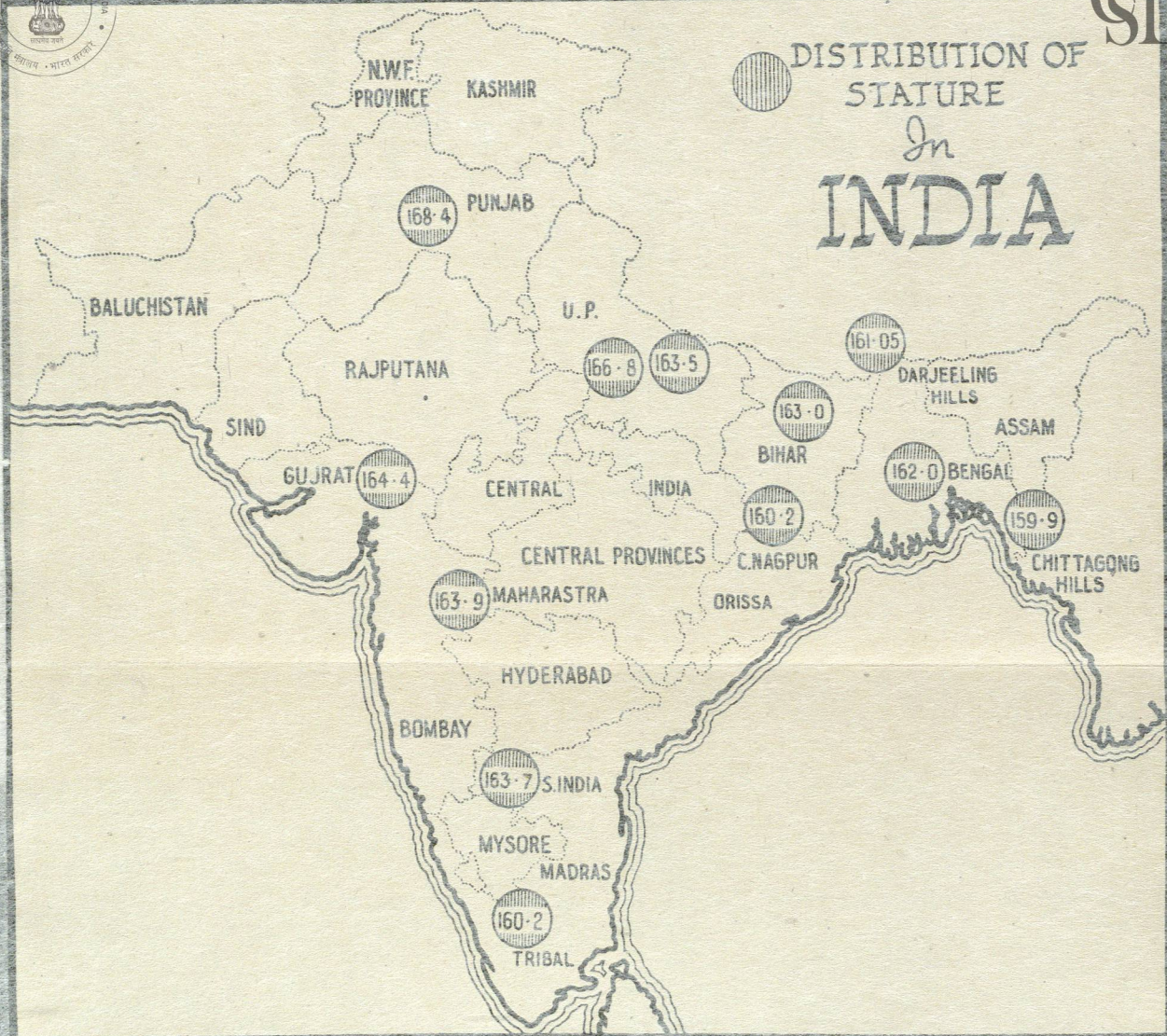
may lead to their genetic interpretation which ultimately will lay down the foundation of eugenic programmes for the country.

As we proceed from the Punjab to Bengal and the Punjab to the peninsular India there is a gradual lowering of stature and physical build. The average stature in the Punjab is 168.4 cms. It falls to 163.5 in the U. P., 163.0 in Bihar and 162.0 in Bengal and in the Darjeeling hills, it is 161.05 and 159.2 in the Chittagong hill tracts. Guha estimates the average stature in U. P. as 166.86 which is lowered to 163.89 in Maharashtra, 164.46 in Gujarat, 165.97 in Bengal and 163.74 in South India. This progressive lowering of stature is partly racial and must partly be due to nutritional standards which are different in different provinces.

The average cephalic index in the U. P. castes is 72.8 and in the Punjab it is 74.0 according to Risley's calculation. There is a progressive broadening of the head as we pass from the U. P. to Bengal, 74.9 in Chota Nagpur, 75.7 in Bihar, 76.9 in Bengal, 80.7 in the Darjeeling hills and 79.9 in the Chittagong hill tracts. Recent data collected by me point to the self-same conclusion. The average cephalic index in the U. P. is 74.51 increasing to 78.96 in Bengal, 77.31 in Orissa, 75.32 in South India, 80.27 in Gujarat and Kathiawar and 77.59 in Maharashtra. The same is the case with the nasal index. It is 70.2 in the Punjab, 78.9 in the U. P., 80.0 in Bihar, 87.4 in Chota Nagpur, 78.7 in Bengal, and in the Darjeeling and Chittagong hill tribes it is 82.7 and 77.7 respectively.



# DISTRIBUTION OF STATURE In INDIA

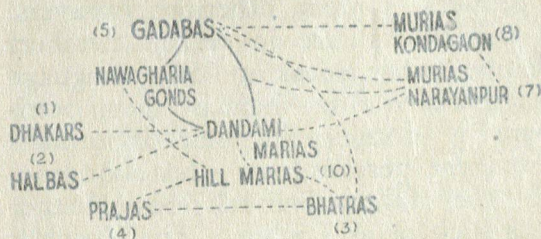




We do not yet possess sufficient data to map out the frequencies of these anthropometric characters but when we do have them, we hope to be able to concentrate on investigations into the problem of 'nature and nurture'.

(6)

In a recent racial survey of the Bastar State in the Eastern Agency we found a progressive lengthening of the head towards the mountain regions as is illustrated by the fact that the Hill Marias possess the longest head (184.57), next to them come the Bhatras who are immigrants into Bastar and then the Kondagon Marias (183.58). The Halbas, who are plain dwellers and also urban, possess the lowest mean head length (179.82). Nowhere perhaps have social precedence and racial distance been found so correlated as in Bastar.



REDUCED C.R.L. < 3 —  
" 3-6 —  
NO IN BRACKETS ORDER OF  
SOCIAL PRECEDENCE.





The anthropometric data shows the alignment of the various tribal or cultural groups, with respect to the Hill Marias who are the most primitive group in Bastar. They also show the affiliation of the Dhakars to other groups. The Dhakars and Halbas are the high caste people of the State and they do not have any close association with the tribal groups, the Marias, the Murias, the Parjas and the Bhatras. Between the various tribal groups there has been much of intermixture but the racial distance from the Halbas and the Dhakars explain their social status in the State.

How far the artisan castes in India are recruited from the tribal stock, can be illustrated by a statistical evaluation of the anthropometric data. Grigson in his monograph on the 'Maria Gonds of Bastar' has referred to cultural transition. He writes that a large number of persons returned as members of the Hindu functional castes, the graziers, potters, fishermen, weavers, blacksmiths and others are in reality members of the primitive tribes speaking their language and only differentiated from them by their occupation. There is nothing in their appearance to distinguish these persons from other aborigines of the State; they follow their religions whether enumerated as such or as Hindus. The Kurukhs are a fishing caste in Bastar. They are found in numbers near about Chitrakot where there is a natural fall receiving its supply of water from the Indravati river. A comparison of the anthropometric data from the Kurukhs, with those of the



Marias, reveals no significant statistical difference. They are for all practical purposes samples of the same population. Similar investigations elsewhere will provide irrefutable data about the tribal origin of many functional groups in India.

## (7)

In the cis-Himalayan region, in the Dehra Dun district, in Garhwal, Rawain and the Simla States we have three important racial strains. The highest altitudes are inhabited by the Tibetans and other Mongoloid people, the central belt is composed of a tall, fair race represented by the Khas-Rajputs and Khas-Brahmins, the Kanets, the Bhats, and a comparatively dark aboriginal type represented by the Doms, a generic name used to include all artisan castes, the Kolis and the Koltas, the Bajgirs, the Oadh, who are originally of Dom extraction. In the Jaunsar Bawar area of the Chakrata subdivision of the Dehra Dun district the lowest rung of the social ladder is occupied by the domestic drudge, the Kolta, the traditional 'hewer of wood and drawer of water.' He lives by serving the high castes and is bought and sold for agricultural labour. Higher than the Koltas, there are a number of artisan castes, the Bajgirs, the Oadh, the Chamar who cannot hold any land but must serve the zemindars who are either Rajputs or Brahmins. The rigidity of the caste system is not much felt in these parts, and inter-marriage between the Khas-Rajputs and Khas-Brahmins has not been barred by the rules of caste endogamy.





## RACES AND CULTURES OF INDIA

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From a comparison of the statistical data and from the coefficients of racial likeness, we could find the racial status of the three cultural groups, the Brahmins, the Rajputs and the artisan castes. While the Brahmins and Rajputs do not show any divergence, the artisan elements cannot be taken to be racially of the same stock as that represented by the Brahmins and the Rajputs. The coefficient of racial likeness, between the Brahmins and the artisan castes, is 7.713 and that between Rajputs and artisan castes 7.021. But between the Brahmins and the Rajputs the C. R. L. is 0.525 which indicates very close association, so much so, that the two castes may be taken as samples of the same population. It is also evident that though the difference between the artisan castes and the higher castes represented by the Brahmins and the Rajputs is higher, that they are not extreme types is evident from the C. R. L. values. There is association between all the three samples which is perhaps due to intermixture which must have occurred during centuries of contacts, cultural and otherwise.

A new technique has been adopted by anthropologists to test the interrelation of racial groups as it is based on the distribution of 'blood groups' and blood group is a genic character transmissible by heredity and follows Mendelian laws of inheritance. A discussion on raciology is incomplete without reference to blood groups' evidence for what it is worth.



## CHAPTER II

## THE BLOOD MAP OF INDIA

( 1 )

Discussing the racial distribution of blood groups Dr. J. H. Hutton suggested that a "proper investigation of blood groups by caste would yield most valuable results." Such investigations are proceeding and very soon we expect to get reliable data on caste basis. We are, however, using the available data to see how far blood groups can tell about racial types and race mixtures.

Genetic study of human differences has not been possible yet. There are four types of differences recognised between the races. Differences in skin colour, hair form and the like probably depend on rather few genes. Skeletal traits which can be studied in man, past and present, overlap so much that races can hardly be distinguished by such differences. Differences of ability and temperament which give rise to differences in cultures are so overlaid by the environmental factors that they often lose their significance. Except blood groups which are determined by certain easily identified genes to be found in the human species, it is unlikely that much progress could be made with the different anthropometric factors except





perhaps for the genes responsible for a selected group of well-marked physical characters'. The only other method of studying human inheritance has been by analysing pedigrees and family strains. This certainly cannot be an exact method and results obtained thereby in the case of the inheritance of a number of abnormal characters have not proved indisputable.

Blood groups as indices of racial relationship have an advantage over anthropometrical characters. Serological difference in the blood cells are 'purely constitutional in nature determined by heredity and not influenced by environment. The substances which characterise the blood groups are present in practically every tissue of the body and have been found 'in soluble form in the serum, saliva and urine.'

The variation of the blood groups in man is a little complicated as 'the gene determining this character has three allelomorphs' or according to the latest information, four. The interaction of these allelomorphs produces four blood groups which are described as groups 1, 2, 3 and 4, or more conveniently O, A, B, and AB. The relative frequencies of the four blood groups in various samples of population have been determined and the relative frequencies of the gene allelomorphs have been deduced from them. The frequency of the genes A, B and O are denoted by  $p$ ,  $q$ , and  $r$  which may be obtained by the formula<sup>1</sup>:—

<sup>1</sup> Birdsell, J. B. and Boyd, W. C. 1940. Blood Groups in the Australian Aborigines, *Am. Jr. Phys. Anth.*, 27, 1.







$$r = \sqrt{O/100}; p = \sqrt{O/100 + A/100} - \sqrt{O/100};$$
$$q = \sqrt{O/100 + B/100} - \sqrt{O/100}$$

The racial significance of blood groups has not been properly evaluated but the geographical distribution of the blood groups indicates that they may be interpreted as ethnically significant. Anthropologists are, however, anxious to find out, how far blood groups data uphold the evidences of anthropometry and craniometry. It must be noted that "the blood groups require a special technique for their study, and overlap to such an extent that racial differences can often only be detected in populations of some hundreds". (J. B. S. Haldane, *Anthropology and Human Biology*, Man, 1939, 163). This makes it necessary to survey many such characters, anthropometric, craniometric and biochemic to be able to classify races.

In 1900 Landsteiner discovered that normal individuals belonging to the same species differ with respect to their blood groups. His method was extremely simple. He mixed the serum of one normal individual with the blood cells of other normal individuals and found that in some cases instead of minor reactions which he expected the serum of some individuals induced the 'red blood corpuscles of others to clump together or agglutinate,' while other bloods remained unaffected. By means of such agglutination tests Landsteiner divided the human beings into three groups, which two years later were increased to four by Sturli and Decastello. In 1910 Von



Dungern and Hirszfeld (Zeitschrift F. Immunitats) definitely proved that the four blood groups are inherited while the 'exact mechanism or heredity was defined by Bernstein in 1925.' Von Dungern and Hirszfeld in 1911 discovered the existence of sub-divisions of the blood groups A and B, while three new individual properties in human blood were found by Landsteiner and Levine.

In anthropoid apes which are the nearest kins of man, identical blood groups occur<sup>1</sup>. In the

<sup>1</sup> Munich Med. Woch. 49: 1690, 1902.

Zeitschrift, F. indukt. Abstammungs, U. Vererbungs 37: 237, 1925.

Proc. Soc. Exp. Biol and Medicine 24, 609, 941 (1927).

There exists in man two types of serum agglutinins and two types of agglutinable substances in the red blood cells. The four blood groups depend upon the presence or absence of agglutinogens in the blood cells and two agglutinins in the serum or plasma.

If we denote agglutinins as  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$  ( $\alpha$  being anti-A, and  $\beta$  being anti-B) and the agglutinogens as A and B, we shall be able to explain how the four blood groups arise. Agglutinin  $\alpha$  reacts with the agglutininogen A to produce agglutination or clumping. Agglutinin  $\beta$  similarly reacts with the agglutininogen B. In the same individual A and  $\alpha$ , B and  $\beta$  cannot co-exist. In blood transfusion, blood must be so selected that A and  $\alpha$  or B and  $\beta$  may not be brought together.

*Agglutinable substance in cells*

O  
A  
B  
AB

(nil)  
A  
B  
AB

*Agglutinin in serum*

$\alpha\beta$   
 $\beta$   
 $\alpha$   
(nil)





Gorilla and Chimpanzee only the A blood group has been found but in 1940, B has also been reported from Gorillas. Of 76 Chimpanzees tested, 71 were A and only 5 were O<sup>1</sup>. Of the 4 Gorillas tested all were A. The Asiatic Orang-utan showed 4A, 5B and 2AB out of 11, and of 10 Gibbons, there were 2A, 6B and 2AB. Thus the African anthropoids show all A with a sprinkling of O, while their Asiatic colleagues show a high percentage of B. Orang (5+2) B and AB Gibbon (6+2) B and AB. Landsteiner and Miller<sup>2</sup> who discovered that the blood serum of apes may agglutinate the 'erythrocytes of other individuals of the same species,' failed to find agglutinogens corresponding to the human agglutinogens A and B in lower monkeys.

From the data cited above, it will appear that it may not be possible to distinguish races on the basis of blood groups as every race possesses

The four blood groups have been given various nomenclatures but after the Health Committee of the League of Nations have recognised the classification into O, A, B, and AB, this has become the International Nomenclature for the blood groups. The three groupings which are new and supplementary to these are M, N, and MN, which yet have not entered much into anthropological serology. Further sub-divisions of A into A<sub>1</sub> and A<sub>2</sub> provides sub-groups A<sub>1</sub>, A<sub>2</sub>, A<sub>3</sub>, A<sub>1</sub>B, A<sub>2</sub>B and A<sub>3</sub>B. These sub-divisions do not prejudice transfusion, but may be very useful in paternity tests and in crime detection.

<sup>1</sup> Gates, Sonderbidruck aus Zeitschrift für Rassen Kunde. Jahrgang 1939, Band IX, Heft 1.

<sup>2</sup> Journ. Exp. Med. 43. 841, 853, 863 (1925).



the four blood groups except in rare cases as, for example, among the pure-blooded American Indians, where the incidence of one group may be insignificant or even nil.

(2)

In 1919, Hirszfeld tested soldiers of many nationalities and the results have shown that all races have a high percentage of O. The American Indians of purest blood approach 100 per cent O blood groups.<sup>1</sup> If we take the gene frequencies they manifest a rarity of the genes p and q; the Ainus have a high value of p and q and a relatively low value of r. The gene p shows a high concentration in Europe and also in north-eastern Asia and from west to east in the Euro-Asiatic continent the frequency of q increases rather steadily from west to east but drops to the south where among the Australian aborigines q has a very low value (4.4. according to Tebutt and McConnel and nil according to Cleland).

The North American Indians of purest blood show 100 p.c. O, though Matson and Schrader (1933) have discovered a high percentage of A among two related Indian tribes, viz. Blackfeet and Bloods. This A concentration among the latter requires some explanation. Gates suggests that these tribes were a fresh centre of A mutation.<sup>2</sup> We propose to

<sup>1</sup> Wiener: Blood Groups And Blood Transfusion.

<sup>2</sup> Gates, R: The blood groups and other features of the Mic Mac Indians, J. R. A. I. Vol. LXVIII, July-December, 1938.





revert to this mutation hypothesis at a later stage. Gates in his article on Eskimo Blood Groups and Physiognomy (Man 1935-36) has shown that in the few cases which could be tested, the pure Eskimo type of face went with the O group, while the Eskimos who plainly showed white and Indian mixture (the Indian being half-bred white) had the A group. Gates was very fortunate in discovering this correlation, but our efforts to correlate typical aboriginal faces with any particular blood group has not been successful. However, for purposes of estimating the frequency distribution of the blood groups such evidence of correlation is not of any material significance.

The presence of Caucasian affinities among the American Indians raise difficulties in the matter of their racial affiliation, and some scholars have put them as a separate race (Blumenbach, 1775). The Australians are mainly O with A (Cleland, 1929, n. 226; O, 43·88, A 56·20). The same author (1930) found 41·60 O and 58·4 A among 296 Australians. Lee found the following percentages: n. 377: O 60·3, A 31·7, B 6·4, AB 1·6 while Tebutt and McConnell by investigating 1,176 cases came to the following percentage distribution of blood groups among pure Australians: O 52·6, A 36·9, B 8·5 and AB 2·0. The Maoris possess high A percentage, 39·5 p. c. according to Phillips, and the Hawaiians 60·8 p. c. according to Nigg, while Cleland got 56 to 58 p. c. A among the Australians. Tebutt and McConnell, however, discovered the percentage varying from 31 to 38 only.



From the above surveys it appears that the Australians, the Maories and the Hawaiians possess very little or no B. The A in Australia and Oceania appears to be comparatively higher than in north-west Europe and equally that of the Americans who have the highest A in the old world. The large incidence of A in Europe has been taken by some authors as a racial trait of the white race. The Nordics, however, are less rich in A than men of Alpine or Mediterranean ethnic groups. The B is not widely distributed among the primitive peoples.

The Bantus have 19.2 p. c. B (Pyper, 1930), American Negroes 20 (Snyder), Solomon Islanders 16.8 (Howells, 1933), Papuans 13.2 (Bijlmer, 1932), Fiji 9.4 (Howells, 1933), Samoa 13.7 (Nigg), the Pre-Dravidian tribes of Madras 9.0 (Macfarlane), and Paniyans 7.6 (Aiyappan), the Angami Nagas 11.5, (Mitra), the Konyak Nagas (British India Association Research Committee on Blood Groups), 10.2. From the data above, it appears that the B element among the aboriginal tribes may not be indigenous to them and may have been received by infiltration from other sources, or that 'B has begun to appear much later' as is claimed by Gates.

The northern Hindus (Hirszfelds) showed a very high percentage of B as high as 41 p.c. While among the southern Hindus, Bais and Verhoef discovered 31.6 p.c. B. Malone and Lahiri who tested 2,357 samples also found 37.2 B among the Hindus, which, however, has been used by all these writers as a generic name including as it





does all people living in Hindustan. This significant B concentration has given rise to a large amount of speculation about the possible source of the B incidence. One fact which has already been pointed out by Macfarlane<sup>1</sup> and bears repetition is the heterogeneity of the samples tested by these authors.

(3)

Malone and Lahiri who tested a large sample of over two thousand people from northern India belonging to various castes, failed to keep the data from different tribes and castes distinct with the result, as pointed out by Macfarlane, that this does not give much idea about the incidence of any particular blood group in the population. As the Indian castes are endogamous and in spite of centuries of contact, they have tried to retain their endogamy by occupational and other taboos, an arrangement on caste basis would have been of great value in estimating the frequencies of genes involved. Similar remarks could be made against the data collected by Bais and Verhoef (1928) for Tamil tea garden coolies in Sumatra. These people, we are told (*ibid*) were natives of various parts of south India and Ceylon and belonged to several low caste and untouchable strains, all classed by them as 'Hindus Southern'. Although Hirszfelds' estimate of B percentage among the Hindus

<sup>1</sup> Journal of Genetics Vol. XXXVI, No. 2, pp. 225-237, July 1938.



may not be accurate as appears from the recent blood group data from India, there is no doubt that India has high percentage of B. The Todas of the Nilgiri hills (Pandit, 1934) show 38 p. c. B, Pathans (Malone and Lahiri) 30.0, Marahattas (Correia, 1934) 34.0, Jats (Malone and Lahiri) 37.2, the Santhals, Mundas and Oraons (Malone and Lahiri) 36.8, Bengal Depressed castes (Macfarlane) 42.7, and Bengal Mohammedan (Macfarlane) 40.0, the Chamars of the U. P. (Majumdar) 38.3, the Bhatus and Karwals, two criminal tribes of northern India (Majumdar) 39.8 and 40.6 respectively and the Doms of the U. P. and Bihar (Majumdar) 39.4 p. c. B.

B is very high in India and decreases in all directions (H. J. T. Bijlmar)<sup>1</sup>. To the west of India B decreases till it reaches its lowest incidence. "B dwindles into insignificance in the south-west of Arabia and Africa." The predominance of B in India and Mongolia inhabited by different racial stocks requires explanation. Japan and China have a high percentage of B. Of 29,480 subjects investigated in Japan (Stiffan, Wellisch and Miyaju, 1927) 30 p. c. show O, 22 p. c. A, 38 p. c. B and 10 p. c. AB. The aboriginal Chwan Miao of Szechwan Province, West China, shows a high B concentration, viz., 39 p. c. (Yang, Beh, and Morse). The Chwan Miao are a very isolated, segregated, financially poor group of people almost certainly

<sup>1</sup> H. J. T. Bijlmar, The Relation of Blood Groups to Races, J. R. A. I. Vol. XV, pp. 124-125, Jan-June, 1935.





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with no European contacts living in the mountains at an elevation of about 3,000 ft. They eat very little meat and few vegetables, their chief diet being maize or rice.<sup>1</sup>

From the data thus reviewed, the predominance of B in India appears very significant. India must have had a great influence in the dispersion of B, if it had its centre of characterisation in India. It may have spread to Africa through western India and eastward to the Malay Archipelago and farther east. The small or insignificant percentage of B among Australians, American Indians and pure Polynesians 'shows perhaps diffusion from these areas to India and not the other way.' According to Howells (1938) 'B spread from Central Asia and India through Indonesia to the Phillipines along with Hindu influence as late as the first millenium A. D. and filtrated into Europe and still later with oriental trade.' The decrease of B from Central Asia to west Europe is interesting because Hindustan where B is highest is believed to be inhabited by Aryan-speaking races or branches of the white race.

The preponderance of B in India among the depressed castes in Bengal, and the criminal tribes in the U. P. and the lower incidence of B among the population of Assam, Burma and Tibet indicate the possibility that India has been a centre of dispersion of B. As a large number of samples have been tested during the last three years, we are now in

<sup>1</sup> Man 66, May 1928.



a better position than we were before with regard to the blood group distribution data.

Macfarlane tested 44 bloods from the Bhils of both sexes in the Kannad Taluk of the Aurangabad district in the extreme north-west.<sup>1</sup> She found 31·8 p. c. O, 13·6 A, 52·3 B and 2·3 AB. This result, if corroborated, should be considered significant. 'It may be', writes Macfarlane, 'that in the Bhils we have one of the reservoirs of group B in India from which it has percolated to higher social castes, for the Bhils have an ancient tradition as soldiers and artisans.' In collaboration with the Gujarat Research Society and the University of Bombay the author had recently done some anthropological investigations among the Bhils of Gujarat and the bloods of 369 Bhils of both sexes were typed in December 1941. The data from the Bhils gave the following percentages: 37·5 p. c. O, 27·5 p. c. A, 26·0 B, 9·0 A. B. A second tour of Gujarat in 1943, which was also organised by the Gujarat Research Society, concentrated on the anthropological study of the Rajpipla Bhils and the blood group percentages obtained from 156 Bhils of Malsamot plateau of the Satpura hills confirmed our previous data from the Panchmahals. Thus Macfarlane's estimate of B concentration could not be corroborated and we have to seek for 'reservoirs of group B' elsewhere than among the Bhils. The Bhils have been described as an

<sup>1</sup> Macfarlane: Blood-grouping in the Deccan and Eastern Ghats, J. R. A. S. B., Vol. VI, 1940. 5.





aboriginal group. I think the time has come when we should revise our ethnological nomenclature, for as in blood group distribution so in other racial traits the Bhils do not show many aboriginal traits. The classification of the Bhils with Kols and Santhals, I think, has been more for symphony than for fundamental ethnic similarities.

## (4)

Although the four blood groups are found distributed in varying proportion in all countries, the rarity or predominance of one or more of these groups in a country requires explanation. O is found in all races, only it is found to occur in a pure state among the American Indians. Recently it has been shown that the American Indians who have been known to be mixed indicate a high A concentration. A is predominant in western Europe and B among the Asiatic peoples. These facts have made the following theory of the origin of the blood types plausible. 'In man only the property O existed originally, A is a later mutation and originated in the west from where it spread towards all parts, particularly eastward.' There may be other centres of A mutations as, for example, Indo-China. B may have originated in Asia and may have spread through migrations. But the fact that A and B are found among the anthropoid apes as well, throws some doubt on the mutation hypothesis. But as Snyder points out, there may be parallel independent mutations in man and apes.



This, we are told by Gates, 'is entirely in harmony with modern genetic conceptions.' The fact that many of the primitive and peripheral peoples possess O and A, suggests that A is a primitive trait in man and must have developed earlier than B. If the four groups all existed in man, as is suggested by some scholars, the distinction of the blood groups today may probably be explained by isolation and migration.

It has been estimated that the rate at which mutations occur in the case of a character like blood group with no selective value, is insufficient to explain their maximum frequencies today. If A and B are mutations from O, then according to Wyman and Boyd, 'it would require 745,000 years for the genes A and B to attain their present frequencies'. Gates has proved with the aid of Fisher, that 'if the rate of mutation from O to A were 1 in 100,000, then without any intervention of selection there would be 10 per cent of A in the population after 250,000 years.' The present frequency would require so high a mutation rate that many consider it simply improbable. While some, however, still believe that 'there are periods during which particular mutations occur at a greatly increased rate.' As I have already pointed out elsewhere, the blood groups data are yet insignificant to enable us to claim the validity of any existing hypothesis. Whenever two sections of the same people have been tested by the same author, one living isolated or inbred, the other outbreeding, one living on the hill-tops, the





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other in the plains district, divergent results have been obtained.<sup>1</sup>

Macfarlane made a careful study of the distribution of the B element in the Indian population. She thinks that B has been in India for millennia and may have originated there in the ancestors of the lower castes of the north-east where the highest concentrations are found, whence it has diffused into the higher castes. As the amount of O and B are found to vary inversely, she thinks that there may be genes for O in these low caste people with a relatively high mutation rate for B.

From a comparison of the blood groups data available yet, it appears that the B concentration is most marked among those social groups which have passed from the tribal to caste status or those which are known to be hybrid castes. The depressed castes in Bengal show a high B concentration, so do the criminal tribes of northern India. The Paniyans (Aiyappan), the Naga tribes, Angami and Konyak, the Bhils, all exhibit lower percentage of B. But as soon as we include in our survey those tribes which are known to be mixed or those who from the nature of their occupation or otherwise allow inter-tribal marriages and extra-marital relationship with neighbouring tribes and castes, the percentage of B suddenly increases. Further data is required to

<sup>1</sup> Blood Groups of Tribes and Castes of the U. P. with special reference to the Korwas, J. R. A. S. B., Vol. IX, 1943, pp. 81-94.



substantiate the point, but all the same it appears that hybridisation may have something to do with the increase of incidence of a particular blood group in the population.

If we arrange the serological values of *A-B* of all Indian tribes and groups available, we get the following negative values:

<i>Caste or Tribe</i>	<i>A-B</i>	<i>Caste or Tribe</i>	<i>A-B</i>
Hazaras .. ..	14	Bengali Kayastha ..	11·7
Jap .. ..	11	Bengali Brahmins ..	12·0
Khatras .. ..	5	Bengali Mahishyas ..	19·4
Rajputs .. ..	5	All non-caste Hindus	17·8
U. P. Hindus ..	12·7	Mohammedans ..	16·7
U. P. Kayasthas ..	12·7	Santhals .. ..	14·6
U. P. Khattris ..	9·1	Maria .. ..	8·1
U. P. Chamars ..	20·6	Chenchus .. ..	19·0
U. P. Doms .. ..	16·6	Goanese .. ..	6·5
U. P. Doms (Hills) ..	13·8	Marahattas .. ..	7·3
U. P. Bhatus .. ..	15·1	Nairs .. ..	13·1
U. P. Karwals .. ..	18·0	Paniyans .. ..	52·8
U. P. Tharus .. ..	20·6	Syrian Christians ..	2·2
		Tamils .. ..	5·4
		Todas .. ..	18·5
		Bhils .. ..	1·5
		Patelas .. ..	1·5

A classification of the tribes and castes into the following groups with values, (-5 and above), (-5 and 15) and (-15 and below) gives the following arrangement with respect to their *A-B* values:





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(-5 and above)	(-5 and—15)	(-15 and below)
Paniyans ( <i>S. India</i> )	Tamils ( <i>S. India</i> )	Non-caste (Hindu)
Chenchus ( <i>S. India</i> )	Khatttris ( <i>Punjab</i> )	Mohammedans ( <i>Bengal</i> )
Nairs ( <i>S. India</i> )	Rajputs ( <i>C. India</i> )	Mahisyas ( <i>Bengal</i> )
Syrian Christian ( <i>S. India</i> )	Hazaras ( <i>Punjab</i> )	Dom ( <i>U. P.</i> )
Bhils ( <i>S. India</i> )	Jats ( <i>Punjab</i> )	Bhatus ( <i>U. P.</i> )
Patelias ( <i>S. India</i> )	Bengali Kayastha ( <i>Bengal</i> )	Karwals ( <i>U. P.</i> )
	Brahmin, Bengali ( <i>Bengal</i> )	Todas ( <i>Nilgiri</i> )
	Goanese ( <i>Goa</i> )	Tharus ( <i>U. P.</i> )
	Marhattas ( <i>Bombay</i> )	

Thus the highest negative values are obtained among the criminal tribes, the Tharus, the non-caste Hindus, Mohammedans, and Mahisyas of Bengal. These castes and groups, as we know, are of mixed origin. The Tharus are a mongoloid tribe with mixed non-mongoloid traits. They claim mixed descent from Rajputs and Nepalese. The Mohammedans of Bengal are a heterogeneous group because their ranks have swelled by conversion. The large percentage of O among the Muslims of U. P. (Majumdar, *Current Science* 1943, 12; 269-270) and a lower incidence of B show perhaps a higher degree of isolation or ethnic purity of the upcountry Muslims. This is corroborated by the percentage distribution of blood groups among the urban Muslims (Macfarlane) who belong to Bengal as well as to upcountry centres, more to the latter I suppose. Again the low value for B among the Muslim population outside India, also very high incidence of A distinguish these



from Indian Muslims. The Mahisyas originally of aboriginal descent have been fortunate in assimilating non-aboriginal features, while the non-caste Hindus of Bengal are certainly not a homogeneous group. The Doms we have already described are a mixed group, so are the Karwals and Bhatus. Thus either the rate of B mutation is accelerated by hybridisation, or the source of B dominance requires intensive investigation.

That this is the experience of field workers will be evident from what Macfarlane observed on the basis of a large number of investigations. She noticed that in the few instances where there were data from two related communities in one locality (except in Cochin) the lower caste or that which probably contains more 'Dravidian' admixture show a high frequency for B. I should put the 'Dravidian' out of this statement as I think the term is a misnomer. If this be true, it is necessary to collect data from groups living in the same locality. Until such data are available the mutation hypothesis should wait. Like many other anthropometric tests the biochemical evidence should be handled with caution till the data speak for themselves.

To sum up: On the basis of our knowledge of blood groups data in India it may be assumed that the fluctuation of the group percentages indicate considerable admixture between the various racial and cultural groups and that the migration into India could not have been from one direction alone, the decrease of B from east to west and from





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the south to the north read along with the distribution of cephalic and nasal indices may be considered racially significant but until we get further data on blood group distribution we shall not be able to construct migration charts of races.

The small size of the samples, the difficulty of regional grouping of tribes and castes, absence of serious efforts to eliminate family strains in the samples investigated, above all the insufficiency of the data, prevent us from speculating on the origin of any particular blood group in any part of the country and we need to wait for further data.

### *B in Primitive Groups*

The Bantus .. ..	19.2% (Pyper, 1930)
American Negroes .. ..	20.0% (Snyder)
Solomon Islanders .. ..	16.8% (Howells, 1933)
Papuans .. ..	13.2% (Bijlmar, 1932)
Fiji .. ..	9.4% (Howells, 1933)
Samoa .. ..	13.7% (Nigg)
The Pre-Dravidian tribes of	
Madras .. ..	9.0% (Macfarlane)
Paniyans of Madras .. ..	7.6% (Aiyappan)
Angami Nagas .. ..	11.5% (Mitra)
Konyak Nagas .. ..	10.2% (Br. Ass. Res. Com. on Blood Groups)
Khonds (C. B) .. ..	10.8% (Majumdar)
Australian Aborigines .. ..	8.5% (Tebutt & McConnell)
Australian Aborigines .. ..	6.4% (Lee)
Korwa (U. P.) .. ..	20.4% (Majumdar)



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### *B. in India*

Hindus .. .. .	41·2%	(Hirszfelds)
Southern Hindus .. .. .	31·6%	(Bais and Verhoef)
U. P. Hindus .. .. .	37·2%	(Malone and Lahiri)
Pathans .. .. .	30·0%	(Malone and Lahiri)
Marhattas .. .. .	34·0%	(Correia)
Jats .. .. .	37·2%	(Malone and Lahiri)
The Santhals, Mundas and		
Oraons .. .. .	36·8%	(Malone and Lahiri)
Bengal Depressed Castes .. .. .	42·7%	(Macfarlane)
Bengal Mahommedans .. .. .	40·0%	(Macfarlane)
The Chamars (U. P.) .. .. .	38·3%	(Majumdar)
Bhatus (U. P.) .. .. .	39·8%	(Majumdar)
Karwals (U. P.) .. .. .	40·6%	(Majumdar)
Doms (U. P.) .. .. .	39·4%	(Majumdar)
Tharus (Males) .. .. .	37·5%	(Majumdar)
Tharus (Females) .. .. .	42·7%	(Majumdar)
The Todas .. .. .	38·0%	(Pandit)
Muslims of (U. P.) .. .. .	33·7%	(Majumdar)





## CHAPTER III

## HABITAT, ECONOMY AND SOCIETY

## (I)

The primitive man is subject to the powers of nature, to its wealth, to the flora and fauna, to the hills and valleys, rivers and forests. He develops a code of social life based on his interpretation of his environing conditions. His tools are those which he can shape well from the materials available, and his interest in his environment is that of 'survival in health and vigour' and not the gain or profit which efforts and application may bring today. He uses tools because he wants to satisfy his needs, and tools help him towards that end, but never does his tool make him work as in the modern economic system, 'for it makes a slave of its designer.' Income is prized not for aggrandisement, not for the sake of profit, but for effecting an equitable adjustment between resources and social group needs. The surplus produce is spent in feasts and festivities, and a leader is one who can entertain the most. If there is any impetus required, vanity furnishes the key to such social custom or etiquette. Leaders are not those who possess property or wealth, they are often without them. They are expected to lead their



people out of harm's way, to warn them of impending trouble or calamity, to direct them to new means of control of food supply, to organise methods of exploiting the resources of the habitat.

The interests of the family are often subordinated to that of the kinship group as the latter is responsible for protection and also for providing individuals and families against starvation. A sort of social equality is practised, which makes primitive culture appear atomistic sometimes. All these elements, distinguish the primitive cultures from their modern counterparts, no doubt, but do not represent fundamental differences as it exists between man and animal. Progress has not been unilinear, evolution as pointed out by Thürnwald is an accumulative process, operating in societies of different levels and aggregations, each one having its own life. There is justification for capitalism, there is also justification for inefficiency or improvidence. Primitive system of exchange and barter fulfil the same purpose as does the highly developed exchange system in international trade. Deny a primitive group of its natural subsistence, deny the forests to hunters and lumbermen, the system of exchange and distribution they have built up by experience will be immediately snapped and a new order must shape itself or has to be forced on them.

The Santhal and Munda who were gleaners and hunters not long ago, have entered the maze of industrial economy. They live in urban surroundings, eat available food from the mar-





kets, spend money on jewellery and trinkets which they never did before, and what is more, join in demonstrations, shout slogans, strike work and have produced leaders among them. While their clansmen at home will flee from strangers if alone and likely to be caught, climb up trees to escape contacts, eat worms, insects, toads and even reptiles, wear little or no clothing, offer sacrifices of hens, pigeons and goats to sylvan spirits and ancestral shades and observe innumerable taboos and social customs, his advanced compatriot will look upon such conduct as reprehensible and will even disown his whilom clansmen. The communal system of economics, of land tenure, of collective farming which so long has protected him from ruin and starvation, becomes irrelevant and irksome. Interest in money economy produces a sort of irresponsibility which release him from clan yoke, makes him independent, detribalised, remote, but the opportunities available for a higher standard of life make him work for money and he soon adjusts himself to his new economic environment.

(2)

Primitive society has tried to work out some kind of adjustment between material needs and the potentialities of the environment. Four factors enter into this kind of adjustment: the size of the social group (1), the material needs of the group (2), the resources available (3), and the degree of skill with which the resources are tapped



and exploited (4). What the material needs of a group should be, is not primarily a function of the resources available, nor is it always determined by the size of the social group. What these material needs are and how they should be satisfied, and for whose benefit the adjustment should be made, differ from society to society.

Among gleaners and hunters, the quest of food leads them from forest to forest and the search for roots and berries make them wanderers with no permanent or stable organisation for production. The needs of food quest may make association of a few families conducive to economic life and group solidarity and mutuality of obligations maintain the social order. The desire for food production does not ordinarily extend beyond meeting the primary needs of the group, family or collection of families, and thus competition is not much evident in primitive society. Yet clash of interests between groups and friction among individuals do take place, and even hunting groups are known to partition the hunting area among families, or distribute the plants among the various families constituting the social group. The *Mobua* is a free crop in many tribal areas in India and the tribal people make a kind of beverage and also use the flowers for preparing cakes. The trees in a settlement are usually divided among the families in the neighbourhood which eliminates chance of friction between families or groups of families. The social organisation of hunting groups has been built up by the needs





of economic life, by the co-operation of individuals in food quest, and as such co-operation is sporadic and intermittent, we find the settlements scattered and the economic organisation less integrated.

(3)

*The Kharias*

The hill Kharias who are confined to the inhospitable hill fastnesses of the Mayurbhanj, Dhalbhum (Singhbhum) and Barabhum (Manbhum) have not been much disturbed by contacts with outsiders. The country they inhabit, does not afford much scope for an easy life and they are constantly faced with the problems of food supply. In their efforts to eke out their meagre subsistence they have developed some skill and ingenuity and their invention of tools and implements and techniques of production, have secured to them some control over food supply.

The iron ores in their hills provide them with material for their tools and implements, those that are required for hunting, fishing, lumbering, for manufacture of utensils, furniture, combs, limeboxes, etc. The vegetable products, gourds, barks of the trees and leaves, provide them with the necessary containers for storing grains and water, and covers against rains and heat, ropes and strings required for making their improvised leafy shelters, and for making beds and ladder which they use to climb hills for collection of honey. Bamboos supply posts for the house, also are sliced to make mats, baskets and fences.



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The hill Kharias have not yet taken to agriculture seriously enough, and those of them who practise the primitive *jhum*, do not derive all their sustenance from such crude efforts. Honey, fruits and edible tubers still supplement their meagre produce from the fields. The men go out into the forests for days, even weeks during which the women manage the household and look after the children. Rice is their staple food, but every day the Kharias cannot afford boiled rice and many families consider them extremely fortunate if they can cook rice once a day. Often they have to take boiled vegetables, edible leaves and tubers for days together while rice is a luxury they can ill afford. Those of the hill Kharias who live near prosperous villages situated at the foot of hills, may secure work as day labourers, but they usually receive their wages in kind. Rice or *Bhuya* (fried rice) is given as wage and the hill Kharias even today prefer such remuneration to money payment.

The hill Kharias catch birds or trap them. They may eat them or sell or barter them for food, rice or vegetables. They have learnt to value things which they can sell to others and thus the hill Kharias are often seen to deal in mangoes, silk cocoons and certain odorous resins for which local demands exist. The *jhum* fields do not allow double cropping. Usually the Kharias raise a kind of pulse in the *jhum* land which they call *Ramakali* or (Urid Kalai). During the rains they are free from work in their





*Jhum* fields and many go to the forests for collecting honey, fruits and roots and for months the Kharia settlements put up amazonian appearance.

The size of the Kharia settlements differs according to their cultural stage. The hill Kharias live in groups of five to ten families, in huts scattered over the hillside at distances of one hundred yards or more, but the more advanced Dhelki Kharias live in regular villages with sacred groves, dancing arenas and the village burial ground where the bones of the deceased relatives are ceremonially interred at intervals. The Christian Kharia villages are neat and more compact with the houses more substantially built. The hill Kharias and also the Dhelkis build dormitories, where the bachelors and the maidens live separate, but the Christian villages have abandoned the practice.

Usually one rectangular house serves all the purposes of the Kharia family, as it is partitioned into sleeping and cooking apartments. The materials for house construction are available locally. The village dormitory where it exists is a 'pretentious habitation for tribal manhood' and all the skill of the tribe, particularly of the young men is spent in making it suitable for common residence. The substantial families imitate the style of dormitories in building their houses. The kitchen may be part of the house or as it is found among the Dhelki Kharias, it may be a separate hut facing the main house. The domestic architecture of the Kharias is in line with that obtained among the other sections of



the tribal population in Chota Nagpur, extremely simple and unpretentious.

The hill Kharias even now make fire by the stick and groove method and match-boxes are a luxury even to the substantial cultivator. A small flat piece of wood in which a hole has been drilled is held firmly under the feet and a stick is inserted into the hole to allow a rotatory movement, the friction producing fire which lits up the leaves placed below the piece of wood. In many villages, they have indigenous forge for making iron blades for their implements, the mechanism of which is similar to the ones in use among the Lohars and Agharias of Chota Nagpur.

Hunters and gleaners as the Kharias are even today, their food supply is met mostly from the forests but the preparation of their food differs from those of other tribes in the neighbourhood. Raw meat is not eaten by the Kharias and beef is unpopular with all sections of the tribe. Salt has been very popular with them and they take plenty of it with their food; meat is salted and dried, vegetables are boiled with salt, and the advanced section of the Kharias have learnt to prepare curry with vegetables, onion, powdered turmeric, pulses and meat, salted to taste. This preference for salt may lead to some physiological change and such aspects of nutrition in primitive society require careful investigation.

The Kharias have experimented with all kinds of leaves and tubers as food and have developed taste for a large number of leaves and flowers.





These they boil in water or put in steaming hot starchy water drained off boiled rice. The nutritive value of such food is not known but it appears that the partiality of the Kharias for vegetable food, particularly to leaves and tubers, has its source in the scarcity and shyness of animals in their forests and the irregularity of supply of animal food. The use of cakes with flowers which are fried in earthen pots and grinded into flour is popular with the substantial section of the Kharias, *Mohua*, *Sarguja*, *Til* are the ones commonly used for the purpose. Fruits and roots also serve as medicines and recipe for their common ailments. Black berry juice is fermented and preserved for months which tastes like vinegar, tamarind provides sauce to rice. Like most other Munda tribes, the Kharias cut meat into small pieces and wrapped in leaves, they roast in fire and eat as a delicacy. The advanced section of the Kharias, the Dudh and Dhelki Kharias now prefer boiled meat, salted and spiced, though turmeric powder and pepper are the only spices used by them.

The Kharias like the other Munda tribes brew a kind of rice-beer; in some parts, distilled liquor has become popular because of its intoxication and the abandon which results from it. *Mohua* is distilled by the excise contractors, and the *arkh* prepared is replacing their home-brewed ale. The rice-beer must be prepared with all the customary rites, and the first drops must be offered to ancestor spirits, before others are allowed to taste it. The fermenting properties of roots and leaves have



been discovered by the Kharias by long periods of 'trial and error', and those who know them have kept the knowledge secret and not every house can prepare this life-giving drink.

(4)

### *The Kukis*

A case of human adjustment to the habitat, and how far environment shapes cultural progress is afforded by the Kukis, a Mongoloid tribe living in the Lushai hills in Assam. The Kukis are known by various clan names. Those of north Cachar hills are called Biete Kukis and Khelma Kukis. To the north of the Lushai range in the forest-clad hills dwell the Darlungs. The Lushai are the most important of the Kuki clans. The Lushai chiefs rule over the country between the Karnafuli river and its main tributary, the Tuilampai on the west, and the Tyao and Coladyne rivers on the east, while their southern boundary is 'roughly a line drawn east and west through the junction of the Mat and Koladyne rivers' and their most northerly villages are found on the borders of the Silchar district. The Lushai and others with distinct Lushai affinities are found scattered over wide areas, they are found in the southern borders of Sylhet, in Tipperah and in the north of Cachar hills and the Chittagong hill tracts also contain some Lushai villages.

The non-Lushai clans can be grouped under five sections, according to the classification given by Col. Shakespeare. They are (a) the Thado





Kukis, (b) the old Kuki clans, (c) some Kuki clans who have come under the influence of Lushais and who live among the latter but are under the rule of Thangur chief, (d) some Kuki clans who live with the Lushais or in the immediate neighbourhood but who have not yet lost their separate identity like those described under (c), and (e) the Lakhers or immigrants from the Chin hills from where the Lushais claim origin. This classification does not, however, establish the Kuki clans as distinct ethnic types, for in practice it is difficult to distinguish one Kuki clan from another and the various clans represent the same cultural pattern. N.E. Parry who wrote about the Lushais in the Census Reports of 1931, Vol. I, Pt. III, has referred to the 'levelling influence' of the Lushais and has shown how they have succeeded in absorbing most of the Kuki clans and how even remote Kuki clans have not escaped their cultural influence.

The Kuki clans such as Fanais, the Paihtes, the Thado and others have all come under Lushai influence and before many years have passed will be practicably indistinguishable from the Lushais. Most if not all the Kukis have adopted the manners and customs of the Lushais who have conquered the other clans in recent times and though traces of the original dialects spoken by these clans survive, the process of absorption with the Lushais has become more or less complete.

The Kuki villages consist of tiny settlements in the jungles, of four to five huts, built of bamboo and cane. The Kukis are 'by temperament



nomadic'. The peculiar vagabond strain if not controlled 'leads to villages splitting into hamlets and the latter subdividing till, as in the Manipur hills, we find single houses in the midst of dense jungle several miles from the next habitation.' This vagabond strain also manifests itself in the custom by which 'each son of a chief as he attains a marriageable age is provided with a wife at his father's expense and given a certain number of households from his father's village and sent forth to a village of his own.' Henceforth he rules as an independent chief and his success or failure depends on his own talents for ruling. He pays no tribute to his father but is expected to help him in his quarrels with neighbouring chiefs, but when fathers lived long it was not unusual to find their sons disowning even this amount of subordination. The youngest son remains not only in the village but also inherits all the property. 'Economic conditions engender social habits' and today on account of the difficulty of establishing new villages, the tribal code with respect to inheritance has undergone modification and primogeniture has replaced the inheritance of the father's property by the youngest son.

The Kuki clans like many other primitive groups in India and elsewhere are self-sufficient in all the details of their economic requirements. The dress of the Lushai and other Kuki clans is quite simple. The men put on a cloth 7 ft. long 3 ft. wide and many do wear a white coat with the 'sleeves ornamented by cloth lines skillfully woven with white thread sometimes dyed





red'. The chief puts on similar dress worn by the common people except that he may put on a Pagri (head-dress) 'to which he fixes the tail feather of the king crow'. The women are not very fond of dress either, they put on a small cloth just enough to cover the waste with a second overlap. In the interior parts the Kuki girls do not put on any thing round the waist, but they must cover their breasts. Often Kuki girls may be seen walking naked with a cloth wrapped round the waist upwards. Lushais and other Kuki clans are not fond of tattooing and even when they do tattoo, the designs are extremely simple. The tatoo marks often are meant as 'mementoes of love affairs' in 'care-free bachelor days'. Men and women put on the same kind of ornaments except those of the ear which are peculiar to women, and sometimes it is difficult to distinguish men from women on account of the absence of hair on the face and similar method of tying hair in a knot on the scalp. Smoking is very popular and men and women both smoke a lot. Men and women have different kinds of pipes which they make themselves out of a particular species of bamboo found in the Chin hills. The Lushai and Kukis have learnt the use of firearms but a century ago, their only weapons consisted of bow and arrows, 'a kind of spear, the blade of which is made longer and diamond-shaped, and a *dao* made in the pattern of its Burmese counterpart.' The warriors use a kind of shield made of bison hide adorned at the two upper corners with tassels of goat's hair dyed red. Besides the



spears and the *dao*, bamboo spikes are also used. The arrows are furnished with barbed iron points and are carried in a bamboo quiver with a leather cap to it.

When we come to describe the economic life of the Lushai Kukis we find that there is a wonderful adaptation of craft and economy to the habitat. Culture and habitat are found to be interdependent and the more primitive the social group the greater the interdependence between the two. The tools, utensils, houses and indeed the great part of the material equipment in the lower cultures will show a direct relation to the available resources. When, for example, we examine the economic life of the Kukis we cannot ignore the dominance of bamboo on the material life of the people.

The Darlungs, a section of the Lushai have settled on the banks of a small streamlet which has its source in the Thlong river. The streamlet practically dries up in the winter months while in the rainy season it becomes impossible to ford it. The rainy season in these parts extends over eight months in the year and the Darlungs usually live isolated for the greater part of this period and articles which are indispensable for their daily needs have to be procured by them during the four or five months of the open season when they can freely move out of their settlement. Of course on urgent occasions, they can and do go out even during the rains, but never without risks for the route lies through dense bamboo thickets where





insects, worms and leeches multiply in the rainy season and even the Kukis are afraid of the poisonous bite which they fear may produce malignant fever. When they pass through the forest under the canoppying bamboo trees, the leeches drop down like drops of water falling from the leaves after a heavy shower and no sooner these come in contact with the skin, there is swelling of the part accompanied with terrible pain resulting in malignant fever which if it does not prove fatal, reduces him to an invalid for a long time.

The forests inhabited by the Kukis are thickly clothed with bamboo, there is hardly any other species of trees to be seen and on all sides the small hillocks are covered with dense bamboo thickets which are difficult to negotiate even in broad day light. Unless a man knows the part thoroughly well, it is not easy for him to trace the tracks left by the Kukis which are sometimes through streamlets leaving no impression of the foot track. Assam is notorious for its herds of wild elephants, whose depredations are frequent in these parts. A large number of these wild elephants are annually captured and trained and even substantial cultivators possess elephants which are employed to draw timber from the interior of the forest. Tigers and leopards are not frequently met, but deer, bison and wild buffaloes are abundant. Wild bears and boars are also hunted by the Kukis. The domesticated animals are the dog and the pig, the former is meant for watch, the latter supply them with meat. The flesh of the dog is eaten in



times of scarcity. Whenever they have to propitiate some spirit or godling, they sacrifice pigs or fowls, rarely buffaloes which are also domesticated by them. The Kukis share their huts with these animals. Goats, ducks and fowls are reared by them for food as well as for periodical sacrifices to the host of divinities and nature powers whose intervention they have to seek in cases of disease, epidemics and for agricultural calamities.

In the jungle, the nomad Kuki builds lightly and a habitation of sorts can be erected in a few hours with bamboo mats as wall and with leaves to thatch and keep out the rain. Where the Kukis live a settled life, they have constructed large solidly built houses, 50 to 60 ft. long, 15 to 20 ft. wide and 7 to 10 ft. high. The houses are built on long bamboo poles, the lower halves of which when covered up provide accommodation for cattle and pigs. Each house has a few bamboo cages, kept on either side of the entrance, in which fowls and pigeons are kept. The Kuki women rise early, fill their baskets with empty bamboo tubes in which they store water for drinking, trudge off before daylight to the spring which lies some way down the hill. The tubes are filled with water whose supply is usually scanty so that they take some time in returning with the basket-load of tubes.

The Kukis do provide most of their technological requirements from the bamboo forests. The baskets are made of bamboo, the mats are made from bamboo, the tobacco pipe, nets for





fishing, traps for animals, weaving apparatus, and even the oven is made in bamboo containers. The leaves of bamboo are used as roofs of houses, as covers for rain and sun and in earlier days they used to hang them round the loins. The green bamboo shoots serve as delicacies which they boil with rice. Their houses are made of bamboo and even the musical instruments are of bamboo. In one word bamboo is the pivot of Kuki material culture.

The Darlungs like other Kuki clans practise *Jhum*. They clear a tract by fire, cultivate for a year or two and then abandon it for another tract where they pursue a like process. When they fell the jungle for *Jhum* they leave one tree in the middle of the field as a refuge for the tree-spirit. The scorched, scarred, twisted solitary stump gives the impression that some spirit has chosen it for an abode and when the harvesting season arrives they take care to offer sacrifice and prayers to the spirit believed to be residing on the stump, as otherwise their efforts may not be rewarded with a bumper harvest. Where the Kukis live on the hills they have not taken to terraced cultivation for which they say they must know the appropriate rituals and sacrifices. The Kukis therefore have not learnt to cultivate wet rice and the only method of cultivation known to them is *Jhum*. In some parts of the Kuki country, Santhal coolies have been imported to teach wet cultivation to the Kukis, and gradually it is expected that they would get over their prejudice against the introduction of this new



method of cultivation.

When the fields are ready after *Jbum* and the seeds are sown, as the monsoon rains begin to pour, the Kukis get themselves completely drenched in the belief that such soaking is good to the crops. Despite all the precautions taken by the Kukis, with all their dances and sacrifices, the economic outlook of the Kukis is not very hopeful. They have little or no ambition in life. They have no thoughts for the 'morrow'. When the harvesting season comes, the fields are full of ripe sheaves of paddy, but they do not know what to do with the yield of their fields. They carry home only as much as they require for food during the interval between two harvests. The remainder of the crop is left for the domesticated cattle. But before a couple of months expire the major portion of the grains are spent in brewing liquor which they are incredibly fond of or they exchange for country liquor.

The Kharias and the Darlung Kukis both are more or less isolated from civilisation. Both are greatly influenced by their respective habitat and show wonderful adjustment to the forces of their environment. The *Sal* forests provide the Kharias with most of their requirements, while the bamboo has done much to feed, clothe and shelter the Kukis. The economic life of the Kharias moves round the *Sal*, the Kukis have made the bamboo the pivot of their economic life. The blossom of the *Sal* trees is therefore of religious significance to the Kharias and the bamboo forests are con-





sidered sacred by the Kukis whose gods are supposed to dwell there.

(5)

### *The Gonds*

Bastar is an important State of the Eastern Agency. There is a large number of aboriginal population, all of Gond extraction. The Marias, the Murias, the Parjas, the Bhatras, the Gadabas, are some of the tribal groups there. Most of the tribal villages in Bastar are self-sufficient. There is usually a family of blacksmith in the village or several villages may have one such who supplies the small needs of the people. The artisan elements in the population of these villages do not seem to have a separate origin. They are probably recruited from the tribal substratum. For example, some Muria who was skilled in iron smelting and was adept in making iron implements may have been allowed to ply the trade of iron-smiths and his descendants have taken to this occupation and form today the functional group known as iron-smiths. The iron-smiths in the Maria country not only possess similar physical features but speak Maria, possess the same clan names as the Marias and even intermarry with the latter. Similarly, among many other tribes of the locality the artisan elements owe their origin to the tribal stock and still have kept their ranks open. Among the Saoras who are widely scattered in the Ganjam Agency Tracts and the



Vizagapatam district of the Madras Presidency, there are a few occupational groups such as the Arisis who weave cloths for the tribe, the Kundals who make baskets and the Lohars, who are iron-smiths. All these are Saoras by origin and still marry in the tribe, though from the cultural point of view, they resemble the artisan elements in other parts of the country. Some of these groups have, however, become independent and although there is no theoretical bar to marriage outside, they usually confine it within their group. This, however, suggests a plausible solution of the origin of caste. The caste system in its present form may be a post-Aryan development, but the essential characteristics which favoured its growth and persistence were most probably of tribal origin. The Kurukhs, Kewats or Dhimar who live by fishing in Bastar afford examples on this point.

The Kurukhs of Chitrakot are physically akin to the Marias. Even trained eyes will not be able to detect any difference in their make-up. Even now Kurukhs marry non-Kurukhs, the wild Maria girls may take the Kurukhs as their husbands. All tribes and groups in Bastar take to fishing as a diversion but its adoption as a permanent occupation by the Kurukhs and their use of rod and line in fishing and their divorce from land have widened the social distance of the latter from the Marias from whom they are evidently recruited. Yet these Kurukhs are indispensable to the social economy of the Maria-country as they barter their catch in rivers and tanks for grain





at customary rates.

The same may be said about the Rawats of Bastar. They are found scattered all over the country and their occupation is tending cattle of the people. They are usually paid in kind by the people but they also sell milk and its produce to travellers and administrative officers who may need the same. Rawats appear to be recruited from the tribal population, for there is hardly any difference between them and the population they serve. In the interior of the Maria country and elsewhere where the population is purely aboriginal, the need of domestic servants for travellers and administrative officers of the State must have been felt and a particular family was selected and granted the sacred thread by the State so that it could be of use to the visiting public. A clean caste was created among the unclean aborigines and today they attend all villages where there is a *Paikguree* or if previous information is sent to them.

The material culture of the people of Bastar is very simple, indeed, and in spite of cultural miscegenation we have mentioned above, the wants of the people are not varied. The usual tools and implements made by the local smiths are the plough-share, axe-blades, arrow-blades, etc., while the plough and wooden hafts for the axe as well as bows and arrows are made by the people themselves. The ornaments which decorate women are not all locally made. Some of the bead-necklaces are imported stuff and even the armlets and rings are



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brought by itinerant vendors or are had from the local weekly markets. Beads and cowrie shells are also locally woven into garlands and often these are coloured from indigenous dyes by the women. Aluminium ornaments are of recent origin and are not made by the local artisans. Various kinds of ear-rings are used, many of which are Japanese or of German make, but the indigenous method of dilating the lobes of the ear has not fallen into desuetude.

In the interior, various forms of tattooing are still found and though it is difficult to trace any relation between the types of tattooing and totemism and other social practices, the belief in their efficacy is not questioned by the Maria and Muria. The Halba and Dhakar do not usually tattoo but all other tribal groups take to some form of tattooing. The hair is tastefully decorated and white bamboo combs are used by women to make the coiffure look extremely pretty and attractive. Half a dozen or more combs usually of indigenous make are put in rows on the coiffure and are very much prized by the girls, as they are usually presents from young men of the *Gotul* (dormitory) who are their admirers. These combs have a special fascination for a girl till she chooses to settle down as wife, when she has to content herself with the one which was presented to her by her lover and husband. As soon as the girls leave the *Gotul* permanently and this happens on marriage there is a waning of interest in the matter of dress and decoration and youth gradually drops its charm and attractive-





ness and surrenders to the exacting rôle of maternity and motherhood.

There is no industry worth the name in the State, the principal occupation of the people being agriculture and lumbering. The wild tribes are still accustomed to their nomadic life in the forests and supplement their gleanings there by crude cultivation. The usual method of cultivation is the *Dippa* (*Jhum* of the Kuki) which is the common form of agriculture practised all over the world wherever virgin forests exist. A piece of land is selected for the purpose, the trees are felled and the clearings are then set fire to. When the field is thus ready they dig holes and sow all kinds of seeds together or use very small or miniature plough for scratching the field and sow seeds broadcast. Sacrifices are then offered to the mother goddess and other godlings of the forest and also to the spirits of their ancestors, dances are held in their honour and when all these rites are done and none is omitted, they expect a bumper crop sometimes twofold, sometimes none at all. Before the seeds are dug in or sown in the usual way, some are ceremonially dedicated to the mother goddess who is also the goddess of corn, and the blood of the sacrificed animals is poured on the packet of seeds enough to soak it and to fecundate it as it were.

On the forest-clad slopes of hills whose declivity is not too steep for agriculture *Penda* or a kind of terrace farming is practised. The method of cultivation is similar in both the cases, the fields in either case have to be left fallow for



Two to three years after every year of cultivation so that fresh growth of vegetation may be possible. Where water is available, arrangements are made to irrigate the field by channelling water from higher levels, or more commonly the moisture of the soil is maintained by placing logs of wood which prevent water running to waste. Even then sacrifices are to be offered, dances have to be danced and the necessary vigil has to be kept during certain critical stages in the growth of the plants particularly when the crops ripen and the harvesting is on.

In areas where permanent clearings have been made agricultural practices conform to the usual type met with in other parts of the country, though adequate arrangements for irrigation and manuring do not exist. Where knowledge of agricultural practices has been diffused and greater security of crops has resulted, the same incentive to sacrifices or magical practices does not exist and the elaborate rites and practices of the wild tribes have been replaced by thanks-giving services, such as is provided on the occasion of the ceremonial partaking of the new crop. But security of food supply has brought in more leisure and a multiplication of wants born of a new philosophy of life, so that wants that were unknown among the wilder groups have become real with consequent efforts to satisfy them. But insatiate wants like unfulfilled wishes have produced a social discontent. Competition though not so acute as yet, has replaced custom in some form and hunger of a few





families for more land has ousted others from the moorings of their fields. On the other hand social and ceremonial needs have driven many to the arms of higher castes who have manœuvred to retain the services of these landless families to meet the increasing needs of farm labour.

When an aboriginal labourer faces a need for cash either to meet the expenses of ceremonial marriage or to meet the obligations of the bride to her maternal uncle whose son should have been the legitimate claimant to the former's hand and who therefore should be compensated or when he is in need of money to pay some fine to the State or the village Panchayat and cannot raise it by selling the holding which is inalienable or by disposing of his personal belongings which are few, he takes a loan from his master under whom he might be working and agrees to repay it in the form of agricultural service.

In days when the aboriginals lived in compact area and the tribal organisation was integrated and strong the individual requirements like these were met by voluntary subscription as among the tribes of Chota Nagpur even today bride price payable in cattle is subscribed by the members of the clan or the village concerned. With the settlement of the higher social groups in the neighbourhood, the individual members of aboriginal tribes have come in contact with the former either as suppliers of flowers or of small works of their own handicrafts or as drummers, labourers or bearers of palanquins,

While tribal solidarity has suffered disintegra-



tion due to the possibility of existence independent of village community, the dependence of the individual families divorced from tribal occupations has been real so that their economic helplessness has become a source of their exploitation by the caste people. The idea of obligation and honesty, which these people have, make it impossible for them to leave the master's service, so long as they have not liquidated the debt and this may and very often means lifelong servitude. When the debt remains unpaid and the man dies, his son has to take up the burden of debt on his shoulders and continue as a *Kabadi* or lifelong servant in the master's family. The master very often pays a further advance towards the latter's marriage and thus the debts increase so that for generations the *Kabadi's* future and that of his descendants is mortgaged. Iniquitous terms imposed upon the *Kabadi* by his master and even continued ill-treatment and undernourishment have not provoked any protest from the former who is wont to accept his lot with philosophic quietude. So long as he does not pay the debt and therefore serves the creditor, the latter has to pay certain remuneration which is expected to keep the *Kabadi* and his family out of starvation. The rate of remuneration varies in different Tahsils of the State.

Besides the *Kabadi* there are in Bastar various kinds of servants whose relations with their employers vary according to the demand for agricultural labour and the customary rules prescribing their remunerations and conditions of service.





There are the farm servants, for example, in Kondagaon and Bijapur Tahsils who do not take any advance from the master. In Bijapur a small advance of Rs. 3 to Rs. 4 is taken, with promise to work for the agricultural year. Usually the servant gets a remuneration of Rs. 4 per year, 1 *paila* of dhan or 1 *sol* of rice, salt and chillies and tobacco daily and also one or two annas for liquor on festive occasions and two pieces of cloth worth Rs. 1-8-0 in winter. In Konta Tahsil where the *Jwari* crop prevails, there is no such system of employing servants. Those who are without land often help those who have, the latter paying some consideration at the time of harvesting. The *Petposa* system which provides for a relative or relatives in distress, allows the latter to live permanently in the house of a man, without any agreement as to service to be rendered or remuneration to be paid, and help the family in all its economic activities.

The *Kabadi* system, however, is mostly met within settled areas and is less prevalent in areas where the aborigines live in compact groups or where the alien settlers have not penetrated much. The usual remuneration of a *Kabadi* though subject to variation in different Tahsils is as follows: 12 *kbandis* of dhan per year, 6 *kbandis* of Dandi mundi at the time of threshing and reaping, 6 *kbandis* of Kator Dhan at the end of the harvest, cash remuneration of Rs. 2 per annum, clothes, Re. 1-8, salt, etc., for about 8 as. and food at odd times. If all these are regularly paid it comes to Rs. 2 per month on the basis of pre-war prices, but as everything



depends on the sweet will and pleasure of the master concerned, the situation sometimes degenerates into ruthless exploitation by the employers concerned. The *Kabadi* has to live in small out-houses, within the compound of his master's house and should be within hearing distance from the family.

Vigorous attempts have been made from time to time and are being made by the present administration to eradicate the evils of the *Kabadi* system and it has been declared illegal in Bastar. But it is at best doubtful if the general release of the *Kabadis* has solved their problem, for agrestic serfdom in some form or other is bound to remain where the possibilities of independent existence are limited. As land is available in plenty and the State is not callous to their interest, gradual settlement of these *Kabadis* on new lands will be possible but the *Kabadi* system shows how different social units living in the same cultural environment, develop a relation of interdependence so much so that the existence of one group without the co-operation of the other is threatened and often end in maladaptation.





## CHAPTER IV

## ECONOMIC GRADING

## (1)

The grading of the tribes on the basis of their economic life and occupations and in accordance with any approved scheme of classification is indeed difficult as most of the tribes possess either marginal cultures or follow more than one occupation. The tribal stage does not provide for any specialisation of functions and as such a variety of occupations are followed by a tribe. When a tribe takes to one specialised occupation it behaves as a caste as, for example, the Biyars and the Kharwars of the Mirzapur district have taken to catechu manufacture and are popularly known as Khairahis.

The economic life of a tribe cannot be described as a simple stage either of direct appropriation or one of mere accidental collectors. The fact that a tribe uses all kinds of occupations to eke out its subsistence and combines hunting with honey gathering, lumbering with the chase, shifting cultivation with domestication of animals, shows the complexity of economic existence in the lower culture.

The recognition of stages suggests a pause or



a halt in the march of economic progress followed by a push forward, and not a continuous development. The idea of stages in economic life has been introduced in sympathy with the evolutionary schemes of cultural progress, that of a regular series of gradually advancing stages based on the uniformity of the working of the human mind which enables different human groups to produce, in similar conditions the same inventions and to develop similar institutions from the same germs of thought, or 'elementary ideas'. As Morgan puts it "like the successive geological formations the tribes of mankind may be arranged according to their relative condition into successive strata."

As regards the evolution of the stages, historical interpretation provides for a fundamental unity of economic life and also for an unilinear economic progress of mankind from the collectional stage, to hunting and pastoral to agricultural. Recent findings fail to substantiate this unilinear theory of economic development. The Maoris, we are told by competent authorities, cultivate the soil, but as they had no cattle they could not possibly have passed through the pastoral stage. A number of American tribes cited by Alexander Von Humboldt, fall in this category. The dependence of primitive groups on their natural surroundings has been emphasised by Hildebrand and Huntington and others. The former supports a multilinear development of economic life. Gide and Walker both are adherents of the unilinear theory of economic progress. The anthropo-geographic school have played an im-





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portant rôle in this controversy by emphasising the geographic influences on human cultural life. Both Frederick Ratzel and Edward Hahn have brought forth unimpeachable evidence against the classical hypothesis and it was through their efforts that the unilinear theory has been abandoned, but 'its place has been taken over by a number of new schemes in which the principle of evolution still played a leading rôle.'

The scheme of Adam Smith who classified economic culture into hunting, pastoral, and agricultural stages was modified by List who laid down five stages of economic development. His scheme includes hunters, shepherds, agriculturists, handicraftsmen and those who follow industrial pursuits. Hildebrand has criticised the classification on the ground that 'it did not take into account the experiences of other parts of the world, the evidence being based on the experience of one country, viz., England.' Hildebrand's scheme divides economic culture into three periods: a period of barter, one of money, and lastly one of credit. Ernest Grosse regards the various types of economy as being primarily determined by the 'drive of economic efforts working itself out in the particular material environment.' He does not take the types of economy, as stages of development one from the other, as he thinks that 'a particular type of economy may emerge from local conditions of life'. Culture according to him is determined by economic factors and 'social institutions are mirrors of economic conditions.'



Others object to the undue emphasis on economic motive in the shaping of cultural institutions, and they have pointed out the psychological basis of culture. Thus the theory of grades or stages of culture, of an unilinear development of society, has had a mixed reception and field anthropologists have brought forward new data to upset its claims.

The most simple method of classifying social groups is on the basis of food quest. The advantages of this method are manifold. As food quest takes most of the time in primitive society the entire social life revolves round it. The economic pursuits contributing to the securing of food, in savage society, and the methods of food supply are jealously guarded by a series of taboos and prohibitions, by elaborate rites and rituals, by traditions and social prescriptions developed through a long process of 'trial and error'. Besides, the simpler the society, the easier it is to find out the importance of economic efforts in food production, as with primitive people 'the manner and mode of securing food are intimately linked with social ways'. One such classification has been given by Nieboer who divides economic life into: (a) gleaners, (b) hunters, (c) fishers, (d) agricultural nomads or hunter-agriculturists, (e) settled agriculturists of a lower grade who also hunt or tend cattle, (f) superior farmers who have complex implements, and (g) nomad shepherds. These types, however, are devoid of any sequential significance.





## (2)

As we pass from the savage to advanced groups, food supply assumes a less important rôle in shaping social institutions and thus a scheme of classification based on food supply or the methods by which food is secured by social groups, fails to achieve its object. As pointed out in a recent publication by a group of British sociologists, Moris Ginsberg and others, man obtains food by a combination of various pursuits and occupations. He keeps cattle, he tills the ground, he irrigates his fields, practises rotation of crops besides hunting, fishing, gleaning and collecting fruits and berries. Some social groups fish and hunt, others do a little agriculture along with cattle-raising, while a third group may combine dairying, poultry and pastoral industry to secure control over their food supply. What culture is there that does not believe in multiple pursuits in quest of food and how difficult therefore it is to classify cultures on the principles of food quest? The defects of this method of classification have suggested a new orientation of our attitude to primitive economics, for a complex trait like food quest must be studied from manifold angles.

It has been suggested therefore that we should link up our data on the methods of food supply in simple societies with other characteristics such as technology, art, magic, religion, mode of disposal of the dead, the forms of marital life, head-hunting or types of association commonly met in primitive society. The attempt made by Ginsberg,



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Wheeler and Hobhouse to link up such data has not produced any satisfactory basis of classification of tribes and cultures though the possibility of finding some sort of correlation between principal culture traits was not ruled out by an analysis of primitive institutions. Much of their difficulties I should think was due to the heterogeneous and often chaotic data obtained from existing literature on tribal cultures for scientific evaluation and presentation of ethnographic data have been of recent practice.

Two schemes of grouping have been tried with respect to the primitive and backward cultural groups in India. Sir Herbert Risley has given a racial classification of tribes. He has divided the various tribal groups into: (1) Dravidian, (2) Mongolian, and Turko-Iranian (3). Sir Herbert Risley's Dravidian includes all the Pre-Dravidian and Australoid tribes, and we may call it Munda-Dravidian, though in tribal organisation, we do not find much difference between the tribes of the Chota Nagpur plateau and those of the south. The Munda-Dravidian tribes have two types of organisation: (a) totemistic and (b) territorial. In the former a tribe is divided into a large number of clans, each of which is named after an animal, plant or material object. Each clan has its settlement which often represents an entire village so that a clan also becomes a territorial unit. Among the Hos, for example, a *hatu* (village) is often inhabited by a major *Killi* (clan) with a sprinkling of families belonging to other clans. The major clan, *Marang Killi* of the





village supplies the hereditary village headman or Munda and also the tribal priest (Deuri). The Khonds of Orissa are divided into village units or *Gochis* which are exogamous sections of the tribe. Each village has its headman who is assisted by a number of subordinate village functionaries but owning allegiance to a divisional headman.

The Mongolian tribes of Assam are either matriarchal as, for example, the Garos and Khasis, or patriarchal like most of the Naga tribes. They are organised into *kebels* or territorial units which function as social and political groups either ruled by hereditary chieftains or kings or tribal headman enjoying feudal rights and privileges. The unsettled conditions still prevailing in this culture zone make isolation and scattered holding full of dangers and we find large and compact settlements containing 2,000 to 5,000 individuals or more. Each *kebel* fortifies itself against predatory raids from neighbouring *kebels* for food or women or both and common social needs bind together members of a *kebel* for corporate undertakings and joint action. The Turko-Iranian groups are welded together on the principle of blood-feud and common vendetta, and though some tribes recognise kinship due to common ancestry mythical or historical, most recruit fresh blood by offering prospect of a share in the tribal land at the decennial distribution and the lure of a settled life so difficult to secure.

(3)

We have seen how various social groups at



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different levels of culture secure food in similar ways so that the classification of the peoples of the world on the basis of food quest can be carried upto a certain limit. The same may be said of the kind of classification detailed above. For, in India we have more or less uniform type of rural or territorial organisation. Also it will be fruitless to argue whether this uniformity is due to its origin at a single centre, among, for example, the tribal people, then its diffusion everywhere or the system has filtrated from the top, among the Indo-Aryan groups, to the various tribal peoples who possess this organisation.

The Nairs of Malabar who are not primitive or much backward are a matriarchal people. The unit of the Nair territorial organisation is the *Taraward* or the matriarchal family presided over by the senior male member locally known as *Karnavan*. Several *Tarawards* constitute the *Tara* or local unit and the *Tara-Kuttam* or the council of the *Tara* contains the representatives of the various matriarchal families. Several *Taras* are organised into a *Nad* presided over by a *Pramanigal*, *Tathasthar* or district chief, and several *Nads* fit in into a *Sime* or region with *Simetoka* at its head. Similar, territorial organisation has been noticed in Coorg, in the Malayalam countries, among the Rajputs and other castes of Indo-Aryan descent.

In the Census Report of 1931 we have for the first time a grouping of tribes according to their social distance. The exterior and the interior castes, represent 'clean' and 'unclean' social groups,





and the scheduled list include groups whom the Brahmin and other high castes avoid for fear of pollution and from whom the high castes would refuse water and also the hubble-bubble. The hierarchical order of the Hindu social system encourages social mobility within limits and thus the problem of grouping of tribes becomes complicated. The spiral system of social order in India may be represented as following the order given below :

Brahmin, other High castes, Clean castes,  
Unclean castes, Tribes

(4)

Although theoretically much group mobility is possible in the spiral system, conservatism, social inertia and regard for "ceremonial purity" and a group philosophy with pessimism as its sheet-anchor, have contributed to segregation of the social groups one from the other, thus making the Hindu system more or less inelastic. Superficial observers still cling to the view put forward by Risley (*Peoples of India*, Chapter on Physical Types, p.4) in describing Indian culture. "Here in India", says Risley, "we have before our eyes a society in many respects still primitive which preserves like a palimpsest manuscript, survivals of immemorial antiquity. In a land where all things always are the same, we are justified in concluding that what is happening now must have happened very much in the same way, throughout the earlier stages of human society in India."



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The Hindu social system allows for social mobility, it is characterised by fusion as well as fission. The fishermen castes of the Nellore district in Madras have fused into one caste while the Kayasthas of the U.P. have split up into various endogamous sections. Due to changes in the social code of the tribal groups many are now in the caste fold, many are incorporated as clean castes from whom the high castes do not refuse water. The Gonds of Bastar have provided a functional caste, locally known as the Rawat who do domestic service for the Brahmin and other high castes. The Rajbanshi and Koch of northern Bengal find it possible to raise their social status, by marrying into Kayastha families in Bengal and a slow process of accession to Kayastha strength has been noticed for years. The Kayastha and Ambastha (Vaidyas) of Bengal claim Kshatriya and Brahmin descent respectively and their claim to this status has been loudly upheld by propaganda and organisation. The Ambastha, however, are challenging the Brahmins, though in the south-eastern districts of Bengal, inter-marriages between Kayastha and Ambastha has been a recognised practice for centuries. The claim of the Ambastha may have the same fate as that of the Nai caste in the U.P. for they call themselves Nai Brahmin and even today they are the traditional masseurs and surgeons to the rural people.

The upward movement of social groups is possible when two or more groups come to live together and one is influenced by the other.





Primitive groups in contacts with superior cultures have learnt to imitate the latter, subject to limitations of differences of speech and of material resources. Where such contacts have not been permanent the tribal groups still live their own life and it is possible to group them according to some principle. Prof. T. C. Hodson defined primitive culture of India as follows : "If a group in its material activities refuses experiment, declines the trial of new methods and is illiberal of naturalisation towards fresh attitudes, it is in jeopardy of stagnation, even of retrogression, it must be assigned to the lower culture." Most social groups, tribes and castes in India come under this definition, yet we know they own a peaceful, philosophical attitude to life, and possess highly developed sense of values, abiding and remote at times.

(5)

## GROUPING OF TRIBES

The large number of tribes we find in India today, some of which have come into contacts with advanced cultural groups, others still living isolated from contacts with civilisation, may be classified on the basis of (1) territorial distribution, (2) linguistic affiliation, and (3) occupations. The following list though not meant to be exhaustive, will give a territorial classification :



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Assam	..	The Garo	..	The Angami Naga
		The Lushai	Kuki	The Sema Naga
		clans		
		The Mikir	..	The Chang Naga
		The Abor	..	The Lhota Naga
		The Dafia	..	The Konyak Naga

### The Khasis

Bengal and Bihar	The Polia	..	
	The Maler	..	
	The Oraon		
	The Santhal		
	The Munda		
	The Ho		
Orissa, Madras	The Khond	..	The Praja, The Irula,
	The Saora	..	The Toda
	The Chenchu	..	The Panyan
	The Lambadi		
	The Sugali		
	The Kota		
	The Badaga		
Bombay	..	The Bhil, the Katakari, the Koli	
C. I. Agency &	The Gonds	(Muria, Maria, Bhatra, Praja)	
C. Provinces ..	The Koya, The Korku		
Hyderabad	..	The Gonds (Maria, Muria) Bhatra, Dhruva, Gadaba	
U. P. ...	..	The Tharu, Bhoksa, Khasas, Korwa, Biyar, Bhuiya, Majhi, Chero, Kharwar, Raji	
N. W. Province } and Baluchistan }	Afghân tribes and Baloch tribes		

(2) Linguistically, the tribes may be divided into a number of groups based on their affiliation to the various families of languages.



*The Austro-Asiatic Linguistic Family*

The Munda, the Ho, the Santhal, the Kharia, the Korwa, the Gadaba.

*The Dravidian Linguistic Family*

Oraon, Maler, Khond, Saora, Parja, Koya, Paniyan, Chenchu, Irula, Kadar, Malser, Malaryan.

*The Tibeto-Burmese Linguistic Family*

The Naga tribes of Assam, the Garo, the Kuki, the Mikir, the Dafla, the Abor, the Khasi.

The third classification may be based on the occupation usually followed by the tribes. There are not many occupations in India but there are innumerable tribes. The same also is true of castes; although castes follow particular occupations, there are more castes than occupations, so that many castes are agricultural today, and many live by the pastoral industry, by mining and by domestic service. The various occupations followed by tribes are given below :

Collection of fruits, berries and tubers, rearing and collection of cocoons, sawaigrass etc., gathering honey, fibres and making strings and ropes, manufacture of catechu, gur, pottery, spinning and weaving, lumbering and selling of fuel from the forests, hunting and fishing, raising cattle, *Jhuming* of forests for crude agriculture, terrace farming, settled agriculture, mining and labour in factories and plantations.



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<i>Where Found</i>	<i>Hunting and collectional stage</i>	<i>Shifting or Jhum cultivation, lumbering, manufacturing catechu, etc.</i>	<i>Settled agriculturists who keep poultry, cattle, know weaving and spinning, pottery and terraced farming.</i>
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U. P.	Raji	Korwas Saheriyas, Bhuiyas, Kharwar	Tharu, Majhi, Bind Bhoksa, Khasa, Kols
Bihar	Kharia, Birhor	Korwa Asur	Munda, Ho, Tamaria, Oraon
Bengal	Kuki	Garos, Malpaharis	Polia, Santhal
Assam	Kuki, Konyak, Nagas	Naga tribe, Lakhers, Garos	Khasi, Manipuri
C. P.	Hill Maria	Muria, Dandami Maria, Gond	Parja, Bhatra
Madras and Hyderabad	Koya, Contareddi, Paliyan, Kadar Hill Pantaram	Khonds, Kurumba, Gonds, Savaras, Mudavan	Bādaga, Kota, Irulas, Parja
Orissa	Juang	Saora,	
Bombay		Bhil, Gond	





## CHAPTER V

## ORIGINS OF CASTE

## (1)

Tribes, castes, sects and classes are the various categories of social stratification found in India. A tribe is a collection of families or groups of families bearing a common name, members of which occupy the same territory, speak the same language and observe certain taboos regarding marriage, profession or occupation and have developed a well-assessed system of reciprocity and mutuality of obligations. A tribe is ordinarily an endogamous unit, the members of which confine their marriage within the tribe. Several clans constitute a tribe, each of which claims kinship between the members belonging to it, based either on totemistic division, territorial contiguity or common residence. A tribe is a political unit in the sense that the tribal society owns a political organisation, either recognises hereditary tribal chiefs or the several sections of it are welded into a territorial group ruled over by clan chiefs or hereditary kings. Each section of a tribe, a clan or sept has a council of elders who assist the hereditary headman in tribal affairs and perfect solidarity and group affiliation characterise the attitude of the members towards the tribal



authority.

Among the Munda tribes of Chota Nagpur, several totemic groups or local units constitute a *Parba* or *Pir* presided over by a divisional headman to whom the headmen of the various classes owe allegiance. Several *Parbas* or *Pirs* make up a tribal area. Among the Khonds of Orissa and the Ganjam Agency Tracts the tribe is divided into a large number of exogamous village units or *Gochis* which combine into small or big territorial groups so that affiliation to the village does not exclude loyalty to the larger territorial unit.

(2)

In recent years, the isolation of the tribes who had been living more or less undisturbed in inaccessible hills and fastnesses, has been invaded by advanced cultural groups, just as the plough has invaded the forests due to the pressure of population on the soil. Many tribal groups have been detribalised or have been scattered all over the country so that many of these have lost their territorial affiliation. The various castes of the Hindu social system recognise social distance between them though the principle on which such distance is measured has been vaguely conceived by the social groups concerned. The tribal groups also own such distance between members of the same clan or tribe as well as between those of different tribes. This is based partly on a fear of the evil *mana* of strangers, which is in essence similar to the transmissible psychic power in man





recognised by the Hindu society. A tribe forbids its members to marry outside the tribe, the same is the case with caste. Inter-caste marriages do take place, inter-tribal marriages are also known, the Oraon-Munda, the Kharia-Munda of the Ranchi district providing such examples. A member of a caste must marry within the caste and outside the *got* or sept to which he is affiliated by birth. A member of a tribe must not marry within the clan he belongs to, but must marry in another clan belonging to the tribe.

A clan is named after an animal, plant or natural object, after nickname sometimes. A *got* is a section of a caste which takes its name from some mythical or a religious person, though not always, but that is not very important in social stratification. A caste is identified with a profession or occupation but not in every case, for while there are only few occupations, there are hundreds of castes. That is why Nesfield grouped together the landlords, the agriculturists, the agricultural labourers, the fishermen under 'castes connected with agriculture'. Today a Brahmin is a jack-o'-all-trades and so is a member of a tribe. The difficulty of securing livelihood by following one particular art or craft is felt by the various artisan castes and they do not confine themselves to any particular occupation.

The changed economic situation of today makes it necessary for rural communities to move to urban centres, and tribes which eked out their subsistence by a judicious combination of gleaning,



hunting, and crude agriculture, find it indispensable to send out people to distant factories, to mining towns and plantations. These have settled in various parts of the country, and thus a tribe is not a geographical unit as it used to be. Untouchability, segregation, ban on commensality may arise from the concept of *mana* as has been explained by J. H. Hutton.

The clean castes and the tribes are at two opposite ends of the Indian social structure, the intermediate rungs are filled by a large number of castes which either have progressed from the tribal stage or have receded from their initial status by non-observance of customary rites and practices, by inter-marriage forbidden by caste code and by adopting new customs and novel occupations and partaking of forbidden food. But these intermediate groups subserve the same purpose as the middle class in an industrial society, only difference being that they are self-conscious, in other words, they know that there exist some consciousness of kind, some kind of similarity between those who are united under the caste label. Social mobility is restricted in the case of the caste, while in the industrial society, although social distance between the high and the low rungs is greater, the distance can be covered by ambitious and successful individuals or class. The lower castes provide a buffer in Indian society, and play the part of the middle classes, whose advent today has been made possible by the requirements of the present-day system of production.





As the tribes enter into caste economy, as the lower castes emerge with occupational status, the primitive attitude to life undergoes significant modification. The importance of the blood bond, or the kinship group is forced to the background, the communal economics of the clan is superseded by individual desire for gain and property, money assumes importance seldom it was given before, and the ties of reciprocity and mutuality of obligation are reoriented to suit new conditions. Tribal customs and practices which established social life lose their value, and the choice of leader and of mate is guided by different considerations. The tribal elders are pushed to the background, the priests are required to satisfy a more exacting clientele, and public opinion finds out excuses for failures and new behaviour patterns. Individuality begins to assert itself and a desire for social equality manifests itself which reduces the status of clan chief and sacerdotal head to impotence sometimes. New customs find favour with the people and new prescriptions for their old maladies gain popularity with astonishing quickness.

## (3)

The functional classification of tribes makes it necessary to discuss another type of social stratification, viz., the caste system, which is an unique institution in India. The caste system has been studied mostly from the academic point of view and much of the literature on the subject refers to the origin and history of the institution.



of its evil consequences. We do not possess many accounts of the institution as it functions. The investigators were so much over-whelmed by the sanctity of the ancient literature of the country that their efforts were mostly confined to harmonising the knowledge of the institutions as they were recorded and detailed in the sacred writings with known practices of the people. A recent writer on caste, Prof. Ghurey, has emphasised the great rôle played by the Brahmin priestly caste in India. According to him caste is, 'a Brahminic child of the Indo-Aryan culture cradled in the land of the Ganges and thence transferred to other parts of India by the Brahmin prospectors.' He also thinks that endogamy, the outstanding feature of the system, was first developed by the Brahmins in the plains of northern India and thence conveyed as a culture trait to the other areas. There are in India various types of endogamy, tribal, geographical, territorial, sectarian and even linguistic. All these can hardly be accounted for by diffusion. The *mana* concept, for example, has produced tribal endogamy in India and regional boundaries have affected marriage field in several parts of India. Caste principles are often found functioning in areas remote from Brahmanic influence which has provided material on the basis of which Dr. Hutton has worked out his Pre-Aryan theory of caste to which we shall refer later on.

It was W.H.R. Rivers, who with his knowledge of field technique, recorded the actual functioning





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of the caste system in the south. He found that the various castes of the south recognise social distance among them and a quantitative estimate of avoidance could be had from the social incompetence traditionally prescribed. Recently S. S. Nehru in his *Caste and Credit* has given us a functional evaluation of the caste structure as it affects rural credit. If we had followed up Denzil Ibbetson's analysis of the factors determining the origin of the caste system, we could have gone much farther in our understanding of the nature of social stratification in India than the knowledge we possess today about it.

The complex nature of the caste structure is evident from the fact that, after a century of painstaking and meticulous research in the history and function of the social system, we do not possess any valid explanation of the circumstances that might have contributed to the formation and development of this unique system. There are today as many theories of the caste origins as the number of those who have written on it. Yet, it must be admitted that no social institution except totemism has been studied from so varied angles as the caste system.

The ancients who believed in the divine descent of Man and in special creation have explained the caste system as derived from the person of the Supreme Creator, Brahma. This theory has been described by the Hindu law-giver Manu with a wealth of details, which is still accepted by the orthodox section of the population in India. So long as religion will keep its hold on the minds of people the theory



must appeal to many. The orthodox theory can be divided into two parts. While the first is theoretical in the sense that it assumes a mystical origin of the four *Varnas*, the second explains the working of the four-fold social division and is partly historical and partly functional. The fact that many of the castes are hybrid ones which have resulted from inter-marriage on the principles of hypergamy and of *Anuloma* and *Pratiloma* unions, as they are found even in the present times, has given some semblance of authenticity to the orthodox point of view. Mysticism or magic should not be taken as substitutes for ignorance and the orthodox hypothesis therefore does not commend itself to careful observers. If, however, we take the divine origin of the *Varnas* as an allegorical explanation of the functional division of society, the theory assumes practical significance.

The association of castes with occupations has suggested functional interpretation of the social system, and some writers have gone so far as to claim that 'function and function alone is responsible for the origin of the caste system'. The social distance between castes high and low arises according to them, from the nature of the occupations, the superiority or inferiority of the caste being determined by the superiority or inferiority of the occupation followed by the caste. This hypothesis ignores the racial point of view, for as Nesfield holds, there is no racial difference between castes, the only difference being in the function followed by the people.





India is a melting-pot of races. Invasion after invasion has shattered the isolation of racial groups and the disparity in the sex proportion, natural to invading peoples, has no doubt led to intermixture with the indigenes ; but the fact that the institution of hypergamy is an ancient practice in India shows the anxiety of the various racial groups to preserve their blood uncontaminated or excessively diluted. There may not be much racial difference between the higher castes as such, there may not be great variation of physical features in groups occupying a particular geographical region or parts of it, but some racial difference between 'high' and 'low' social groups does exist and is apparent to one who knows the country and its peoples.

Even if there does not exist any ethnic dissimilarity between the castes, the few occupations followed in India do not account for the innumerable castes that one finds in any particular region. Agriculture claims more than 67 p. c. of the population and thus a constellation of castes and tribes can be identified with agriculture as their main economic pursuit. That makes the functional interpretation of the Hindu social system, extremely dubious, though function is one of the main planks on which the social stratification is obviously based.

(4)

The existence of tribes in various stages of cultural progress and transition of tribes to one of



interdependence, provided the starting-point of the evolutionary hypothesis of Denzil Ibbetson. The turning-point in the career of a tribe comes when it abandons its wild and nomadic life and adopts a particular occupation as its principal method of economic subsistence. This is the guild stage in caste history, and is common at some period or other of economic progress to all peoples in the world. The formation of guilds or occupational groups naturally led to the recognition of skill and importance of the various guilds. In an industrial society, the technicians have assumed a dominant and even dictatorial status. In mediæval times, the guilds vied with one another for predominance in accordance with their economic status exercising various degrees of pressure on the social life of the country. The exaltation of the priestly guild was soon followed by the priests insisting on the hereditary nature of their occupational status, and this led to the formation of endogamous units, as more and more of the guilds wanted to conserve the social status and privileges they enjoyed and to secure these permanently for the members of the guild. The Brahmins set the ball rolling and the various other guilds followed suit and a hierarchical organisation established itself.

One of the criticisms directed against the above hypothesis is that in no other country guilds have formed castes, though guilds exist everywhere. Such criticism is not necessarily valid. The various elements, traits or fundamentals, which constitute an institution may not combine in the





same proportion, some of these may become exaggerated or attenuated, some may even drop out while units of an institution may change with physiographic and economic changes. This makes it possible for similar traits to evolve different institution in different cultural regions. The defect of the hypothesis lies in the fact that it, like its predecessor the functional theory, ignores the racial differences between the social groups constituting the hierarchy. Besides, it is difficult to believe that a social stratification of such complexity as the caste system of India, owes its origin to a priestly division of society, and to the desire of levitical supremacy. Tribes pass on to the caste stage, but they seldom move up much higher in the scale of precedence; nor does the caste status of the tribes mean any metamorphosis or a sudden reorientation of attitudes to life.

The racial significance of the caste system was recognised by Sir Herbert Risley, who traced the origin of castes from the Indo-Aryan immigration into India. The prehistoric migration of the Indo-Aryans from Persia, where a four-fold division of society was known, laid down the structure of social grouping; and the clash and fusion of cultures between the invading people, on the one hand, and the indigenes on the other who belonged to separate racial stock inferior to the immigrants, brought about the super-structure which is the caste system. Endogamy which is a fundamental trait of the caste system was absent in Persia because the people



belonged to the same race and shared similar culture. The racial dissimilarity between the invaders and the invaded emphasised the importance of breed, while cultural differences between them did not encourage amalgamation or large-scale miscegenation. A compromise was worked out. Inter-mariages were allowed till such time as it was necessary. In other words a *jus connubii* was formed, after which the various invading groups closed their ranks to the indigenes. That is how Hindu law-givers recognised inter-caste marriages as they were necessary. It is still practised in the outlying parts, for example, among the Rajputs and Brahmins of the cis-Himalayan region.

As it is found in other countries, where race contacts have taken place, hypergamous marriages were insisted on, so that the invading group refused to marry their daughters to the indigenes, though they did not mind taking women from the latter. This led to the introduction of a matrimonial code prescribing *Anuloma* marriages and forbidding *Pratiloma* though the high incidence of the latter was a challenge to orthodox conceptions of social justice. The history of the caste system in India is a record of a perpetual social tension and of protests and revolts against the prevailing social code which succeeded at times but very often failed in their objectives, and which might have released individuals from caste tyranny but put a tighter shackle round the social groups. The rigidity of the system has grown through centuries of practice and





precepts; and what the clash of cultures and mixture of races produced in the olden times, new impacts of races and cultures are likely to unmake it in the decades to come.

In his report on the census operations of India, 1931, J. H. Hutton has contested the post-Aryan theory of caste, and has laid special stress on Pre-Dravidian taboo on food and marriage based on a fear of the evil *mana* of strangers. He thinks that the primitive attitude to taboo, the occupational division of society as is found among the Naga tribes in Assam, and superstitious regard for everything strange and unfamiliar, might have shaped the structure of Indian society. In other words, the fundamental elements of the caste system have been functioning in primitive cultures from very early times and the Indo-Aryan immigrants had only to superimpose an occupational grouping on a crudely stratified social structure. It is not difficult to trace endogamy, occupational division, and untouchability from the dread of uncanny *mana*. The untouchability that had developed in the south, and which is the most rigid we know of has been found to be mutual. We are told by competent authorities that it is not the Brahmin alone who avoids the Holiyas, but the latter must not approach the former without being sure that his influence has become innocuous so far as himself and his material possessions are concerned. That is how, when a Brahmin enters the *Parachery* of the Holiyas, men and women from the settlement



come to the outskirts of the village to greet him with cowdung solution, broomstick and a garland of torn shoes, these, the Holiyas say, disarm the Brahmin of his evil *mana* and the Holiyas have little to fear from consequent social intercourse with the Brahmin. The ignorance of the *mana* or *bonga* of a person makes a Ho of Chota Nagpur avoid his contacts, and in hostels of aboriginal boys there are innumerable food groups which maintain social distance as well as taboo commensality.

The principle of *mana* is recognised by almost all primitive tribes of the world, but the caste system has not developed in any country except India. Among the Mongoloid tribes, notions analogous to the *mana* of Oceania occur as also again among Indonesians and Melanesians, but without any caste stratification. In Polynesia the concept of *mana* is both patent and latent and is recognised as a source of personal distinction, but there is no stratification as we find in India. S. C. Roy has made an exhaustive survey of the *mana* principle from primitive to modern religions, but nowhere does he find any proof that the *mana* principle has shaped social grouping. It is only with the Zoroastrian ideas of personal purity that Roy comes to something more nearly akin to the principle underlying caste divisions, and thus he brings us round to the Vedic Aryan's conception of a mysterious supernatural power of the same nature as *mana* expressed by the word *Brahma* which Pargiter long ago considered to express





something akin to *mana* and also to be that quality in virtue of which the Brahmin caste claimed or was given its superior status. "If *Brahma* is connected with the root *brih* to grow, to become strong, as Haig and others suggest, the analogy deserves careful attention specially in connection with the Hindu philosophic notion of *Gunas* or fundamental quality, which further determine the *Varna* or social class, determined by description as the word itself implies." There would therefore not seem to be reason, says Roy, for looking beyond the Aryan outlook in the world and mankind for the *mana*-like principle which Hutton's explanation of caste presupposes.

The concept of *mana* or *bonga* does explain the social distance and personality fixation. It has given rise to innumerable taboos and avoidances. It regulates individual behaviour and group responses, and its importance to tribal life and conduct must be conceded. It is therefore possible to trace the roots of social stratification in tribal cultures in the *mana* principle, but how far it has contributed to the origin of the Hindu caste system is a matter of opinion.

(5)

The use of the word 'caste' originally of Portuguese derivation, which meant nothing more than social divisions, to signify the entire social system of the Hindus naturally has complicated the issue. As K. De B. Codrington says, the abstract semi-literary and wholly arbitrary definitions of Port-



nguese word 'caste' should be jettisoned and we may revert to the Sanskrit words which were used by the ancients to describe the social groupings. That will, I think, give us the clue to the origin of the unique system.

The word *Varna* means colour as well as class, but the three high castes were originally distinguished one from the other by the various shades of colour that were found in the earlier days, resulting from the intermixture between the immigrants of Indo-Aryan racial stock and the indigenes either of Pre-Dravidian or Proto-Mediterranean racial affiliation. Various factors contributed to such race mixture; scarcity of women among the invading group, the settled life with a house and all that it connotes among the indigenous population which naturally attracted the nomadic elements of the immigrant population, highly developed Dravidian culture with its matriarchal system of family life, female liberty and an elaborate system of temple-worship of the mother goddess, rites, rituals and temple architecture, priesthood and learning, all have contributed to a racial miscegenation.

The clash of cultures and contacts of races crystallised social grouping in India, and endogamous groups were formed which jealously guarded their racial purity and cultural integrity against wholesale admixture and miscegenation. The three *Varnas* or more resulting from hybridisation have tried to maintain these claims to superior status by keeping to themselves the important





professions and avocations and jealously restricting the liberties of others with respect to these means of livelihood. The influence of the Brahmins was utilised for imposing the *Varna* tradition upon the social conditions found in the country and incidentally to include within their fold the indigenous tribes and castes and social groups. The ancient literature of the country bears ample proof of class struggles consequent on a social monopoly of the learned professions and occupations, and the fact that rights claimed by the Brahmins had to be conceded in special cases to others is proof that social justice demanded such reorientation of attitude, but political supremacy of the higher social groups helped to maintain such monopolistic social attitudes.

The caste system in India should be identified with Brahmanism or the three original *Varnas* which, in due course, as is but natural, had to concede rights and accommodate ambitious social groups and thus a hierarchical organisation had evolved, due to impacts between 'pressure groups'. The higher castes or the original *Varnas* had to admit other social groups and rank them as 'clean' as opposed to those who were unclean both of body and mind, in race as well as in culture. The various social groups which possess little social status in the caste system, but are yet units of it, have been recruited from the indigenous populations, both Pre-Dravidian and Proto-Mediterranean, Australoids and Dravidians (to mention linguistic groups) and, although a sort of uniformity of culture is evident,



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detailed investigations would prove fundamental differences between them. Nesfield said that the superiority or inferiority of a caste is determined by the superiority or inferiority of occupation followed by the castes. I should think that the status of the caste depends upon the degree of purity of blood and the extent of isolation maintained by the social groups. The Brahmins have maintained greater racial purity. The tribal groups have also maintained their purity of blood and have kept away from contacts and they represent today, as before, the lowest social status. In between both there are innumerable social groups which differ with respect to their blood and their cultural affinities. The whole of this is miscalled the Hindu caste system.





## CHAPTER VI

## CASTE INCOMPETENCE

## (I)

The 'Depressed' castes are those who suffer from various social and political disabilities, many of which are traditionally prescribed and socially enforced by the higher castes. They are 'untouchables' 'Harijans' and carry pollution. They are often denied the use of public convenience, roads, wells and schools, they are also debarred from entering places of worship, temples and sacred enclosures. In some parts their shadows carry pollution and they should not approach public thoroughfares without warning or walk on them so that their shadows, in front and behind, may be trodden by the Brahmins. In one part of the Madras Presidency the untouchables and Pariahs can use the roads at midday, when the sun rests vertically overhead and the shadow does not project at all. Such restrictions cannot be enforced under present conditions, though tradition may still claim loyalty to usages.

The distinction between Brahmins and non-Brahmins exists in all provinces; in the south such distinctions account for considerable social disabilities of the latter. In other parts, the disabili-



ties are on the decline and are tending to disappear. Such distinctions have their origin in the ceremonial purity of the Brahmins, and do not have any racial significance. The disabilities of the so-called 'depressed' castes is not ceremonial but founded on racial and cultural differences and therefore slow to disappear.

The total number of 'depressed' or 'exterior' castes has been recorded as fifty millions, of which forty-one millions are found in the provinces and 9 millions in the states. This forms 21 p. c. of the Hindu population as recorded in the 1931 Census, and 14 per cent of the total population. The estimate of depressed castes is not easy. Some of the disabilities on the basis of which the provincial lists have been drawn up are not real, others are attached to occupation, as for example, that of Bhangi, Dom, and Dosadh. The Brahmin today does not always follow the occupation traditionally prescribed for him, he only professes to follow these, though his real occupation may be one which is looked down upon even by the exterior castes. Many exterior castes follow clean occupations but the antagonism that exists between them and the high caste Hindus of the locality, perhaps orally transmitted from generation to generation, still finds expression in contemptuous epithets addressed to the individual members of the caste concerned. While some castes who suffered from social and political disabilities in the past have claimed superior status and were admitted to it by the higher castes of the locality, there





are others who have recorded themselves as exterior for political prospects and their foresight has already been rewarded to some extent.

"The occasion of this Census (1931)," writes Dr. J. H. Hutton, "coming as it did at a time when political reforms appeared imminent, complicated the already plentiful return of numbers of exterior castes. A number of conflicting forces were at work, as apart from the natural desire of individuals of exterior castes to raise their own social status by making themselves out to be something other than they were recognised to be by their neighbours, a definite movement was set on foot by the Hindu Mahasabha for the return of all Hindus simply with no qualifications of caste or sect." The effects of such propaganda on the total number of exterior castes is difficult to ascertain as counter-propaganda and appeal by the exterior caste leaders and the prospects held out by them and their sympathisers encouraged social groups with imaginary grievances and inferiority complex, to record them as 'exterior' for census purposes.

Social disabilities of a kind exist in all countries; they must be numerous and rigid in those where two or more distant racial groups with graded cultural status have settled down and are in constant contacts. Among the higher castes in India, the Brahmins have so long secured to themselves rights, which are jealously guarded against being encroached upon and the non-Brahmins though recognised as 'twice-born' suffer from disabilities not less irksome than those that have fallen to the lot of



the exterior castes. The Brahmin's *hookah* must be kept apart, no one can sit on the same seat with a Brahmin, a high-caste man other than a Brahmin must take the dust from the latter's feet as often as he meets him, no Kayastha or Sudra must leave behind his plate on which he has been served food by a Brahmin; he must remove it himself. The Brahmin will not take water in the same glass or pot from which others may drink water. Every householder must therefore keep earthen glasses or those made of stone or marble, in which the Brahmin can drink water. A Kayastha or a Vaidya in Bengal must not invite a Brahmin to a feast in which '*kachi*' food is served, the latter can only take '*pakki*' food or food prepared by Brahmin alone. The Brahmin levies many a tax on other castes and in marriage, social ceremonies and in religious worship, he must be satisfied before others. Even today a Brahmin widow in Bengal would take a ceremonial bath if touched by a non-Brahmin 'twice-born' caste, whom in Bengal she addresses by the uncomplimentary epithet of Sudras. If such disabilities obtain in the relationship of 'twice-born' castes, it is no wonder that the exterior castes, who belong to different races and cultures, should share more acute disabilities.

(2)

The figures of exterior castes in the various provinces and states are given in the Census Report of 1931. As no uniform tests could be applied,





the figures are based on the standing of the castes in the various provinces and the express desire of the latter to get recorded as 'exterior' castes. Although the provincial census superintendents have claimed authenticity for the figures, I think they are a bit exaggerated. For example, Assam records 37 p.c., of the total Hindu population and 21 p.c. of the total population as 'exterior' yet there do not exist any significant disabilities for them. Candidly enough, the Census Superintendent of Assam puts his case for 'exterior' castes as follows: "Under the orders of the Census Commissioner for India, a list of depressed and backward classes has to be prepared for every province in India. The invidious task of preparing such a list for Assam has, therefore been laid upon me and I am compelled, however reluctantly, to assume the functions of a modern Ballal Sen. 'Depressed' as used in India in connection with caste has come to be associated particularly with persons belonging to certain castes in Madras who are unapproachable, whose touch necessitates immediate purification and who are not allowed to read in the schools along with other boys. There is, I am glad to say, no such degree of repression in Assam, an unapproachable caste is unknown here and boys of all castes are freely admitted into all schools and colleges. Nor are there any difficulties worth mentioning as regards the drawing of water by all castes from public tanks and wells." This led the Census Superintendent to suggest the term 'exterior', which has been adopted by the Census Commissioner for India for



all-India enumeration.

Percentage of exterior castes to the total population of the provinces and important states are given below :

Assam	..	21	Bombay	..	8	Hyderabad	
Bengal	..	14	C. P.	..	1	State	.. 17
Bihar & Orissa	15		Madras	..	15	Mysore	.. 15
U. P.	..	23	N.-W. F. P.	nil		Jammu and	
Punjab	..	5	Baluchistan	nil.		Kashmir	.. 5
						Travancore	35

The percentage distribution of exterior castes in the various provinces shows that the disabilities are more pronounced in those areas where there are large number of primitive and aboriginal population.

The exterior castes in Assam number 21 p.c. and Assam is inhabited by a large number of aboriginal tribes who are being gradually converted to Hinduism. In the other provinces and states, the exterior castes and tribes belong to the pre-Dravidian, Australoid or Mongolian elements in the population. To take a particular example, the United Provinces contain a mixed population, and Risley described them as Aryo-Dravidian. The order of social precedence in the U. P. may be represented by a social pyramid with the Brahmins at the apex.

Brahmins (1)

Bhat, Bhuinhar, Taga (2)

Rajput, Khatris (3)

Kayasthas (4)

Baniya, Jats, Gujar, Ahir (5)





## CASTE INCOMPETENCE

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Kurmi, Kunbi, Mali, Banjoras, Bhars (6)  
Tharus, Rajis, Kalwar, Teli, Kol (7)  
Dhanuk, Dosadh, Kori, Pasi (8)  
Chamar, Dom, Bhangi (9)

1-5 represent the Indo-Aryan stock, though mixed in varying proportions between themselves and with the next group (6). The latter are mostly agricultural castes who have mixed with tribal groups, yet have maintained much of their original racial traits. In these provinces, the agricultural castes (6) have more of Indo-Aryan features than in Bengal where the Pre-Dravidian strain is more discernible. The tribal groups (No. 7) are either of Mongolian or Pre-Dravidian stock, but variously mixed with Indo-Aryan elements. Group 8 and 9 are miscellaneous groups whose social status has resulted from their occupation, which is unclean and considered degrading to the higher groups. Even the tribal groups refuse to touch them, not for fear of ceremonial pollution but for the unclean occupations they have chosen to adopt. The Chamar tans hides of dead cattle which he gets from the higher castes, professional or cultivating, in exchange for which he makes shoes for them and skin bags with which the urban municipalities water the streets, a common sight in Indian towns. The Dom is an eater of leavings and carrion, a beggar, a thief. The nature of his work either as scavenger or as a provider of light for the funeral pyres at the burning ghat, brings him in daily contact with people of other castes and the lure of immediate reward has appealed to the women of the tribe so that the



immorality as a profession of women has had significant influence in shaping the physical features of their descendants.

Another significant fact in connection with the social map of the U. P. is the geographical distribution of the castes. In the western United Provinces most of the high castes are distributed, while the eastern parts of the province are inhabited by the lower castes, so that social precedence increases as we proceed from the eastern to the western districts. Recent migrations have helped the infiltration of the higher castes into areas they were absent or negligible in strength and in course of a few decades the distribution of the social types may be uniform in the whole province.

The position of the depressed or exterior castes can briefly be summarised as below:

1. Depressed castes are not depressed in all provinces, the same caste may be depressed in one province; but may not suffer from any social and political disability in another. In the C. P., even in adjacent districts, the same caste has different social rights and disabilities.

2. Where the depressed castes are numerically small, the disabilities are rigid. Where they are numerically strong and have developed strong caste organisation, their disabilities are less or on the decline.

3. Where the castes are all of the same race or are largely so, social disabilities are not numerous and are usually confined to those whose function is considered degrading.





4. Where the higher castes are not numerous and the depressed castes form the bulk of population, the degree of ceremonial pollution observed is very small, and often we find little disabilities attached to the inferior castes and social groups.

5. A caste may be depressed but individual members of the caste who have succeeded in life, are substantial and own property, have been admitted to higher social status, and even have wives from the Rajputs or pseudo-Rajputs.

6. Tribal stage does not carry with it any social stigma, but that may be due to isolation and remoteness. As tribes enter the caste economy, their status varies in accordance with their number and importance to the higher castes. The Santhals in the various health resorts of Bengal and Bihar in the Santhal Parganas itself do not suffer from social disabilities, on the other hand they refuse water and food from the higher castes who must require their services. The Sahas and Tilis have exerted varied pressure in the village economy of Bengal and have secured rights which are not exercised by their colleagues elsewhere.



## CHAPTER VII

## TOTEMISM AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

## (1)

In India many tribes and castes are found to claim mystic ties with some material object, animal or plant species. They are the totemistic people, though many of these have either forgotten their totems or do not attach much importance to such mystic connection. The name totem was first learned from the North American Indians by the Englishman, J. Long, in 1791. J. F. MacLennan was the first to understand the significance of totemism as a primitive social institution. Besides Australia where the institution flourishes most, totemism is found in some parts of Africa, in North America among some American Indian tribes, and in South America it has been found to exist only in two tribes. In India a large number of tribes are either organised on a totemic basis, or they hold animals and plants as sacred or observe taboos regarding eating or killing the animal or destroying the plant.

Most totemistic tribes are either in the collection stage or have learnt to supplement their gleanings from the forests and their humble gain from the chase, by crude farming such as by burning forests and sowing on the ashes. It is not surpris-





ing therefore to find that animals and plants figure prominently in the totemic structure of primitive tribes and castes everywhere. Many totems are parts of animals, the liver, the heart, the entrails, or the juice of a flower or fruit and its kernel. Such partition of the totem animal or plant may have been necessitated by multiplication of original groups, as the same totemic group has split up into more than one totemic clan to meet the growing needs of social life. In Chota Nagpur, for example, when a totemic clan becomes numerically very large, it splits into sub-totems and the latter content themselves by adopting as their totem, parts of the animal or plant which designated the larger division out of which they have regrouped themselves. Another fact can be noticed, usually neighbouring tribes living in the same geographical area possess similar totems though they do not recognise kinship obligation among them.

The characteristics of totemism may be summarised as below. The killing of certain animals or eating them is tabooed. The totemic animal when it dies, is ceremonially mourned and buried as a member of the clan concerned. The skins of animals which are the totems of clans are donned by the totemic group at specified solemn occasions. Many totemic groups paint their persons with the picture of the totemic animal, and take the pictures as their coat of arms or even tattoo them on their bodies. The totem animal, if dangerous, is propitiated and it is believed that it would spare the members of the totemic clan. If the totem plant



of animal is edible, the members may eat them at ceremonial occasions or by offering excuse to the animal. The clan recognises mystic ties with the animal species and believe that the animal will foretell the future, protect and warn the members of the tribe. The assumptions with regard to totemism are that totemic organisation is universal. Some kind of religious regard for totemic animal or plant exists, taboos are connected with totemic objects and symbols and totemic kinship makes exogamy obligatory.

The ethnographic survey of India under the direction of Sir Herbert Risley collected relevant data on totemism and since then monographic studies of tribes have added to our knowledge of the distribution of the institution. The Santhals have more than 100 clans all named after plants, animals and material objects. The Hos have more than 50 such clans, many being common with the Santhal. The Mundas are divided into more than 64 exogamous clans. Although inter-tribal relations are not much recognised, the various tribes of the Munda racial stock own similar totems, and most of these have some use to the tribes, either as edible fruits, roots, plants and animals, or injurious or harmful birds or animals, all found in the areas they inhabit.

The Bhils are divided into 24 clans, some of which are named after animals or plants. As they have been Hinduised and their origin and affiliation are still difficult to ascertain, the clan names may not give any clue to their social structure.





Many tribes in Orissa, the Kurmi, the Kumar, the Bhumia, who have advanced in culture in recent years, are named after serpent, pumpkin, jackal and other totems. The Katkaris of Bombay, the Gond tribes of the C. P. and the Central Indian Agency also have clan names after the fauna and flora of their habitat. The Dhelki Kharias, a major section of Kharias of Chota Nagpur plateau, are divided into 8 totemic clans, viz., *Soren* (rock or stone), *Muru* (tortoise), *Samad* (deer), *Barliha* (a variety of fruit), *Gharbad* (bird), *Hansda* (the eel), *Mail* (dirt) and *Topna* (kind of bird). These names show how a totem may be an animal, plant or often material object or parts thereof.

Some Indian tribes are divided into 3, 4 or more phratries and some of the clans in a phratry may have an animal and plant name. The Bauris of Bengal (Bankura district) is a depressed caste and they own four major divisions, Malla, Dhala, Sekhoria and Mana. Some investigators take them as geographical divisions. The Mallas are from 'Mall bhumi,' the Dhalas are from Dhalbhum and the Mana from Manbhum. Each of these phratries is a closed and endogamous group and contains 5 to 20 exogamous clans. Totemic traces are noticed in their reverences for the striped heron and the dog, and in their taboo of horse-dung, but most of the clans have little to do with animals or plants.

The Bagdis, Mahisyas and Koras of Bengal have animal clan names, but no totemic beliefs as are met with among other totemic tribes. The Kora originally from Chota Nagpur and most



probably belonging to the Munda stock, venerate tortoise, duck, fish, egg, etc., but they are not organised on a totemic basis.

Whether respect for animal or plants constituted totemism is a moot question. It is not necessary to suppose that it has any direct relation with totemism as such. In India even persons belonging to higher castes offer sacrifices and prayers to objects of nature as well as animal or vegetable species. Rivers and rivulets are generally sacred and regular cult is found about them. The *tulsi*, the *bel*, the *bot* are objects of worship, but these are not totems of social groups. In most parts of Eastern Bengal the tiger has a cult and it is ceremonially worshipped on certain occasions. Hymns of prayer are sung by young village boys and girls and every household contributes to this worship. The monkey and snake are sacred to the Hindus; they would not kill or destroy either. The cat is protected by taboo and tradition. The maltreatment of cat is considered an ill omen and every year the Hindus of Bengal propitiate the cat to secure effective fertility to women. The killing of cat is taboo and the man who inadvertently kills a cat has to pay an equal quantity of salt to the Brahmin to expiate his remissness.

As Hopkins has said, by calling everything totemism, totemism has been found to be universal. The functional analysis of totemic customs will lead to a reshuffling of the totemic traits on the basis of their cultural significance. If animal worship in any form is taken to be totemism, even





the Semites, Aryans, and Egyptians practised totemism. Even the Mahenjodaro people can be identified, as totemistic. According to Sir John Marshall, some animals and trees were conceived as personal deities and endowed like human beings with destructive attributes and functions. A number of animals found on the seals must have been objects of worship, if they were not worshipped, they were regarded as sacred or taboo, 'possessed of magical powers of one kind or another and for that reason were used as amulets.' The racial types found in the Mahenjodaro are not extinct in the present population, it is possible to believe that the ancestors of the totemic tribes living today also observed some plant taboo, and 'practised some form of zoolatry.' Many Indologists have suggested totemic traces in the Vedas. Oldenburg thinks that the fish and dog peoples of the Rig Veda were totemistic clans. Macdonnell and Keith (Vedic Index, Vol. I, p. 378, find in the *sigrū* tribe occurring in one of the passages of the Rig Veda, suggestion of totemism as *sigri* means horse radish. The invocation of plants in the Vedas as divinities and the existence of hymns in praise of plants, perhaps disclose totemic beliefs. Later Vedic texts mention offerings made to plants and the adoration paid to large trees passed in marriage procession (A. A. Macdonnell, History of Sanskrit Literature p. 111).

A. C. Haddon traced totemism from the fact that many primitive groups originally lived on a particular animal or plant species and also traded



with the food and exchanged it with other tribes. In course of time they became known to others by the names of animals or plants which were vital and important to their life. Frazer thought primitive men formed some kind of magic production and consumption club so that each totem clan undertook the preservation of a certain article of food for the good of all the others. The omnivorous nature of primitive diet does not favour such rationalisation and planned economy.

Sir James Frazer has given many alternative theories. As the data became profuse, their interpretation naturally became difficult. The belief in an outward soul might have suggested to primitive man the security of lodging the soul in totemic animal and plant, so that the possessor might become invulnerable as risks to life in predatory life are indeed great. Frazer later on moulded this theory into what is known as the 'conception theory of totemism.' The savages were ignorant of the process of procreation or of the rôle the male plays in fertilisation and thus the totem animal becomes the ancestor of the clan, the animal sometimes mysteriously fecundating the woman.

Hopkins thinks totemism rests on food supply. The totemic tribes at the time of Agatharcides regarded their cattle as parents. In the Harivansha, which reflects Hindu beliefs of circa 400 A.D., the same idea is presented that 'whereby one is supported should be his divinity,' in other words, 'the provider is god to those provided for.' It is also the point of view of the Todas, to whom buffalo





is sacred, because buffalo gives them food. Similar is also the Hindu idea about cattle, particularly the cow. Australian custom supports this view as the non-edible totems are believed to be of later origin. Among the Begandas of Africa, 'the totem is holy because it is not eaten, it is not eaten because it is injurious, it made their ancestor ill.' The worship of totem objects, according to Hopkins, is a secondary stage. Many plants and animals are worshipped, but they are not totems of people who worship them. Against this, we have Wundt's theory that totemism underlies all religions, and that, underlying totem, is the belief that the worms crawling out of a dead man's body are his souls. Durkheim also takes totemism as an elementary form of religious life but to him, the totem animal or plant is the collective representation of the social mind. Tylor interpreted totems as ancestor worship, in other words, a form of ancestral cult. The soul does not remain disincarnate forever after death but animates another living body. Lower psychology does not draw any definite line of demarcation between the souls of men and beasts so they believed in the possibility of transmigration of human souls into the bodies of the lower animals. So the religious respect inspired by the ancestors is quite naturally attached to the animals. Animals are most common totems of social groups where totemism is found to exist, but plants and material objects are also frequently found as totems, and ancestor worship, plant worship and fetishism all must have contributed to the growth of totemic



beliefs and practices.

Boas, Hill Tout and Swanton, all believe that 'totemism has been derived from the generalisation of the individual totem.' Some eminent men having found by experience the value of a totem, chose it for himself by his own free will, 'transmitted it to his descendants; these latter multiplying as time went on, finally formed the extended family known as a clan and thus totem became collective.'

(2)

Study of the origin of totem clans among some of the important tribes of Chota Nagpur gives interesting data on totemic origins. The tribes of Munda ethnic stock are divided into a number of exogamous septs or clans, taking their name from some animal, plant or material object. The origin of the Kujur sept among the Oraons has been described by Roy in his monograph on the tribe. When an Oraon had fallen asleep under a Kujur plant a flexible twig of the plant entwined itself round his body and protected him from molestation. Accordingly the man took the Kujur plant for his totem and his descendants now form the men of the Kujur sept. Evidently the man was in the dense thickness of some forest where he was surrounded by danger from wild beasts.

Traditions regarding the origin of certain clans among the Tamaria, described by a Tamaria himself, indicate that the totemic animal or plant is believed to have helped or to have protected the human ancestor of the clan or been of some peculiar





service to him. The origin of the *Pandu Bing* clan is thus narrated. A Tamaría woman went to a river to fetch water. There was none at home to look after the child which the mother had left behind at home. The mother having bathed in the river, filled her earthen pitcher with water. She then placed it on her head and hastened home. On returning she found, to her bewilderment, a cobra or *Nag* or *Pandu-Bing* protecting the baby with its extended hood over the head of the baby. The serpent glided away as soon as the mother appeared on the scene. The descendants of the child all belong to the *Nag gushti* or serpent clan and none belonging to this clan would dare harm a *Nag* or serpent with beliefs in reciprocity. The *Kamal* sept of the Tamaría originated in the following manner. While out on a hunt, the members of the party killed a deer and the meat was distributed among the hunters. One of them kept the meat that had fallen to his share on a *Kamal* leaf (lotus leaf). As he did so, others named him after the leaf and his descendants belong to the *Kamal* clan.

Stories of clan origin are many and can be cited in their hundreds. Most of the stories connected with the origin of totem clans among the Ho, Munda and the Santhal explain how the totemic relation has emerged out of dire necessity at a time when human help could not be requisitioned or was of little avail. Analysis of such evidence leads us to conclude that the spirit of totemism is to be sought not in a religious attitude toward totemic objects or emblem, not in a gradual process of postulating



in totems the higher powers or spirits who influence the destiny of the savage, nor in the social or economic necessity of preserving species of edible products of the vegetable and animal kingdoms, but in a simple adjustment of social order which could bring about a sympathetic relation between man and his environment. Such a relation subserves the needs of human adaptation to the habitat. So far as Indian totemism is concerned, an accidental connection between a group of animal or vegetable species seems to have been the rule, as will be evident from a number of examples printed elsewhere. This is why Risley, who recorded the evidence of totemism and totemic survivals, could not vouchsafe for the religious aspect of totemism in India, and assumed that the religious side of totemism was in disuse, but the social side, i.e., exogamy, was invariably associated with totemism. The theories centre around an arbitrary concept of totemism which has been arrived at "by first shuffling the so-called totemic state, divorced from their respective cultural background, and then searching for their common denomination" (Man, June, 1934, No. 113).

The totemless Hindu, and many aboriginal groups who are not totemistic, are endogamous, while members of the same totemic clan may and often do marry among themselves. The various hypotheses we know of exogamy do not warrant us to suppose that totemism and exogamy are causally connected. Frazer holds that totemism and exogamy are distinct in origin and nature though these





have accidentally crossed and blended in many tribes.

If kinship ties determine the limit of marital choice, if the fact of kinship is important in the choice of mates, the blood ban may have forbidden many tribes to marry within the clan. When the clan multiplies beyond convenient size, and kinship is difficult to trace due to migration and social distance, an exogamous clan may develop into an endogamous group. Thus it is kinship and not totemism that determines the limit of marital choice and a totemic group is also a kinship group. A village or a part of it behaves as a local unit and marriage within the village has been tabooed by most of the primitive tribes in India. The higher castes are organised into *got's* or *gens* of Roman times and the *got* kinship forbids inter-marriage among those who are affiliated to the same *got*. Distance has produced endogamous groups out of the same social group, and many of the high castes are divided into endogamous sections as they happen to occupy parts of the same country geographically divided. The Kanaujia Brahmins of the U. P., the Batendra and Rarhi Brahmins of Bengal, the Saraswat, the Sarjupari and the Gangari are all territorial units of the same caste.

Migrations have split the same tribe into two or more endogamous sections. J. P. Mills (Man 1935, 94) explained how the Eastern Rengma Nagas about 400 years ago (according to Naga tradition) split off from the main or western body and migrated eastwards closed in by the Sema and Angami from behind. Today there are many



cultural differences between the two sections of the tribe. The Chamars of the U. P. who have migrated to the eastern districts of Bihar and to Bengal constitute an endogamous caste while the Santhals of Chota Nagpur now widely scattered in Bengal and Assam recognise no kinship with the parental stock and have formed endogamous sections. The Nai of the U. P. do not marry with the Nai of Bengal who are emigrants from the former province. The Kurmi of Bihar have split up into endogamous sections on account of changes in social standards, those who conformed to Hindu practices, allowed child marriage and prohibited widow marriage, refused to recognise those who still cling to tribal habits of thought and action and practise widow remarriage which is contrary to orthodox Hindu sentiment. On the other hand, the fishing castes of the Nellore district have sunk their cultural differences and have fused into one community. The tribal Bhumij of Bihar treat with scant courtesy their traditional code of marriage, which did not allow inter-tribal marriage, and the reformist section of the Ho and Munda are anxious to level up clan barriers for new requirements of marital adjustment. We have everywhere today two tendencies at work, that of fusion and fission, segregation and accretion, and perhaps when tribal cultures began, the same tendencies were functioning but the struggle for existence was so keen, the equipments were so inefficient, that 'food quest' absorbed all the interest of a tribe, leaving little room for the play of these tendencies.





## CHAPTER VIII

## YOUTH ORGANISATION

(1)

The institution of village dormitories is found among most of the aboriginal tribes of the Chota Nagpur plateau, viz., the Mundas, the Hos, the Oraons, the Kharias. They are also found in the Central Provinces, among the Gonds and the Bhuiyas. Most of the Naga tribes in Assam, the Aos, the Memis, the Lhota, the Angamis, the Semas, the Chang, the Konyak tribes of the Naga hills, and the Kukis possess this institution. Many tribes of Melanesia and Polynesia are also known to own dormitories.

The Mundas and the Hos call it 'Gitiora', the Oraons call it 'Jonkerpa' or 'Dhumkuria,' the Bhuiyas, 'Dhangarbassa', the Gonds know it as 'Gotul'. The Aos and the Semas call it 'Morung,' the Memis have two names for it; the men's dormitory is known as 'Ikhuichi,' while the girls' one is termed 'Iloichi,' and the Angami call it Kichuki. All young bachelors of a Munda *tola* or village have a fixed common dormitory in the house of a Munda neighbour, who may have a hut to spare for the purpose, while the unmarried girls of a village sleep together in the house of a childless Munda couple



or in the house of a Munda widow. The girls are taken care of by an elderly matron of the village who exercises a general supervision over their morals.

The bachelors of an Oraon village must sleep together during night in the Dhumkuria which is generally situated at the outskirt of a village. There is also a separate house for the girls where the latter pass the night under the guardianship of an elderly duenna. In case a house is not available for the purpose, the girls are distributed among the houses of widows. The Hos also possess two houses, one for the unmarried young men and the other for the maidens of the village. But the girls are often distributed among the houses of widows.

Many Gond villages in Chattisgarh and the feudatory states have a large house near the village where unmarried youth and maidens collect, dance and sing together at night. Some villages possess two, one for the boys and one for the girls. The Bhuiyas have the same system as the Oraons. The bachelors of the village sleep in one large house. Col. Dalton mentioned some villages having a house for maidens which they occupied without any elderly matron to look after them. Among the Lhotas, every *Khel* (division of a tribe) possesses one common bachelors' house or Morung, and many of their customs and practices are associated with it. "It is the sleeping place of every Lhota boy from the time he puts first his *dao* holder till he marries, the rule being only relaxed in the case of boys who





are allowed to remain at home and nurse an ailing and widowed mother or when the house is no longer habitable." In the latter case the Lhota boys collect and help in reconstructing the house. Anybody absenting himself must pay a heavy fine.

Among the Angami Nagas, however, the Morung is not always resorted to by the bachelors but is used on occasions of ceremonies and *gennas*. In some Memi villages, the girls share the same dormitory as the young men. The boys sleep on an upper platform, the girls in a lower. The Murias and Marias of Bastar State possess sleeping barracks outside the village, where boys and girls meet nightly to play and dance and sing till they fall asleep. The Marias have a Gotul in every village, but the boys and girls do not always share the same house, as among the Murias of Kondagaon (Bastar). The Gotul institution appears to have developed to perfection in certain Muria villages, where it has effectively superseded tribal or clan organisation. In the Muria Gotul the boys and girls who share the same Gotul are not all of the same clan, and unions of boys and girls, when they develop into permanent friendship, may end in marriage, if necessary. This is possible because both among the Murias of Narayanpur and those of Kondagaon, among whom the institution is very highly developed, the villages are not scattered like those of the Hill Marias, and several clans share the same village or different wards of it.

Life in the dormitory is associated with many customs and observances. Some of these have a



traditional antiquity, others have been added in the course of their experience of the functioning of the institutions. Tribal groups living in and around urban centres are gradually abandoning their indigenous customs and practices. Those, for example, that did not possess separate houses for the girls, are having such houses built. The Christian villages have lately resorted to girls' dormitory with an aged dame in charge. Writing about the Oraon dormitories, Col. Dalton showed how the Oraons have a regular system of fagging in the Dhumkuria. The smaller boys serve those of larger growth, shampoo their limbs, comb their hair and so on, and they are sometimes subjected to severe discipline to make men of them. Where the boys and girls share the same dormitory, as among the Gonds, the part of the small boys is played by the girls. As soon as the girls enter the Gotul after supper, they are to bow to the Sirdar or captain of the dormitory, after which each girl takes a boy, combs his hair and massages his hands and arms to refresh him. They then sing and dance together till late at night, when they get tired and retire to their beds.

(2)

In Bastar, the Murias have a regular organisation, their captain is called Sirdar and the master of the ceremonies, the Kotwar, while there are other officials bearing the designations of State officers. The Oraons also have a similar organisation and the captain known as Dhangar Mahato has an ac-





knowledgeable position among the village officials. The roots of political organisation are to be traced to these dormitories which are characterised by group solidarity and discipline. The Dhumkuria fraternity, remarks Col. Dalton, are under the severest penalties bound down to secrecy in regard to all that takes place in their dormitory and even girls are punished if they dare tell stories. 'They are not allowed to join in the dances till the offence is condoned and it is the severest punishment that can be imagined by a girl.' The girls, otherwise very frank, will withdraw as soon as questions regarding their dormitories are put to them. Nothing makes a Naga girl look more distressed than a single question on their Morung life. Dr. Hutton describing the discipline of the Memi dormitories, remarks that 'publicity is probably an efficient bar to flirtation.' The social solidarity found in the dormitory reflects to a great extent on the tribal life and thus accounts for the spontaneous discipline that characterises the conduct of primitive life.

The Muria Gotul has a hierarchy of functionaries. The names of the officers are often borrowed from the titles of zemindari or State servants. In Padelibhum, the head of the dormitory is always known as the Leyur Gaita and below him are the Leyur Majhi, the Jalarsi, the Laharu, the Baider and the Kamdar (cf. Grigson, *The Maria Gonds of Bastar*.) The head officials of the Gotul in Narayanpur are as follows: Salau, Baidhar, Siladar and Kotwar. The Salau is the chief of the Gotul. He is responsible to the elders of the tribe



or village for all that happens in the Gotul. The Baidhar looks after the collection of fuel, clearing and sweeping of the Gotulguree, the Siladar is responsible for the attendance at the Gotul, he has to keep the inmates informed about the programme in the Gotul and to report their behaviour to the Salau. The Kotwar does the work of bailiff and has to call the members both male and female, whenever the Gotul functions are ordered by the Salau.

The Salau, or the head of the Gotul, has certain definite privileges allowed by custom as, for example, he can love a particular girl and declare it in public. The girl of his choice enjoys certain privileges which are denied to other girls. So long as the Gotul is informed of his choice no male member of the Gotul has a right to approach her or make love to her. The Salau has also the further privilege of having as many girls as he desires to keep about him. So long as the chief of the Gotul does not marry, he remains in sole charge of the Gotul institution, but after marriage a new Salau is elected. The election, of course, must be unanimous.

A Gotul member after marriage is not welcome in the Gotul. In case a married member frequents the Gotul, there is no tribal law forbidding his entry or his participation in Gotul life. The chief of the Gotul can only request him not to frequent the Gotul, but in case the latter does not abandon his intentions, the Gotul brotherhood takes recourse to certain conventional methods which





ultimately bring about the desired effect. First some member of the Gotul will be deputed to steal a fowl from his house, then a second one, a third one till all the birds are stolen from his pen and eaten up by the Gotul brotherhood. If that is not enough, pigs, sheep and even cattle will share a similar fate till depleted resources lead to domestic quarrels between husband and wife so that either he has to sever his connections with the Gotul or face divorce proceedings before the tribal 'panch'.

While married people are not allowed in the Gotul, special consideration is shown to the widows and widowers who want to share the Gotul, for there is no restriction against such persons and in one Gotul, in Narayanpur, the Salau was actually a widower, who confidently said that he had no intention of marrying again. The position and prestige of the Gotul girls are determined by the age and importance of their associates, but the Salau's mate wields considerable authority over all the girls of the Gotul, and powers and privileges are often exercised by other girls in accordance with seniority and also according to their influence with the Gotul officials.

The unions of Gotul mates, as well as those between Gotul boys and non-Gotul girls, or vice versa, are not regarded as complete unless the couple after marriage spends a night with the Gotul fraternity. It is on this occasion that the Gotul ceremonially acknowledges the transfer of loyalty of the newly married couple from the Gotul to



the village, which henceforth claims their undivided allegiance. This night generally witnesses a battle of wits between the Gotul fraternity and the village represented by married couples in which the married or the mature group is subject to various criticisms for acts of omission and commission.

The Gotul organisation has a tremendous effect on the social life of the tribes concerned. It is not only a club where the two sexes co-operate in developing tribal solidarity and to direct their energies to productive channels, but it is here that the necessary training for the duties of tribal manhood is inculcated through a system which has the sanction of traditional experience. Training in discipline is an important feature of Gotul organisation wherever it exists. The Muria Gotul is more or less independent of tribal control, but the assistance of the Gotul can be had by the village on payment of certain specific fees, agreed mutually by the Gotul chief and the villagers in need of such assistance. In case the headman of the village needs the service of the Gotul boys, the chief of the Gotul is called in for help and this of course is ungrudgingly given, but individual villagers must pay for their services. Among the Marias where the Gotul is not so elaborately organised the Gotul boys are only fed by the families who may require their services and no wages are paid for their labour.

Tribal life in India, as elsewhere, is characterised by an absence of a hierarchy of economic organisation. Absence of a well-assessed division





of labour in primitive society does not favour the development of hereditary skill or technique which leads to the formation of artisan classes, or guilds, so that spontaneous co-operation in domestic and economic life becomes essential. The dormitory therefore affords the training ground for educating the children of the village in all matters relating to the social and economic life of the tribe, so that they may participate in all activities of social or economic order.

The dormitory house is usually situated in the heart of the jungle among the wilder tribes or away from the villages as in Bastar, so that except the inquisitive investigator, no stranger may even stumble into it. In many of the Oraon villages, the dormitory house is found located at the centre of the village without any big road leading to or from it, or is built adjacent to the headman's house. It is purposely kept closed on all sides with only a small hole serving as door through which one can just crawl in and out. The inside of the room is dark and filled with smoke most of the time the room is in use, and little is visible from outside.

In his account of the dormitory life among the Murias and Marias of Bastar (Maria Gonds of Bastar, O. U. Press) Grigson writes as follows: "Boys and girls of an age to visit the dormitories are known as *Leyur* and *Leyas* respectively. All the boys assemble at the dormitory in the evening for dancing, games and social and sexual training, sleeping on there after the departure of the girls to their homes late in the night. The



girls attend at the dormitory in the evening, each girl being paired off with a boy of an *Akomana* clan. The girls have to comb their boys' hair and massage their arms and legs, to dance with them and to be initiated into the mysteries of sex with them. Marriage frequently follows these dormitory unions, but by no means always does."

Our investigations, however, did not corroborate this for the mating of the girls and boys in the dormitory is not so deliberately done as described by Grigson. We discussed with the members of various dormitories in Kondagaon and Narayanpur, if the girls have to attach themselves to particular boys in the Gotul and whether the Gotul chief has to see that the mating is between persons of *Akomana* clans, marriage with whom, if necessary is not barred by the rules of clan exogamy. We were told that such an arrangement was not possible as the strength of the two sexes depend on the resources of the village. Any such convention would be a serious infringement of personal liberty and would militate against the prevailing practice, which allows sufficient latitude to the sexes to select their partners in life. On the other hand we were told that it was the unwritten code of conduct in the Gotul for a girl not to bestow her favours in public to any individual, for that would be coupling her name with some boy who may not marry her. This, however, does not mean that the girls do not have their sweethearts, there is not a single girl whose eyes are not fixed on one or more of her acquaintances of the





other sex, but she generally conducts herself in such a way that no other member of the Gotul gets an inkling of her intentions during the early overtures. This is why every evening a girl usually selects a new friend, massages him, combs his hair and looks to his comfort. Even if she remains with the friend of her choice, she does not grudge doing odd bits for other boys who may need her assistance so that no suspicion may arise about her choice.

Lessons in the various agricultural operations, in hunting, in honey-gathering and other minor economic pursuits are imparted in these Gotuls through mimetic dances depicting them, while ideas about the sanctity of tribal discipline, social approbation, social justice, reciprocity of obligations, law and order in society, as well as the relations between efforts and rewards, between crime and punishment, are inculcated through stories and anecdotes which graphically describe individual doings and their repercussions on the social life of the community.

Sex-training is regarded as an indispensable discipline in dormitory routine and various methods are adopted to give the inmates a knowledge of sex practices. In the Oraon dormitories there is a central post, usually the trunk of a tree, in which a slit is made for sexual exercise, and the novice has to mimic the sex act in presence of his elders. In the Muria Gotuls the same objective is achieved by mimicking sex intercourse or by appropriate songs and rhythmic movements of



limbs in dances, and through anecdotes describing the method and processes of the sex act, and its importance to tribal life and conduct. The sexual act is not taboo in the Muria Gotuls, but it must take place under cover of darkness. The officials of the Gotul organisation often take advantage of their position and indirectly assist in the training of the novice and the non-initiate. The girls usually resent the actual act being performed in presence of the Gotul fraternity.

The popularity of a Gotul depends upon the personality of Gotul boys who can attract girls to the Gotul. In many big villages among the Muriyas there are several Gotuls in close proximity to one another and there are rivalries between the various fraternities for attracting the girls of the village. This is possible if the girls get sufficient attention from the boys and also if the Gotul programme is more sufficiently attractive for the girls. Generally speaking the attendance at the Gotul can be kept up by the personality of Gotul officials and the ingenuity of the boys in providing variety entertainments.

In one of the Gotuls in the Kondagaon Tahsil one dark night at about 1 a. m. we shot a torch through the small entrance and we found three groups in three corners of the big house, each consisting of 6 to 10 persons. Closer inspection revealed the composition of the groups. In one corner a young man about 20 years of age was lying on his back and six girls of ages varying





from 14 to 20 sitting or reclining round him, three to his right and equal number to his left, all eagerly listening to his recent exploits, as we were told afterwards. The youngest girl was massaging an arm while the eldest one was caressing the hair of the boy, while the rest were reclining with their heads touching the side of the young man's body. The flash of the light had the immediate effect of making the girls conscious of their uncovered body which they started setting to order. In another corner, two young men were surrounded by five elderly girls, most of whom had passed their teens and all discussing with great concern a case of elopement. A Gotul girl had eloped with a young man of her choice; her father wanted her to marry her cousin, her maternal uncle's son; the preliminaries were gone through but the girl did not approve of this union. She had already expressed her wishes to her comrades in the Gotul, her parents were informed but they did not view it seriously. The relevant facts of the case were being gathered by the Salau from the elderly girls, who appeared to know much about the case. The third corner was occupied by several boys of ages varying from 15 to 20, some lying on their backs, others sitting while two girls were sandwiched between two boys, who had their hands round the necks of the girls. This corner was most noisy and peels of laughter from the girls and loud conversations of the boys could be heard as we approached the Gotul. Nothing that we saw was suggestive of any licence in sex



relationship, but the interesting grouping that we discovered in the Gotul throws light on the organisation of the Gotul fraternity.

There are age grades in the Gotul. The fraternity is divided into groups based on age and although the mean age of the Gotul fraternity we investigated was 14.9, there were as many as 5 grades into which the 39 inmates were distributed. Besides these age grades there were also sex grades and girls usually kept together unless there were unusual attractions to separate them. When a girl is asked to join a particular group of boys, she manages to persuade some of her friends, so that a single girl is seldom found in any of these groups. Girls usually sit together or join the boys but they rarely pair off with boys. Outside the Gotul also we found similar groups sitting by the side of fire in which both the sexes were equally represented. In one group three girls were massaging a boy, who, we were told, was the last arrival in the Gotul and thus was receiving the attention of the Gotul girls, all others evidently had been treated previously.

The distribution of work by the Gotul officials was, as admitted by them, on the basis of this age grading in the Gotul and every age grade was aware of what its members were expected to do, whenever their services were requisitioned by the village or their labours needed for the Gotul itself.

The relations of a Gotul girl with her family so long as she remains a member of a Gotul are





of secondary importance to her, and although she has to do some routine duties for the family to which she belongs, her interest centres round the life and activities in the Gotul of which she is a willing participant. Her allegiance to the Gotul often militates against her larger interests of the family and village solidarity, but the strict discipline of the Gotul with its lure of amatory life puts a severe strain on her loyalty to her family obligations. But the other aspect of this double allegiance is of very great importance to the clan or tribal solidarity, for the interests in children which parents must necessarily have, and the affections they possess are not centred on their own children only, but extend to children in general and the Gotul which to the village is a symbol of clan manhood receives the fostering care of the village. Quarrels often arise among the inmates of Gotul which may assume serious proportions, and the arbitration by the Gotul officials may not satisfy the parties to the dispute but seldom do such cases involve the parents of the children concerned.

The Gotul institution is found in a state of high elaboration among the Murias of Kondagaon and those of Narayanpur ; it is practically absent among the Parjas (Dhruvas), Gadabas and other tribal groups whose social position is superior to the former. It is present in a less complicated form among the Dandami Marias and in a rudimentary form among the Hill Marias, both of which are culturally inferior to the Murias. The Parjas



and Gadabas have some common houses where the young men of the tribe find shelter during the night, but there does not exist any arrangement or organisation among those who share the same roof. The Marias, as we have already mentioned, possess the dormitory institution but it exists in embryo only. The dormitory among them is a men's club where the able-bodied hunters sleep at night and the unmarried girls visit the young men, if and when they like. When the men are engaged in agriculture and sleep in the corn houses, particularly when the crops ripen, the dormitories are either closed or inhabited by idlers and those whose services are not needed by the families to which they belong, it being the usual custom among the tribes for the senior male members to sleep in the corn houses.

The Gotul organisation does not appear to have any thing to do with sexual segregation, for such segregation is not usually found in those tribes possessing dormitories. Besides, most of the tribes which practise this institution allow sufficient liberty to the women and slips of morality so long as they are confined to the tribe, are scarcely heeded. The facts we have already detailed above show that the dormitory fraternity is composed of various clans, marriage among whom is not barred by clan laws. Thus the necessity of sexual segregation is hardly enough to explain the origin and continuance of the institution.

The relevant facts which have bearing on the





origin of this institution are as follows :

1. The distribution of this institution among hunting and nomadic tribes is extremely significant.

2. The need of protection of the tribal group from the ferocious denizens of the forest as well as from the alien and hostile groups who may prey upon them for women or cattle or for both. The ablest hunters of the tribe had therefore to keep together for this purpose.

3. The need of keeping awake during the night or major part of it for purposes of protection. These people usually take rest in the early hours of the night and during the day time which make possible the dormitory life with its nightly bon-fires and its varied programmes of fun and festivities.

4. Sex acts are usually tabooed during the busy agricultural season when men work strenuously in the fields or go on ceremonial hunting in the forest, the women therefore have to keep together for some periods of the year as any violation of this has disastrous effects on the economic life of the family and the social group.

5. From the time new crops shoot into corn and till the harvesting is over all the men sleep apart from their wives in their fields while the latter sleep in the village. This also leads to the compulsory segregation of the sexes.

6. Husbands, for example, among the Marias, and Murias are not allowed to sleep in the house with their wives so long as the navel cord of the new-



born child does not fall.

7. Wives have to live separate for three to five days either in the communal hut or any special one provided by the family during the period of menstruation, when it is taboo to see men, and associate with anybody not so polluted.

8. Sexual relationship is not allowed between husband and wife during the first few years after child birth or till the child weans.

9. As Grigson writes, "The Hill Marias are still doubtful about the propriety of men sleeping in the house and regard the jungle or some place overshadowed by the thick leaves of the Siari (*Bauhinia Vabilie*) creeper as the right place for intercourse between man and wife, there is a prejudice with them against cohabitation with wives in their houses." It may be either due to a belief that the god of prosperity or the ancestral spirits get annoyed or to the fact that the shades of the ancestors are usually sheltered in the house or a part of it, so that the sex acts performed in the house would have the same effect as doing it in public. The sanction for this custom may be traced to the belief that such irregularities result in damage to crops by pests or in the complete loss of yield and general calamities such as excessive precipitation, inadequate rainfall, diseases of cattle and crops and the various epidemics which claim their toll from the people.

10. Most of the hunting communities which possess the dormitory institution are very sparing in the construction of houses. A family usually pos-





sesses one hut which may be partitioned to accommodate cattle or for housing the ancestral shades. Husband and wife sleep in one room with immature children and when these grow up they need to be removed and wherever the dormitory house exists, they are conveniently housed in it.

## (3)

Institutions are often traced to simple beginnings, and also to single source. This monogenist attitude the anthropologist appears to have inherited from the biological sciences in which anthropology is deeply rooted. Recent researches do not prove the legitimacy of the monogenist view of evolution as it had been found that when history began men found themselves already possessed of those characteristics of skin colour, hair form and the shape of the head, which serve as the marks of race. The fossil remains of man that have been found in various parts of the world, and the handicrafts of extinct types of man during the last one century, afford 'tangible evidence of the antiquity and diversity of the human family and of the range of its earlier migrations'. If such is the case for the hypothesis of monogenesis in the sphere of organic evolution, its application to cultural evolution has to be watched with greater vigilance. Most of the anthropologists of the historical school have held monogenist views regarding the origin of social institutions and it is this that has rendered their explanation of dubious value. The functional school of anthropology



owes its consolidated position today to the failure of the monogenetic historical school in interpreting cultural origins, as field investigations in selected areas under controlled condition have raised issues, the solution of which could not be arrived at on the basis of single origin.

The origin of an institution, a custom or a religious rite may be an accident, as inventions usually are, but the complicated machinery of social formation that we have inherited today has gathered its complexity and momentum in course of its career. A group may take an animal or plant name to designate itself, another may be known to trade or live on a particular animal or plant species by which it may be known to the outside world, an individual may take as his or her guardian angel which might appear to him or her as a protector in dream, a woman may name her son or daughter after the animal which she believes to have mysteriously fecundated her, but the complex institution of totemism we find among many social groups owes its complexity to many traits whose identity is difficult to distinguish today. It does not matter how or what accident was responsible for the origin of an institution, in most cases it is a minor incident in the life of an individual or that of a human group, but it is essential to know how the institution has grown, how the different elements of the traits-complex have been grafted to the original trait-stem. Once a particular idea or a custom is introduced by an individual and is adopted by the social group for utility or for spectacular effect 'it would





be kept alive and strengthened by ideas and sentiments not in themselves adequate to start the custom'. Such is the case with most of our social institutions.

The principles which underlie the survival of social institutions are indeed numerous. An institution, if borrowed from an alien source, remains for a time unchanged. The people who borrow it can easily adapt themselves to the institution, as the borrowers need not enter into the spirit of the institution but can depend upon mere imitation.

A cultural trait, borrowed or indigenous, remains unchanged if it cannot be fitted into the existing structure of the society or if any change in form leads to maladjustment. Again an institution may be put to several uses. So long as it subserves a number of purposes its position in the social life of the community is readily conceded but as soon as it is found that the trait or institution does not fulfil the interests which it used to do, it loses its hold on the social life of the group concerned.

An institution, as I have said, may be introduced by accident. The belief in its efficacy may keep it alive in an unchanged form. Interest in it deepens if it can be put to more and more social uses. The larger the number of social contexts into which a trait fits in, the greater the number of interests it fulfils. The survival value of an institution is proportional to its utility, as every cultural form is an instrument of adaptation. Its



role is to render the process of adjustment of the group to its milieu, as also of the intra-group adjustment smooth and easy.

The longevity of a trait therefore rests upon a number of interests that it stimulates. When, again, some of the interests that are usually answered in an institution may not find satisfaction in the accepted form, or when a new object or trait diverts the attention of the group from the cultural form, it decreases in popularity and disintegrates altogether or remains in an attenuated form. Thus an institution may survive through the principle of graded utility. This is how the dormitory institution among the tribes of Bastar we have discussed above, appear to have survived.

The dormitory is a group organisation. Its origin may, as we have already referred to, be traced to the campings where the ablest hunters of the community took their shelter for purposes of defence and protection of the weaker members, but in course of time other traits have slowly been woven round it and the elaborate Gotul of the Murias is the result. With a settled life and a better control of food supply, predatory excursions of neighbouring groups for women or for cattle become rare, but economy of accommodation in the house, helps to maintain this communal organisation as the members find it a convenient place where to sleep in and a venue for their communal activities. Association of men and women in the dormitory helps to make the group life vivid and concrete. Opportunities for inter-communication





between the members of the group set up a group standard of social life and the effects of deviation from the group are seen more in their proper perspectives. It is in the dormitory that a system of discipline may be rigorously tried and the success in this direction has contributed not a little to tribal and clan solidarity and apparently slavish compliance to traditional usages as we find in most of the primitive groups. Training of boys and girls in the usual economic pursuits characteristic of the group, in social and ceremonial duties, in sex and associated matters is inculcated through the dormitory organisation and thus fulfils an important rôle in the tribal life of the community concerned. Above all, the dormitory institution where it exists, ensures tribal endogamy by controlling the movements of women within the tribal area and prohibiting social intercourse between men and women belonging to different tribes. How far this has been achieved depends on the effectiveness or otherwise of the dormitory organisation



## CHAPTER IX

# MARRIAGE AND SEX

### (1)

We have in India all forms of marital life, the polyandry of the matriarchal Nairs, the fraternal polyandry of the cis-Himalayan tribes, the polygyny among the Mohammedans and backward castes of Hindus, and diverse methods of securing wives.

The Hindu law-givers recognised eight different forms of marriage (Manu, Ch. 3, Verse 20). In the *Brahma* form, the parents invite a learned and virtuous young man and make over their daughter to the latter along with clothes and ornaments. In the *Daiva* form, the father of the bride performs a sacrificial ceremony and the learned Brahmin who officiates in the ceremony, is not paid any *dakshina*, but is offered the bride, properly decorated and bejewelled as his fee. These two forms of securing wives are considered 'holy' and 'divine,' and as such very desirable. The *Arsha* form of marriage is based on a system of barter, in which the father of the bride receives from a young man a pair of cattle or two, in exchange for his daughter whom he weds to the latter. The *Prajapatya* form is not attended with





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any solemnity or ceremony, the bride is given away to a young man of choice, extolling the virtue of the married state and praying that the union may turn out to be happy and prosperous. In the *Asura* form, which is practised by the aboriginal tribes even today and also by the backward communities, the relatives of the bride receive money from the bridegroom and there is no limit as to the amount required to be paid. The *Asura* form, differs from the *Arsha* in the nature of the transaction. Whereas in the *Arsha* form the bride receives a pair or two of cattle, in the *Asura* form the bride price is settled by the parties and there is no custom controlling such exchange. The *Gandharva* form which is marriage by mutual choice, obviates the rôle of the parents as the couple decide to marry without even consulting their guardians. The *Rakshasa* form of marriage is by abduction, sometimes carefully planned and executed but sanctioned by legal code. Predatory life as well as rivalry and hostility between groups lead to constant warfare, as is the custom among the Naga tribes, and the invading group overwhelms the invaded, kill the men and carry away the women, such conditions necessitated recognition of unions of men from the invading group with women of the invaded and thus it is made a legal form of wedlock. The last form is known as the *Paisacha* by which even raped women have been given a social status, and the man who rapes a woman in sleep or when she is incapable of protecting herself, is allowed to keep the woman as



his lawful bride.

Hindu society now recognises only two forms, the *Brahma* and the *Asura*, the higher castes preferring the former, the backward castes the latter, though here and there among the higher castes the *Asura* practice has not died out as, for example, the orthodox Kulins of Bengal would even today certainly protest against marrying their daughters to non-Kulins by decorating their daughters with ornaments or marrying them at their own house; they would either demand money in exchange for their daughters or would send their daughters to the house of the bridegroom, to be ceremonially married there or they may insist on both as they usually do.

(2)

In most parts of India, among primitive tribes, marriage is a simple affair, in which the couple concerned decide to settle down as man and wife without the ado of ceremony. In most tribes sufficient latitude is given to young men and women to find their partners by mutual choice and even where marriage is arranged by the parents, the young persons concerned are consulted before the final ceremony. The Kukis of Assam, the Darluns, for example, allow probationary marriage where the young man is allowed to live with his sweetheart in the latter's house for weeks and even months, after which if they temperamentally suit one another, they agree to marry and settle down. Failure to adjust themselves to each other





leads to the break-up of the union and the young man has to pay Rs. 16 as compensation to the girl's parents.

The Bhils allow young men to marry according to their choice and the Gol-gadhedo ceremony symbolises the freedom of choice exercised by the youth of the tribe. During the 'Holi' festival in the Jessawada Taluka, Panchamahar district, in Gujarat, young men and women practise a folk dance round a pole or a tree at the top of which a cocoanut fruit and gud are tied. The young women, married, unmarried and widowed, all those who want, dance around the pole in the inner circle and prevent the men reaching the centre, while on the outer circle the young men dance to the same tune. The trial of strength begins when a young man attempts to break through the inner ring and reach and climb the pole to eat gud and break open the cocoanut. In doing so, he meets with strong resistance from the women, and if he succeeds in reaching the pole the women catch him by his clothes, strike him with broomsticks and tear hair from his head and may even scratch flesh from his body, though all this is done in good faith. Should the young man succeed even after such ordeal in climbing the pole, and reaching the sweets and the fruit, he passes the test of valour and has the right to name a girl for his wife and take her away without any further attention from the crowd. The girl who becomes the prize feels proud of her status and even afterwards remembers with admiration the part played



by her partner in obtaining her hand. Although elopements are far too common, the Bhil girls who marry under the Gol-gadhedo seldom separate. Ordinarily, however, girls and boys mutually agree and plan their marriage and the Gol-gadhedo only sanctions their union.

The Parjas or Dhruvas of Bastar till recently used to confine the marriageable girls of the village in an underground cell where young men desirous of matrimony were to join them at night and make their choice. Carefully careless they would leave their brass bracelets with girls of their choice, so that next morning the parents of the girls concerned could identify the Romeos of the village. Where tribal beliefs and practices have been disintegrated, even today the girls of a village gather together under some improvised leafy hut at the outskirts of the village for a few weeks before the Dusserah festival, and young men of the village or those from neighbouring villages frequent the hut, dance, sing, and woo their sweethearts till exchanges of gifts take place and the intimacy is talked about in the village. The choice is then implemented by the parents of the young man, who carry pots of liquor and rice to the house of the bride who have the option of accepting or refusing the gifts. In the latter case the gifts are doubled and negotiations take definite shape.

The Hos and cognate tribes of Munda ethnic stock must pay a heavy bride price. The Hos pay in coins and cattle, the Mundas only in money. The bride price depends on the status of the parents





and varies from *kili* to *kili* (clan to clan) as well. As the parents and relations are required to finance young men to obtain the required bride price, the young folk of both sexes are less free to select their partners. Yet the final selection lies in their hands and they can signify their refusal at the time of the ceremonial distribution of *illi* (rice-beer). As soon as the bride and the bridegroom are brought for the first time publicly together and it is done at the 'Era Thil ceremony', they exchange glances and have to inform their respective relatives of their mutual approval. This is done by the bridegroom offering *illi* to the bride who if she approves of him, has to distribute the liquor to all relations after partaking of it herself. The bride will then on her part, offer the liquor to the bridegroom who has to repeat the formality. The bride, even if she is willing, may not immediately accept the leaf-cup from the bridegroom as it is customary for the latter to offer some money, clothes or jewellery to elicit her public approval.

Marriage in tribal society is neither a sacrament nor is it indissoluble in life as is found among the Hindus. Primitive society recognises the chances of friction between man and wife in domestic life and also provides for maladjustment. Divorce and mutual separation are freely allowed for incompetence, cruelty, desertion and adultery. With all such provisions, divorces are infrequent and the divorcee, man or woman, does not enjoy a great social status or respect. Where the men are subservient to women, the former are the



aggrieved party, and public opinion favours the aggressor. The Tharus of Naini Tal Tarai afford an example of female dominance and often the husband has no alternative but to pray to God for redress against maltreatment by the wife.

In the Chota Nagpur area, women enjoy considerable freedom of movement and husbands have to behave and treat their wives as equal partners. Where caste influence has permeated, the free movement of women has been circumscribed, and the lack of opportunities for intercommunication has pushed the women into a subordinate status. Restriction on the freedom of women has encouraged polygyny and domestic quarrels are of frequent occurrence in polygynous families.

(3)

Adultery is punishable by the social code of most primitive tribes, and the tribal or clan panchayat has to see that such offence is not frequent in the society. Where tribal solidarity has not been greatly disturbed, excommunication and heavy compensation to the aggrieved party reduce the incidence of adultery but in tribes in the process of detribalisation and disintegration, tribal supervision and vigilance have failed to check adultery and fine, and ostracism are no cure for such social lapses. Yet, the tribal elders frown at such guilt and public pressure though ineffective in most cases, tries to assert itself by limiting the social freedom of the persons concerned. Time was, when an adulterer inflicted punishment on himself, just as any





person violating a social usage or order committed suicide to escape the consequence of the act, and saving the society from disaster, afterwards. To-day, he pays money compensation and tribal feast and if these are not enough, he leaves the village for a period of a year or so, so that people may forget his social lapse.

Where women are dominant and choose their partners in marriage, as among the Tharus of Naini Tal Tarai, adultery is not infrequent. The tribal elders convene meetings to fix the guilt and punish the offenders, but the complaint must be preferred by the husband himself, or the wife as the case may be, but as women are the usual culprits, the husband dares not accuse the wife unless he can enlist the support of his friends. Every tribe, however, has its penal provision against adultery and some tribes view it with great horror. Tribal gods are believed to be offended and misfortune visits the family concerned. Even the wandering and vagrant tribes who allow sufficient latitude to their women in this respect have laws which are strictly enforced against those guilty of such social lapse.

The Nats, the Sansiyas and the Doms allow laxity of morals and licence within the tribe, but would not tolerate any between their women and men belonging to other tribes or castes. Strict injunction is given to women in this respect, and the women may tempt, decoy and develop intimacy with strangers if that is required for their profession of crime, but they should not violate the tribal code regarding sexual licence. How far such demarca-



tion is possible is a matter of belief. In cases of adultery being proved before the tribal elders the offender has to compensate the aggrieved husband or wife as the case may be, and also the tribal people which can be done by standing a dinner to the elders or a tribal feast. In some tribes, the man and woman found guilty, are allowed to live as man and wife but in most cases they are left to shift for themselves among hostile and whispering neighbours.

Premarital licence is recognised in tribal society and in those tribes where late marriage is customary, virginity is not essential for marriage. Among the Munda tribes girls and boys are allowed to mix freely and marriage may not take place even after they pass their teens. Where the bachelors and maidens of the tribe are housed together, as among the Gonds of the Central Provinces, sex training is imparted in traditional ways, and the youth of both sexes learn the mystery of sex before they unite to live as man and wife. Where tribal custom has now been modified to suit changed social outlook, licence is allowed during festivals and ceremonies but the curtain is dropped on such licence immediately the festival terminates and the ceremonies end.

Many tribes again have introduced child marriage partly as a claim to higher social status, as it is a recognised practice among their Hindu neighbours, and partly as a measure of restricting premarital licence. The village elders and substantial families among the Mundas and Hos





of Chota Nagpur plateau, the Bhils of Gujarat and Nimar (C. P.) have popularised child marriage to restrict licence, though the freedom of movement obtained in these tribes finds frequent expression in later years in the child wife's refusal to settle in the husband's house or deserting the husband by planned elopement. In the Dehra Dun district, in Jaunsar Bawar, also in the Simla hills, child marriage does not always mean that the girl when she attains puberty, will come to live with her husbands. A return of the bride price and the expenses involved effect a release of the girl from the marital obligation.

## (4)

All the tribes of Munda descent in Chota Nagpur and elsewhere have to pay bride price to marry. In earlier days, they probably paid in cattle, as money economy did not assert itself. The Hos today pay both in cattle and money, the Mundas and Santhals in coins, though some exchange of gifts, clothes, etc., is more or less indispensable among the substantial section of these tribes. Under a system of quasi-communal economics, marriage was not difficult, as the bride price was provided by the community by voluntary subscription, a common pool controlled by the village Munda or the Mahato. Every family in earlier days used to keep extra heads of cattle to fulfil its obligations to the clan. Even today, the obligation is recognised by the community but due to increased wants and an individualistic attitude to life, the form remains



though but the function of the custom has certainly changed, and voluntary assistance today does not provide the means of securing wife to the less fortunate villagers.

The substantial cultivators, the village headman and also the priest, if the latter serves a group of villages or owns service land as in most parts of Chota Nagpur, spend two to three hundred rupees. Some do spend more. A new tendency has been showing for some time past among the ranked people, particularly those who live in the neighbourhood of urban centres, and have been influenced by contacts with higher castes among the Hindus, to reciprocate gifts between families entering into matrimonial alliance. The bride price is paid in money, cattle and jewellery but the parents of the girls also make substantial gifts to the bridegroom and feel proud about such display of status. The lower classes, the average person, for example, toils hard to secure bride price and marriage among the Munda tribes is becoming more and more difficult for these people. While the substantial section is adopting child marriage an intolerable situation has been created among the poorer Hos and Mundas of Chota Nagpur.

Marriage among the Munda tribes was settled by the young people concerned. Mutual choice decided who should marry whom, and as the bride price was paid in cattle subscribed by the clan, young people had no great hurdle to cross. The ceremony was a simple affair. The bride painted vermilion on the forehead of the bridegroom

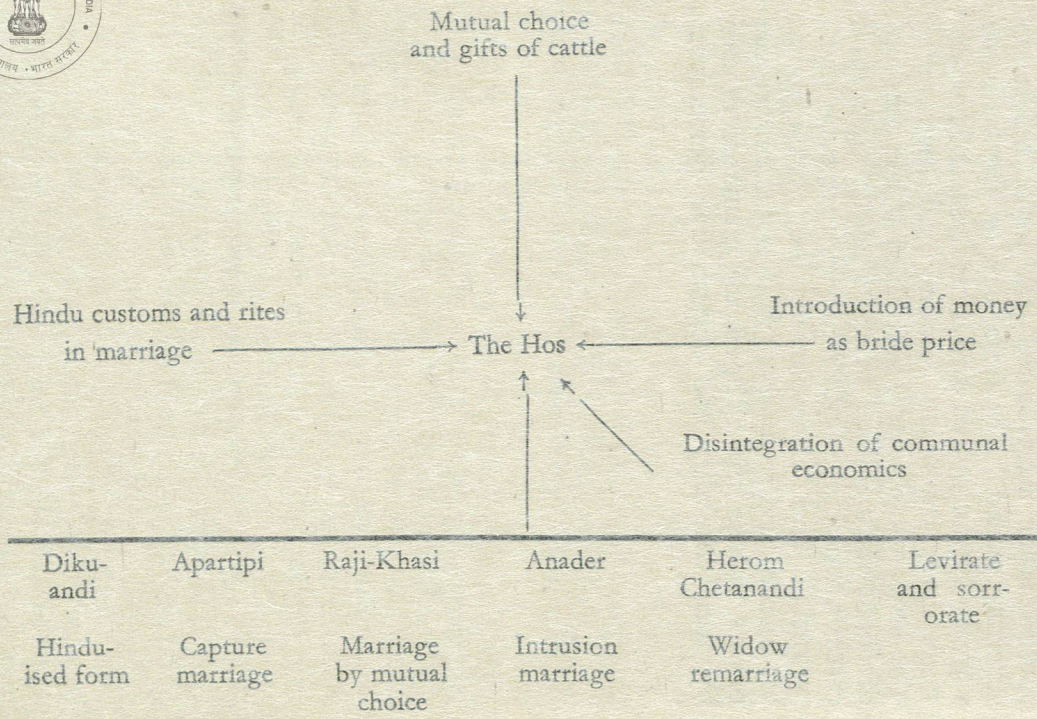




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and the latter reciprocated the same before an admiring crowd. The ritual part of the marriage was very simple, indeed, and tribal feasts and friendly visits made the union binding and memorable. The bridegroom's party assembled at the outskirts of the bride's village where a mock fight took place in which the bride's people were soon overpowered, and triumphantly the bridegroom, his friends and relations of both sexes, entered the bride's village and obliged the members thereof by their cordiality and appreciative demeanour:







With the introduction of money economy and its effect on the communal system of economics, a sort of adjustment could be anticipated, for most of the tribes of Munda affiliation were living in compact areas under a system of protective administration or assisted by philanthropic agencies. But Hindu ideas about marriage and social propriety permeated aboriginal cultural life and the parents became shy of marrying their daughters as it involved receiving bride price which was excessively high for their means. With the increase of their wants, girls were sold to the highest bidder till the parents who received high bride price were looked down upon by the community. The former therefore did not exhibit any anxiety to marry their daughters though a high bride price was coveted by the parents and also it meant some social status for the bride. The proposal for marriage therefore was to come from the bridegroom's side, and the institution of go-between who negotiate marriages was introduced. Many families today have memorised the amount of *gonom* or bride price they have paid in their marriages and even young boys and girls know by heart what *gonom* their parents had paid to marry. Men and women who married without payment of bride price, or paid nominal amount hang down their heads in shame and yet many are the families who have married without paying bride price.

As marriage involves payment of bride price, the middleman negotiates between families desir-



ing to marry boys and girls, and arranged marriages have become customary among substantial cultivators and tribal officials. The average man has to find out some other way to secure wives, and tribal society recognises irregular forms of marriage, as otherwise the tribal structure is likely to disintegrate beyond recovery. Thus the tribal society had to sanction irregular forms of mating, though the elders and those who can well afford, have adopted elaborate ritual and ceremonies which bring them in line with their neighbours, the caste people.

Although the tribal groups are at the bottom of the social pyramid, the adoption of traits of one group by the other does not follow any spiral order, on the other hand, it has been found that the tribal groups have adopted customs and traits belonging to the clean castes but have not been greatly influenced by contacts with the unclean ones.

The various methods of securing wives among the Munda tribes have been detailed in the monographs by Roy and recently in 'A Tribe in Transition'. These have been devised to meet the needs of their cultural adjustment. Tribal economy has undergone transformation due to contacts with advanced groups. Payment in kind has been replaced by money transaction, and the voluntary assistance previously given to young men by the members of the clan or village to help indigent families is no longer obligatory or generous enough. Thus the marriage of Munda maidens is indefinitely postponed and young men find it extremely hard to marry and settle down. So long as the





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parents are alive, the question of maintaining the unmarried daughters does not arise but when the latter have to share the establishment with their brothers and sister-in-laws quarrels and bitterness do arise which make joint living impossible at times. There are hundreds of songs in Munda language detailing the sufferings of aged maidens, the tyranny and maltreatment of elder brothers' wives and the lack of attention on the part of eligible young men. The jealousy of elder brother's wife and of step-mother is described in songs popularly sung by maidens all over the Munda country. The following is typical :

Elder brother's wife's jealousy  
Step mother's jealousy

Clouds above tremble as they quarrel  
Stomach, stomach, I am hungry  
Water, water, I am thirsty.

Where, Oh Nili (E. B's wife) water can be  
found ?

King's tank, queen's tank  
Go, find it there ?

Even a glass of water is denied by the elder brother's wife or the step-mother, and the aged Munda maiden is directed towards the village tank to drink water.

The situation can be graphically indicated as below :



Contacts with neighbouring advanced caste groups under mining their sense of social values.

Disintegration of tribal economy, emergence of money economy. Excessive bride price.

Status accorded by society to marriages by paying high bride price.

The parents' voice in marriage. Their reluctance to propose their daughter's marriage, the proposal must come from the other side.

Poverty and consequent difficulty in securing the bride price.

Postponement of marriage of young people.

Freedom of social intercourse. Neglect and maltreatment by step-mother and elder brothers' wives who become guardian after the death of the parents.

Recognition by the Society of unions other than ceremonial marriage.

Drudgery in the house of their brothers and the fear of remaining a spinster all life.

Marriage by Capture or Intrusion marriage.





Thus side by side with ceremonial form of marriage which is rich with varied folk rites and customs which is given a high status in tribal society, irregular forms of union are recognised and the two popular forms of union among the Munda tribes are (1) Apartipi and (2) Anader. The first is marriage by capture or by use of force. When young men desirous of marriage fail to secure the brideprice or who want to marry girls of their choice but are prevented for tribal or personal reasons to do so, they may plan and capture the girls of their choice. If the girl does not make any loud protest or does not refuse to take food from her captor, she remains as the lawful bride of the latter and no payment of bride price is required to validate the union. In some cases the man responsible for the capture may negotiate with the parents and settle a bride price which the girl's parents usually accept, thus giving a formal status to irregular union. In the Kolhan today, capture marriages are mutually planned and executed and thus are devoid of any criminal motive.

In Apartipi marriages, it is the bridegroom who plans and forces his choice on the girl he wants to possess, but in the Anader it is the girl who forces herself into the household of the man she is passionately fond of. Her intrusion is not liked by the parents of any young man but her determination is ultimately rewarded by the family, by allowing her to stay in their house as the lawfully wedded wife of their son. She first stays as a domestic help, as a drudge. She works her way up against a hostile



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family, even the young man, her choice and goal in this case evades her, does not remain in the house, neither the parents at the initial stage want their son to develop any intimacy with the unwelcome member in the house. If the young man was already familiar with the girl, he might steal visits into her room, but the parents must not know, as in that case it becomes really hard for the girl. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, the girl succeeds in her mission. In most cases, the young man sympathises with her, and that gives the necessary courage to pursue her intent desire. Thus both the forms of marriage are legal in the Munda country, and provide the necessary escape from the hard conditions of life, resulting from high bride price and its associate evils. Such has been the solution of the marital problem in earlier days under unsettled conditions which made the Hindu society recognise eight forms of marriage, and the Hos and Mundas under conditions of detribalisation have forged similar practices to tide over social crises.





## CHAPTER X

## POLYANDRY

The various conditions under which man and woman 'come together to love, mate and produce children' are of great interest to the sociologist as it is with the average normal man and woman. Courtship, love and mating in any society are influenced by 'the way the sexes face one another in public and in private as well as the economic co-operation that is demanded of them'. Westermarck has shown that monogamy is as old as human society but that it is not the only kind of marriage is sufficiently clear from the religious and sacerdotal literature in all parts of the globe including the Bible. Unless polygamy is banned by law, its incidence is pretty widespread.

Among the lower cultures in India polygyny is a very common institution. In some tribes the possession of a number of wives determines the social status of the person concerned and various standards are insisted by the tribes which allow such practice. Polygyny is found among the Nagas and most of the primitive Pre-Dravidian tribes, it is found in Africa, Australia and Newzealand. The Mohammedans are allowed to take more wives than one, and in the eastern districts of Bengal,



the high fertility of the Mohammedans is partly ascribable to the widespread practice of polygyny. This is how one district in Bengal (i.e., Mymensingh) alone is responsible for settling a large part of Assam. Polygyny was also popular among the Kulins of Bengal and the social history of Bengal during the last one hundred years would provide interesting data on the incidence and consequences of polygyny as well as hypergamy. With the growth of individuality in women and the changed economic conditions, polygyny has a restricted rôle to play in future.

Polyandry, though far more restricted than polygyny, is still being practised in various parts of the world. It is found among certain American Indians, the Eskimos and among the tribes of the Alaskan coast of north America. It is found among the south sea Islanders, in the Malay Archipelago, and the island of Lancelot, but rarely reported from Madagascar. It is found among the Wahuna of East Africa. In Tibet it was and still is the traditional practice. From Kashmir to Assam, among the Mongoloid people in some form or other polyandry is reported. The Todas and Kotas of the south and the Tiyaṅs practise this form of marriage. In Ceylon polyandry is said to have been common but 'was suppressed by the sixties of the last century'. It was also said to have been practised in Arabia felix and from mythological evidence it appears that it was frequently resorted to by the Aryan-speaking peoples. Westermarck says that polyandry is generally confined to non-



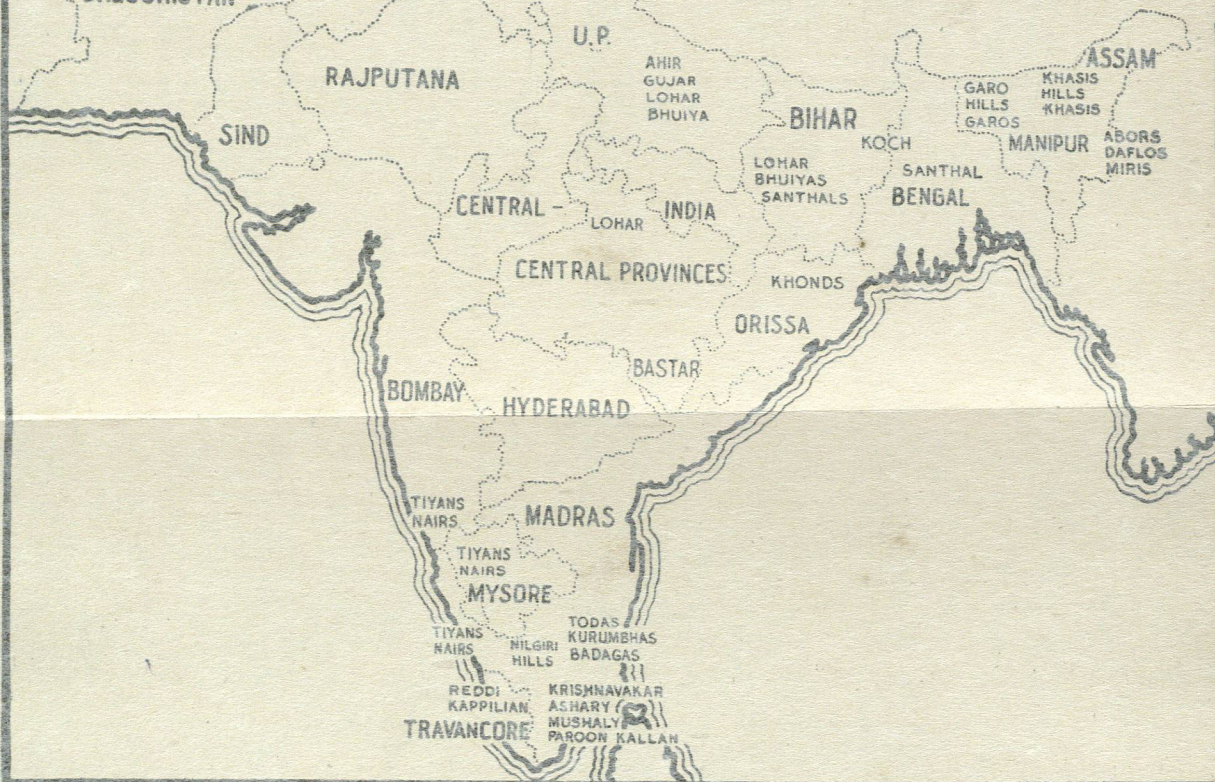


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# THE DISTRIBUTION OF POLYANDROUS TRIBES AND CASTE

In

# INDIA







Aryan, Tibetan or Dravidian tribes and castes, i. e., among the Mongoloid people and those speaking some branch of the Dravidian family of languages. Polyandry is commonly practised today in Jaunsar Bawar, in the Dehra Dun district, in the Simla hills, in Rawain and neighbouring tracts, by the Rajputs and Brahmins who belong to the Indo-Aryan stock, also by the artisan castes who are of mixed descent, so that it is not correct to say that polyandry is a non-Aryan institution.

There are two types of polyandry in India. In one the husbands of a woman are brothers, in the other they may not own any kinship. The Todas and the Kotas allow cousins and even clansmen to share their wife or wives.

From the distribution of polyandry, it appears that it is not a primitive institution. The Tibetans and other Mongoloid people are not primitive in the sense we understand the term, nor were the Nairs who till recently practised this form of mating. The evolutionists have explained polyandry as an important phase in the development of marriage. For example, Morgan postulated an elaborate scheme with consanguine or Malayan family based on the supposed inter-marriages of brothers and sisters in a group, to Punalulan or Hawaiian family founded upon the supposed inter-marriages of several brothers own or collateral to each others husband in a group, Syndasmian or pairing family founded upon the marriage of a male with a female under the form of marriage but without exclusive cohabitation, to patriarchal family or the marriage of one





man to several wives and finally to monogamian family founded upon marriages between single pairs. According to Morgan, therefore, no fewer than fifteen normal stages in the evolution of marriage and the family must have preceded marriage between single pairs and of the family itself in the modern sense of the term. Mac Lenan says that polyandry must be regarded as a modification of and an advance from promiscuity.

The evolutionists believe that the matriarchal form of family organisation is prior to the patriarchal. In the matriarchal system, the mother's family designation is given to the children as the latter live with the mother and the mother's brother becomes the habitual guardian of the family. Husbands in the matriarchal society are only visitors and do not wield any authority over the children. But many matriarchal societies allow the husband to live independently with his wife by setting up separate establishments within the matriarchal group, and though land passes on from mother to daughter, certain kinds of property also pass from father to son. The next step would be for the father to pass on his own name to the children, so that the children get their affiliation not to the mother and her family but to the father. The final stage is reached when land is also passed from father to son with provision perhaps for the maintenance of the daughters. Thus patriarchal society may develop out of the matriarchal through a long process of transition in which the different features of the patriarchal society are gradually acquired and



handed on to the children. Today, most of the advanced societies are patriarchal no doubt, but there are some which may be called maternal-paternal, for the features of both the structures are found among them.

That property considerations have influenced the structure of a social life is common knowledge to field anthropologists. Matrilineal system of inheritance can be traced to the requirements of horticulture and the introduction of the plough has displaced woman in agriculture at least from her being the sole agriculturist of the family or clan. Social needs, such as the performance of religious ceremonies and obligation to cremate the deceased members of the family and to inter their bones in the family resting-place under the clan stone (mawbah) have made the Khasi vest the family property in the youngest daughter, and Khasi law recognises her as the custodian of the family property. Mills has pointed out the complications that have arisen from contacts of the Khasis with non-Khasis, particularly when the custodian of the family property changes her religion, as different interpretations have been put by interested parties among the Khasis, both Christian and non-Christian. Misconceptions have arisen due as Cantille (Notes on the Khasi-Law) says, to the fact that courts use the legal term 'heir' for the custodian of the property instead of treating her as the head of a Hindu undivided family as she really is. The matriliney of the Khasis is associated with the tribal customs prescribing the rôle of the youngest





daughter in family worship and general mortuary rites.

Both the Khasis and the Garos, are passing through a transitional stage of maternal-paternal descent. The Garos marry the youngest daughter to the maternal uncle's son, who becomes *Nokrom* and assumes guardianship of the property. The Christian converts among them maintain the matriarchal system, but are trying to read in their customs implications which never existed. Inter-marriage with non-Khasis of Khasi women has complicated the Khasi system of inheritance. The children of a Khasi woman by a non-Khasi are eligible to inherit the property of the former, but under particular rules, the property of the non-Khasi husband is equally transferable by law to the children. The situation today lies, as Mill puts it, in the following lines: "If the man abandons the woman and his children or leaves her a widow, she will in due course take their shares from what she leaves according to Khasi custom. If, on the other hand, the man sees the upbringing of the children through they will grow up non-Khasis and inherit according to his custom. Or as not infrequently happens, death or other causes may part the couple when some children are grown up and some are still small and in such cases half the family will grow up Khasis and the other non-Khasis." (Essays in Anthropology Presented to S. C. Roy, Lucknow, 1942).

In the Nayar form of Polyandry which is usually known as of the matriarchal type, a woman may



have a number of husbands who may or may not be related. So long as a woman lives with one of her husbands, the other husband or husbands cannot have any marital rights over the wife. K. M. Panikkar (J. R. A. I. Vol XLVIII) denies the existence of non-fraternal polyandry among the Nayars and observes that the only type of polyandry to be found among the Nayars is of the fraternal variety. Dr. Aiyappan (Man, 1932, 99) believes that the non-fraternal polyandry was generally circumscribed within an *langu* (endogamous group) and was subject to the supervision and control of the head of the extended matrilineal family. That polyandry did not only apply to certain areas of Malabar where the Nambudiri tyrannised over the Nayars, as contested by Pannikar, has been fully demonstrated by Aiyappan. In the Toda and Kota form of polyandry, the husbands are brothers or clan mates, so also among the Tibetans and other Mongoloid people who practise polyandry. Amongst the Tibetans several brothers share one wife and the latter comes to live with the husbands. If therefore paternity is not certain among the Nairs or among those who follow the matriarchal type of polyandry, the line of paternity at least is certain amongst those who practise the fraternal variety. The actual father in both the cases is not known. Biological fatherhood may differ from sociological fatherhood. This is how all polyandrous societies possess some conventional method of ascertaining parentage. In Jaunsar Bawar, for example, if the brothers marry





one wife the eldest of the three brothers will be addressed by the children as 'Bari Baba', the second who may be in charge of the cattle will be addressed as 'Dangar Baba', the third who may be with the flock of sheep is 'Bhedi Baba', and so on.

The Khasas of Jaunsar Bawar live in joint family. A group of brothers live together with one, two or more wives under the same roof, the brothers sharing the wives without any exclusive right of any brother to cohabit with anyone wife. The children are maintained by the family and there is a conventional way of ascertaining fatherhood among them. The eldest born child is fathered upon the eldest brother and the next child on the second and so on. If four brothers have two or perhaps one wife between them and four or five children are born, but one of the younger brothers marries again, the children remain with the woman and the latter cannot go to the younger brothers but must live with the elder, but children are entitled to equal shares from the four brothers which are paid to the elder. If they separate the elder brother bears the expenses of their marriage.

Customary laws of inheritance make the eldest brother receive the lion's share of the property in case of partition. According to the laws of inheritance in force, property is divided in the following way. After deducting one thing of each kind and one field for *Pitans*, viz., on account of seniority, and half of that field, viz., *Kanchoo*, for



the youngest, all the rest are divided equally among them. The family house in Jaunsar Bawar, belongs to the eldest brother, the garden belongs to him, the crops are his, and the cattle and sheep are owned by him and the wife and children, and their maintenance and control are his. He is the governor of the family, the custodian of the property, and his brothers accept his rule and authority without grumble. Cases have been found when a younger brother has rebelled against this social and economic monopoly, has forced the elder brother to a partition of the family property or to the granting of exclusive right of cohabitation with a particular wife, but inasmuch as he has gained in his individuality, his wife has deserted him afterwards. It may sound strange to a capitalistic society but it is a fact that if a man happens to be the only son of his parents and is sufficiently well provided with pattimony, he stands little chance of keeping a wife, for a wife would not care to live with one man as she would have to do all the work for the family. He must therefore find out his cousins or collaterals before he decides to marry for a woman would like to marry a group of brothers, as that would further secure her against widowhood. The brothers who have to move out from home frequently on errands or on business, with cattle or sheep, do not fail in their duty to their common wife or wives as one of the brothers can always live with the latter to meet the obligation of the married state.

The hard and meagre life on the bleak tops





of hills, the extreme difficulty of lone existence, or independent living, make partition of property uneconomic. Co-operation between villagers and members who constitute the family group is indispensable not only for maintenance but also for protection against organised theft and robbery. Big families on the other hand are most conducive to securing a living than a small one. When I asked a group of Jaunsaris why they still preferred to live under polyandrous conditions while their neighbours the Garhwalis hate this institution I was told that they did not envy the latter. The Garhwalis, they said, left their homes due to the disintegration of joint family. Previously land in Garhwal was measured in acres, then by roods, then by poles, then by yard and feet, till they all left their home and are today distributed all over the country as menials, domestic servants or army recruits. The Jaunsaries and their neighbours in Bawar, love their home and do not want to emulate the Garhwalis.

The effects of polyandry are diverse. A first-hand inquiry in Jaunsar Bawar revealed that polyandry is not the only form of marriage practised by the people, monogamy and polygyny, sororal and indefinite, are frequently found, while extra-connubial relations are permitted under specific conditions. There is a double standard of morality recognised by the Khasas. A woman in her husband's village must observe strict rules of propriety and marital obligations but daughters in the village are not required to conform to any



approved social code, thus allowing undue licence to the latter. But wives in one village are daughters in another and periodical migrations make extra-connubial intimacy possible.

Although it is possible for a group of brothers to marry more than one wife at a time, in practice seldom a family has more than two wives living together with the group of brothers as husbands. Usually the divorce of a wife is followed by another marriage. It is also a fact that the number of children in polyandrous families is very low, for 4 to 5 brothers between them possess 3 to 4 children and sometimes less. Besides, there is a preponderance of male children. The incidence of sterility in woman is very high. A husband waits 2 to 5 years to see if the wife produces any child; if she fails, she feels that she is not much wanted in the house and thus she seeks a new home. If she is not wanted in the house, if she is lazy or suffers from sexual disease which is a frequent complaint in these parts, or if she is guilty of some grave social misdemeanour, such as unwillingness to cohabit with the eldest brother so long as he remains in the house, she is divorced and the next husband of the woman has not to pay any big dowry either. But if she wants to leave her husband herself and if she does not suffer from any disease or has already proved her fertility, the husband usually demands an exorbitant price from her fiancé and this amount must be paid by the latter if she is to marry him. In such case, the larger the number of divorces, a woman goes through





the higher the bride price she fetches, for the bride price must provide for compensation to the previous husband and his family.

The larger the number of social contexts into which an institution fits in the greater the number of interests it fulfils. The longevity of an institution or a trait depends therefore on the function it performs or the interests it stimulates. The institution of polyandry has survived in Jaunsar Bawar as it fulfils a variety of purposes. The origin of an institution may be due to single or multiple causes. Polyandry may be the result of a disturbed balance of the sexes. Economic conditions engender social habits. Property considerations among the Tibetans, Todas and other groups are perhaps responsible for polyandry. The custom of hypergamy under pre-control conditions may lead to destruction of female children and a consequent shortage of females may result in polyandry. But the durability of the institution depends upon the persistence of the stimuli that have given shape to the institutions.

Westermarck in his *History of Human Marriage* (1911) said that the chief and immediate cause of polyandry was no doubt 'a numerical disproportion between the sexes' although in the later edition of this classical work he did not stress this point too strongly. In those areas where polyandry exists as a solidified system of marital relationship of traditional antiquity as, for example, in Tibet, Sikkim, in Ladhok, Lahue and other parts there is hardly any numerical disproportion between



the sexes among the 'effective population' (by effective is meant the population after deducting those in monasteries and others who have taken a vow of celibacy). Sir A. Cunningham says that in Ladhok, the females outnumber the males and Moorcroft and Trebeck (*Travels in the Himalaya Provinces of Hindustan and the Punjab, in Ladhok and Kashmere*, Vol. I, p. 322) came to the conclusion that 'the women of Ladhok in consequence of their great proportional number, find it difficult to obtain subsistence'. Risley did not think that polyandry of Tibet and Sikkim was due to any disproportion between the sexes as he found the sexes fairly equal there. The undue prominence of the maternal uncle, the extraordinary freedom of women, double standard of morality enjoyed by women among the Khasas, all suggest a matriarchal matrix on which a patriarchal culture has been superimposed. The feudal system which still survives in this area, accounts for an elaborate territorial organisation based on a confederacy of Thokdars or Sayanas, and also consequent desire to concentrate power in the senior male member of the family. These have given rise to a rigid code of joint living and co-partnership and may have sanctioned the prevailing type of marital life in these parts.

The Thokdar system.	} <i>Polyandry</i> {	The need for protection against organised theft and robbery.
Shortage of women.		Difficulties of making an economic living.
Periodical migrations of women.		The cold and bleak climate of the hills.





## CHAPTER XI

### KINSHIP CATEGORIES

#### (1)

There are different ways of classifying relatives. Blood, parentage, marriage and contiguity are the usual determinants of relationship in human society. Relationship may be lineal or collateral, matrilineal or patrilineal, by descent or by marriage, the latter often cross-cutting blood relationship. Professor Kroeber, from a comparative study of tribal systems, as they are found, formulated the principles according to which known systems of relationship are ordered. The chief categories of relationship as conceived by Kroeber prevailing in the world today are as follows :—

1. The difference between persons of the same and of separate generations is recognised; father and grandfather, uncle and cousin are examples.
2. The difference between lineal and collateral relationships is maintained. Father is distinguished from father's brother.
3. Difference of age within one generation is recognised as, for example, the distinction between the older and the younger brother.
4. The sex of the relative, except cousin



the English terms of relationship are all discriminative of sex.

5. The sex of the speaker is recognised in the terms of kinship. The father and mother may receive one designation from a man and another from a woman. Among the Marathas, a man calls his brother's child *Putanya*, while a woman calls her brother's child *Bhaca*. The Bhotiyas address elder sister as *Pota* when a man is speaking and as *Tata* when a woman speaks, younger sister's husband as *Tete* (man speaking), but when a woman addresses him, she calls *Poa*.

6. The sex of the person through whom relationship exists. In most of the advanced systems, this category is not operative and conventional qualifications are added to distinguish relations as, for example, 'paternal grandfather' and 'maternal grandfather.'

7. Blood relatives are distinguished from connections by marriage, father-in-law from father.

8. Recognises the condition of life of the person (dead or alive, married or unmarried) through whom relationship exists. This is not operative in advanced societies.

Of the eight categories, 3, 5, 6, and 8 are not operative in English and most European and Indo-European languages but the rest are recognised.

There are two principal systems of kinship terms, one in which the terms are applicable not to single individual persons, but to classes of relatives which may be very large, and the other in which the terms denote single individual persons. Even





in the terminology of relationship of most of the Caucasian peoples, which Dr. Rivers speaks of as the 'family' system, sometimes a group of individuals is denoted by one common term so that the difference in the two systems, classificatory and descriptive is one of degree only. In the former, a term is used to denote a large number of individuals while in the descriptive system of terminology a term refers ordinarily to one single individual.

The Sema Nagas use one word *aza* to denote mother, father's brother's wife and mother's sister; the same people use *apu* to denote father, father's brother and mother's sister's husband. Again they use *Ani* to denote father's sister, wife's mother, husband's mother, husband's brother's wife. The Angami Nagas use *Thi* to denote wife's elder brother, wife's elder brother's wife, mother's brother's wife, father's brother's wife, elder brother's wife, husband's elder sister, etc. Amongst the Hos of Chota Nagpur, mother's brother, father's sister's husband and the father of both husband and wife are all called *Hoyar*. Again, father's sister, mother's brother's wife and mother of both husband and wife are denoted by *Hatom*.

The essential characteristics of the descriptive type as defined by Morgan are (1) that the terms express actual blood relationship, terms such as father, sister being only applied to persons having actual blood kinship with the speaker (2) that the collateral lines are kept distinct from each other and divergent from the linear, so that



the terms nephew and niece are applied to persons related collaterally, the divergence of the successive generations being indicated in the names employed and (3) that in most cases except for the nearer relatives, the terms are descriptive, i. e., there are in what he believed to be the typical and normal forms of the system, no general terms like uncle, niece or cousin, the person being specifically described as father's brother, sister's daughter, mother's brother's son.<sup>1</sup> The classificatory system, on the other hand, reckons kinship between groups rather than individuals and the collateral lines are not kept distinct and divergent from the lineal.

## (2)

The question of the origin of the terminology of relationship has been approached from different standpoints. Professor Kroeber claims that descriptive terms are more precise and as in English, restricted in categories, whereas classificatory recognise more categories but express them less efficiently. The purposes to be served by the two systems are the same in each case, and tribal differences are to be explained 'as matters of psychology rather than sociology.' Professor Kroeber believes that nothing can be inferred from the particular systems of kinship terms a group uses,

<sup>1</sup>In this system, all the kinship terms refer to the single biological family comprised of man, wife and children. Terms for other relations not included in the family are usually vague and indefinite.





and thus the study of kinship systems has little practical use. "Kinship terminologies are arbitrary, and unexplainable by any principle other than accident." This nominalistic point of view, however, can be supported up to a point but we have also to consider terms of relationship which can be deduced from social functions or particular kinds of marriage.

Dr. Rivers has proved that terms of relationship arise from social functions antecedent to their use.

The Hos use the term *Hoyar* to denote mother's brother, father's sister's husband and the father of both husband and wife. The custom of cross-cousin marriage is very much prevalent amongst these people, and as a result of this form of marriage, the mother's brother and the father's sister's husband get to the position of father-in-law, consequently the Hos possess only one term to denote mother's brother, father's sister's husband and the father of both husband and wife. For wife's sister, most primitive societies have no special term. Sometimes it is conventional to address her by a term of endearment or mild reproach as *Sali* in Bengali. Wife's sister is a potential mate and as such a separate term is not required.

The Semas use the term *Angu* to mean 1. mother's brother, 2. mother's brother's child (uncle), 3. husband's father, 4. wife's father, 5. husband's brother, 6. wife's father. Thus the Semas use the same term for as many as six relations



and it is also used to include persons of two generations. The Semas are polygynous, not only chiefs marry a number of wives, the well-to-do Sema will at once take to more wives than one. The ordinary Sema may often avoid a second wife for poverty but the tribe as a whole is polygynous. The Semas allow a widow to inherit her husband's property, so when a Sema is seen to marry his deceased father's widow, we may explain it by reference to the law of inheritance which obliges a Sema to marry his own father's widow, other than his own mother of course, in order to be able to inherit the property otherwise devolving upon the widow. If of course the widow does not agree to the marriage sanctioned by custom, she is allowed to depart from her husband's shed, with all the movable property her husband had left and which she has a right to inherit. The general rule is that the widow of the deceased marry the sons of her deceased husband and live in the family as governess or mistress to the family property. In case a man dies leaving only young children, the property of the deceased devolves upon the man's brother who takes care of the property and after his death, the nephews and sons of the deceased stand in the same relation to the widow of the deceased. Dr. Hutton suggests an origin for this custom. "It appears likely", writes Dr. Hutton, "that it may have its origin in its obvious advantages. The widow naturally wishes to retain the care of her children but as these pass into the guardianship and keeping of her husband's heir, she can only





do so by marrying him, a procedure which also ensures her retention of the ornaments that formed her dowry. This also avoids, from the point of view of male, step-mother." Of course, if the widows, as is but natural, are so zealous of taking care of their children, this could easily be effected by a sanction from the Sema society. As widows serve useful purposes in the domestic circle, the care of the children might naturally have been left with them. As regards the retention of the ornaments, the Sema laws allow a widow to depart from her husband's shed with all the movable property her husband had left and which she has a right to inherit, in case she does not agree to marry her deceased husband's heir. So that this marriage is not necessary to safeguard the interests of the widow. Perhaps, this custom of marrying the widow of the deceased father may be traced to an idea of property in women. The women are regarded as movable properties and the sons being the natural heirs, inherit the widows of their deceased father.

Whatever be the reason, either the desire to inherit the property of the deceased husband, or the widow's anxiety to take care of her children by the deceased, a Sema marries his father's widow but not his real mother. He may also marry his mother's own sister, his father's sister's daughter, mother's brother's daughter. As Dr. Hutton puts it, "A Sema may not marry his wife's mother but can marry practically any female relation of his own mother on her father's side. For al-



though some Semas are said to forbid marriage with a mother's sister by the same mother even though the father be different, the vast majority hold that a man may marry his mother's sister by the same father and mother without any suggestion of impropriety." His marriage code explains the use of the same term for a number of distinct relations in other societies.

The identity of relationship existing between 1. Mother 2. Father's brother's wife and 3. Mother's sister which are all denoted by *Aza* can be explained on the ground that a Sema may marry his 'mother' (widow of his deceased father, other than his real mother), his father's brother's wife and his mother's sister. So *Aza* denotes all three relationships named above (a Sema is also entitled to marry his father's brother's widow).

The Sema as well as the Angami will not utter his or her name or that of the husband or wife. He can take any name save and except that of himself and his wife and a woman that of her husband. Hutton writes, "The Angami has exactly the same delicacy about mentioning his or her name and of wife or husband, as the case may be, though with the Angami too, the feeling is rapidly weakening". It is a curious fact that the excuse given by the Angami for his reluctance to mention his own name is that he would be like an owl which is always repeating its own name (*buthee*). This notion, we are told, is exactly paralleled by the same notion found in the Philippine Islands, though there the bird the example of which is shunned





is a raven instead of an owl (Golden Bough, 3rd Edition, Vol. III, page 329. Hutton, Sema Nagas, page 143, foot note 2). The hesitation of a Sema to utter his name and that of his wife as well as that of a wife to utter her husband's name may admit of different explanation. The rule of residence, matrilineal or patrilineal has aligned kinship differently in different societies and may have sanctioned many taboos in primitive society. The taboo relating to the use of personal names, among the Polias and Rajbansis of north Bengal is probably designed to protect persons from magical use of their names. So also the age of a man is difficult to ascertain in primitive society partly no doubt, to ignorance and partly to the general fear of disclosing identity of persons.

Among the Hos, father's sister's children have no special terms in Ho terminology, they are called *Hatom Hon* and *Hatom Undi*, i. e., father's sister's children. The mother's brother's son is classed with the father's sister's child, wife's brother's child, wife's brother's daughter's daughter's son, daughter's daughter, they are all denoted by the term *gain*, but when addressing these relatives the personal name of the addressee is preferred. The use of one term for persons of two generations is significant when it means husband's sister's child, wife's brother's child, how can it be applied to the daughter's sons or the daughter's daughter which are one generation below the former? The Hos are very fond of cross-cousin marriage. Formerly this form of marriage was



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compulsory. In case a man for any reason cannot marry his cousin he has to give presents to the mother's brother and without this no marriage is regarded as valid. In the same way, the mother's brother also has to satisfy his nephew, before he can marry his daughter to a chosen bridegroom. Marriage with the mother's sister is also common amongst the Hos. So to account for the use of the term *gain* these two social functions are to be taken into consideration.

Thus, social functions often explain the use of terms but the use of terms can also determine social relations. Often, old servants are addressed as 'uncle,' or 'brother' wife's brother is also addressed as brother, wife's father as father. The use of the term brother and sister for persons not related by blood or by marriage even, have tabooed marriage between them. It is inconceivable to think of marriage between a god-father and a god-daughter, though there may not be any social or religious bar to marriage. In this case marriage ban or social function follows the adoption of terms. All terms of relationships therefore do not result from social functions antecedent to their use.

The vocabulary of a people generally expresses the cultural stage of the society. A poor vocabulary results from low culture, wants being limited, the needs of the language are small. In such societies, the terms of relationship also must be limited and that is how the same term is used to denote persons of two sexes, which cannot be explained either by assuming a psychological





similarity between the persons concerned or by antecedent social functions. We may therefore conclude that the origin of a particular term of kinship may be an accident, but once it is introduced it fulfils certainly some important function in the society, it identifies persons, recognises kinship, explains social functions, such as marriage, taboo social intercourse, even affiliates strangers to one another. The social function may be the cause as well as effect of the use of terms of relationship, the latter may be independent of social functions, they may be simple terms of address 'arbitrary' and unexplainable' as Prof. Kroeber claims. "When a kinship term does not reflect the current kinship usage", writes Dr. Irawati Karve, "the very disharmony between the word and the usage becomes a significant social fact, useful for the construction of the cultural history of a people".<sup>1</sup> Terms of kinship need not tell so much. Below is given a fairly complete list of kinship terms of two tribes, one a Munda tribe from Chota Nagpur, the other the Indo-Aryan Khasas of the cis-Himalayan region, which may afford material for a comparative study.

<sup>1</sup>Irawati Karve: Kinship Terminology and Kinship usages of the Maratha Country. Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute. Vol. I. No. 2-4 March 1940.



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	<i>The Hos of Chota Nagpur, Bihar</i>	<i>The Khasas of Jansar Bawar U. P.</i>
Father .. ..	Āpu.	Baba, Bajoo, Babjoo.
Mother .. ..	Āngā.	Ija.
Elder brother ..	Bau.	Dada, Dajoo.
Younger brother ..	Undi.	Bhai.
Elder sister ..	Ājing.	Didi.
Younger Sister ..	Unding.	Behin.
Father's Elder Brother .. ..	Gungu.	Barabap, Thul Bap, Bajoo.
Father's younger Brother .. ..	Gungu.	Kakā.
Father's elder brother's wife .. ..	„	Jethija, Thalija.
Father's younger Brother's wife ..	Gawain.	Kaki.
Father's brother's daughter .. ..	Ājing (elder). Unaing (younger).	Didi (e). Behin (y).
Father's sister ..	Hatom.	Didi, Phuphi.
Father's sister's son	Hatom hon.	Dada (e) Bhai (y).
Father's sister's daughter .. ..	Hatom undi.	Didi (e) Behin (y).
Mother's brother ..	Hoyar, Kumang.	Mama.
Mother's brother's son .. ..	By circumlocution addressed by name.	Dada (e) Bhai (y).
Mother's brother's daughter .. ..	„	Didi (e) Behin (y).
Mother's sister ..	Gawain.	Jethja (e) Kainja (y).
Mother's sister's husband (e) ..	Apu.	Jeth Bap.
Mother's sister's husband (y) ..	Undi.	Kas Bap.



Mother's sister's son	Addressed by name.	Bhai.
Father's father ..	Tatam.	Bûbû.
Mother's father ..	Tata.	Bûbû
Father's mother ..	Jiam.	Âmâ.
Mother's mother ..	"	"
Husband .. ..	Heral.	Addressed by circumlocution.
Wife's father ..	Hoyar.	Sasur.
Wife's mother ..	Hanr, Hatom.	Shāshu.
Husband's father	Hoyar.	Sasur.
Husband's mother	Hanr, Hatom.	Shashu.
Husband's brother	Bān Hoyor (e).	Jethan (e).
	Eril (y).	Dewar (y).
Husband's sister, ..	Hanr (e).	Jem (e).
	Eril (y).	Gusīānī.
Wife's sister		Sali (y).
Wife's sister's husband .. ..	Saragin.	Sardharn Bhai.
Husband's elder brother's wife ..	Tangain.	Jethani or Didi.
Husband's younger brother's wife ..	"	Deorani.
Son's wife's father	Bala.	Somdhi.
Son's wife's mother	Bala era.	Somdhin.
Wife's brother's wife .. ..	Hanr.	Didi (e).
		Nadia Behin (y).
Husband's sister's husband .. ..	Erakin.	Dada.
Son .. ..	Hon.	Chela.
Daughter .. ..	Honera.	Cheli.
Brother's son ..	Hon.	Chela or Bhatija.
Wife's brother's child .. ..	Gain.	Sala.
Sister's son ..	Hon.	Bhanej.
Husband's sister's child .. ..	Gain.	Bhanej.



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Son's son .. ..	Jai or garam.	Nati.
Daughter's son ..	Gain.	Nati.
Wife .. ..	Era.	Siani.
Daughter's husband	Era.	Jamai.
Son's wife .. ..	Hon Kimin.	Bûari.
Elder sister's husband .. ..	Tangain.	Bheena.
Younger sister's husband .. ..	Erakin.	Jamai.
Elder brother's wife	Hili.	Bhanji, Banjeo.
Younger brother's wife .. ..	Undi Kimin.	Bûari.





## CHAPTER XII

## PRIMITIVE RELIGION

(I)

The Korwa of the Sarguja forests believe that man can transform himself into animals, ancestors whom they propitiate today are lodged in stones, rivers and trees, plants and animals can speak with man and even rocks and ploughshares pulsate with life. The Polia of Bengal in spite of his contacts for centuries with the advanced social groups, the so-called '*Bhadralog*' class of Bengal, will not allow a photograph to be taken, and believes that an effigy or a photograph of a person conceals the real self of the person and must be taboo to others. The Tharu still think that success in agriculture or fishing depend on what their women do at home in their absence, and the Ho offer tooth-brush and water to their deceased relatives fearing lest they may not feel aggrieved at neglect or remissness.

Levy Bruhl, Durkheim, and others of the French School of Sociology, have characterised primitive mind as 'prelogical' 'irrational' and averse to abstract thinking and "logical analysis of the scientific sort". The ideas and beliefs possessed by modern man are believed to be scientific and



logical. 'Reality to modern man is the tangible world of natural cause and effect and all our thinking is governed by the assumption of uniformity in natural causation, and a sufficiency of natural causes to produce whatever occurs.' Such an analysis may be true of individuals but it cannot be taken as general for any group, however differentiated it may be. The English anthropologists on the other hand assume a generic similarity between mental powers and processes everywhere. They admit 'the delusion and the illusion', the crudeness of primitive ideas, but these do not prove that primitive mind is 'prelogical'. Wrong assumptions lead to wrong conclusions. Erroneous conception of reality by primitive man has clouded his vision and the superficial association of things in primitive mind causes errors of action, as in the case of children. Experience and knowledge have equipped modern man today, and he arrives at valid conclusions about the nature of things and persons, but children are likely to misapprehend reality and do so, and the conclusions they arrive at are not always what they should be. The primitive man misapprehends the nature of reality from the very first and comes to wrong conclusions. This difference between modern man and his primitive compatriot is not organic but circumstantial and should be understood clearly before they are put into distinct categories.

It is no wonder therefore that primitive man views and reaches the mystery of nature and life differently from modern man. The large element





of chance in human affairs does upset his calculations and he believes that the processes of nature are governed by capricious forces and he wants to control them. In one year there may be plenty of rains, "the sky gives in" says the unsophisticated Korwa, in another, the sun is so hot and blazing that even the urine of cattle dries before it reaches the ground. Primitive man approaches the 'seers' or dreamers of his clan and is instructed in magical action to fight the elements. The Munda go to the top of hills and throw down stones of all sizes and descriptions, so that the rumbling sound of stones falling would resemble the rumbling of thunder and they believe that rains would follow. The Ho would burn faggots of fuel to raise a canopy of smoke which would overhang the village and believe that rains would come as sure as it does from the clouds. Yet rains do come occasionally and thus restore the confidence of the people in the efficacy of their magical rites and practices. Failures of magic are corrected by further magic and thus a vicious circle develops which has prejudiced primitive thought from the earliest times. In course of time, magic is reinforced by supplicatory rites, for the essence of magic is coercion and when it fails, approach to the higher powers can only be effected through prayers and prescriptions which define the rôle of gods in life and in the prosperity of the people. When spell is transformed into prayer, magic yields to religion.

Much of magic is on par with religion; both are based on similar intellectual attitude, as both 'want



to 'unravel the mystery of the world'. While magic explains 'the ways in which things happen in terms of hidden force,' the other does it in terms of spirits, gods, etc. The magician's art and religious ritual are both meant to 'create an atmosphere of suggestibility', and the technique employed by both is similar. The performance of both is governed by a traditional order and form conformity to which is essential for success. In the Hindu temple, for example, an atmosphere of suggestibility is created by the character of religious architecture, dim and diffuse lighting, burning of incense, the peculiar dress of the priest and his habits which are known to the public, also by the use of an ancient or classical language, 'mysterious formula and sing-song monologue', etc. The difference between magic and religion therefore lies in the manner in which the mystery of the world is viewed. Magic represents an exaggerated notion of human potency while religion, admits man's discomfiture in the presence of nature, his helplessness and his resignation to his destiny. Both are tools of adaptation. Man has tried to adjust himself to his surroundings, to his habitat by both magic and religion and will ever continue to do so, though science may correct magic as knowledge triumphs over pseudo-knowledge as natural causes supersede occult ones. Yet magic plays its rôle in society and in its differentiated form it hinges on a belief in a mystical impersonal force called *Mana*, *Wakua* or *Bonga*.





(2)

It is easy to define religion with respect to the parts of which it is composed rather than as a whole for we are concerned with the religious conceptions of mankind only so far as they find expression in outward form. Durkheim defined religion as composed of beliefs and rites, beliefs about sacred things and rites addressed to them. Mere beliefs do not constitute religion, it is rites which make religion a living force. Max Schmidt similarly, divided religion into its component parts, 'cults' and 'art', the former signifying all those acts by which men believe themselves to be brought into touch with the powers that are the objects of their religious faith, while all representations of religious ideas come under art, 'for art is an outlet for human emotion.' If religion is to be distinguished from theology, both beliefs and rites are essential to religion and that is how religion exists in primitive society. As magic also contains beliefs and rites, a distinction between the two must be made though very thin partition divides them in popular thought.

Primitive culture, is characterised by a sort of 'power politics', a struggle for mastery of life and all that it stands for. This conception of power varies from tribe to tribe. In its ultimate form it is a nebulous thing, the root cause of all beliefs and practices. It is impersonal but here and there conceived as personal, though vaguely defined and indeterminate sometimes. The outward events that affect life have been explained and



accounted for by primitive people on the basis of knowledge gained by them through experience and the fortunes and frowns they have received have shaped the categories into which the various powers, gods and spiritual beings have been distributed. The dead constitute a category of power propitiated and worshipped as the needs determine, and the cult of ancestors, *manism* finds favour with many primitive groups. The animals are credited with power which they use against persons or things and various beliefs and rites exist in savage society regarding the effectiveness or otherwise of their mediation in human affairs, making animal worship obligatory in primitive society. Lion is worshipped in Africa, and tiger, snake, cow and monkey are objects of cults and of veneration in India. The cult of trees is a very old one, they are regarded as 'symbols of productivity' or 'emblematic of divinity.'

The inanimate objects are believed to pulsate with life, the natural powers are conceived as conscious beings, and the fate of man is believed to be in the keeping of such powers. Even stones, feathers, amulets, bones and beads, possess mystic powers; they are imbued with life, for stones are seen to grow, mountains rise and beliefs about the efficacy of amulets and charms are widespread. The stones are believed to climb up from below, and work up their way at their own volition. The stones are often taken as children of mother earth. These are worshipped, cared for, cajoled and propitiated to bring happiness to society. There





are also invisible powers to whom some degree of personality is attributed but mostly it is a vague conception, having no objective existence.

Primitive man establishes relationship between himself and his fellow men, also he recognises similar relationship between the various kinds of powers, some remote and some immediate, some high, others low, and a hierarchy of powers characterise the religious life of many primitive communities. It is the process of anthropomorphism that has brought the gods down to the level of man, the sacred powers have been made profane and the force of religion has weakened in human society.

The tribal religions in India have so long been described as 'animism'. Animism is that exceedingly crude form of religion in which magic is the predominant element. It conceives of man as passing through a life surrounded by a ghostly company of powers, elements, mostly impersonal in their character, 'shapeless phantasm of which no image can be made' and no definite idea can be formed. Some of these are taken to preside over particular departments of life or spheres of influence. Thus we have a spirit presiding over cholera, one over small-pox, spirits dwelling in rocks and mountains, haunting trees, or associated with rivers, waterfalls, etc. These are diligently propitiated to ward off the dangers associated with their influence. Among the Korwas of Mirzapur, there is a spirit presiding over crops, one over rainfall, one over cattle and a number of spirits which dictate the attitude of the Korwas to their neigh-



hours, to the tribal priest, to the headman and the affairs of the tribe. Thus 'animism' carries with it the belief in malevolent spirits and powers, which influence the destiny of man.

It is not true that primitive man only caters to a constellation of malevolent spirits, he worships stones, feathers and symbols, he worships plants, trees, also natural objects, like the sun, moon and stars. The 'high gods of low races' reveal the anxiety of primitive man to know the world of 'supernatural', the powers and spirits that shape his destiny. These are worshipped or propitiated according as he conceives them as benevolent or malevolent. Some are unworshipped gods to him, distant also and as such do not meddle with his affairs. The great sun-god or *Singbonga* of the Mundas is seldom worshipped as he is benign and does no wrong. Every primitive tribe has a creator, a god who undertakes to place every earthly possession worth caring for before man, and this benevolent divinity does not live on human ministrations as do the host of evil spirits moving on land, water and air, and very much prone to take offence for the slightest inattention.

Thus 'tribal religions' have replaced 'animism' and are expected to come in line with popular Hinduism in the near future. Dr. Hutton has recently remarked that "tribal religions represent, as it were, surplus material not yet built into the temple of Hinduism". Elwin has pointed out in an illuminating booklet on the effects of contacts with civilisation on the aboriginal tribes





in India (Loss of Nerves) that distinction between tribal religions and Hinduism or 'the previous classification into animism and Hinduism is meaningless.' "The tribal people always are willing to worship a few more gods, if by doing so, they can gain some material or social advantage", on the other hand the Hindu has no objection to include in his multi-god pantheon a few tribal gods. Judged from this angle the tribal religions represent today 'marginal religions', a no-man's land between magic and religion, between pseudo-science and science.

The aboriginal tribes coming in contact with Hinduism or Christianity, with urban people to whom they look up for their economic existence, may not learn much about true Hinduism or Christianity, but all the same they know which of their rites and rituals are repugnant to their civilised neighbours and gradually develop an aversion to their indigenous religious code and even become ashamed of their time-old practices; the result has proved to be disastrous, a decay of religion has set in.

The Gonds of the Central Provinces, possess a richly furnished system of worship, a meticulous code of ministration to their gods, beautiful little shrines where they sacrifice animals and offer prayers, 'a priesthood comparable to that found among the lower strata of the Hindu society', and periodical pilgrimage to known and reputed places where some of their high gods are believed to dwell. Their religious life can hardly be distinguished from that obtained among the lower castes



of Hindus. The latter do not only possess these elements but also have incorporated in their religion, many tribal gods whose rôle they have come to know by association with their votaries. The tribal religions everywhere have been permeated with Hindu ideas, rites and rituals, and it is indeed difficult to draw a line between them and popular Hinduism. A monographic study of a tribal religion will illustrate the nature of the 'surplus material not built into the temple of Hinduism.

(3)

The Munda religion has been greatly influenced by contacts with Hinduism and Christianity. The religious life of the Munda-speaking tribes today does not therefore give us the required data on which we can build any hypothesis about the 'roots' of primitive religion. Yet, careful analysis of Munda beliefs and rites collected first-hand by trained ethnographers, would provide some evidence about religion as it was, and nothing perhaps is more important to the history of religion than beliefs and practices which claim an antiquity and are regarded with sanctity by the people concerned. Three types of evidence we possess about the religious life of the Munda tribes :

1. The testimony of writers who have given detailed and meticulous accounts of Munda religion,

2. The dream experiences of the people through which even today they regulate their religious life,





3. The hymns and prayers of the people addressed to their tribal gods which in all religious worship detail the rôle of the gods and discuss their nature and personality, if there be any.

It is a fact of everyday occurrence that so long as the gods are invoked in a body, or no reference is made to any particular god or goddess, the religious-minded Hindu does not show as much concern as when a particular god is mentioned or invoked to aid him or to avoid any disaster hanging over him. The same attitude is noticeable among the Munda tribes, for so long as no proper name is used, the *Bongas* do not excite as much concern as when a particular *Bonga* is mentioned. This is how the Hos annually drive away their *Bongas* out of their village, after the *Maghe* festival so that they may not be required to pay constant attention to their needs and aspirations. But the *Dessauli* must not be named, the *Marangburu* or even the *Nage-Era* must not be suggested for that would bring sure calamity to them and to their possessions. The *Diuri* of the Hos may name these *Bongas* but usually he refers to places where they are believed to reside, so that as among the Santhals, so among the Hos, the *Bongas* are 'appellatives of some sort'. No definite ideas about the *Bongas* can be had from the *Diuri* or priest of the Hos, and except a vague conception of power indefinite and impersonal, the *Bongas* do not appear to have any objective existence. The fact that the *Bongas* dominate the life of the Hos, they preside over the various



aspects of life, bless them or chastise them for their deeds and their crimes, they can give them plenty and prosperity, shows only the extent of anthropomorphism. Questions regarding the personality of these *Bongas*, of the shape, size and other characteristics are usually evaded by the tribal priests, not because they are afraid of telling the truth, but because they do not possess any knowledge thereof. "They can neither be heard nor perceived, though fluttering about everywhere, they are, so far as sense perception goes just as if they were not." Though they feel the sure and certain influence of the *Bongas*, they consider them as manifestations of power, one that they have attempted to control and manipulate but which has always overpowered them in all spheres of life.

It is only in their dreams that they get glimpse of *Bongas* at least its probable reactions on their life. The benevolent powers or *Bongas* are represented by the tribal officers or the village *Diuri*. As the latter are important elements in the village polity, dreaming them or about them warns them of impending calamities, of diseases and epidemics and also provides them with prescriptions for their maladies and how to get their grievances redressed. While higher powers and benevolent gods are thus conceived and interpreted, the evil spirits are known also in dreams, but usually during their 'Singi-Dum' or day-dreams or when they doze sitting or reclining amidst their engagements and always when they dream of ordinary common men and women particularly the latter. Samru



of Pokharia saw a woman driving an ailing boy out of his village. It did not strike him that it was only an illusion. He followed the woman to the big tamarind tree at the outskirts of the village. There were people sitting under the tree making ropes from fibres. He shouted for help, yet he saw that they did not move nor did they care to stop the woman. He got annoyed and asked why they were so indifferent. He learnt that they did not see anything. He was surprised, but immediately he saw a dust storm coming and a whirlwind followed, the stack of *sabai* grass was blown off. He retraced his steps to his house where he heard a noise and wail of his family, and he learnt the death of his nephew, Udiya.

Most diseases follow certain dream experiences. A slap on the cheek by the village Munda, received in dream, has resulted in swelling of the gums and cheek, a push from behind by the *Diuri* or the village priest in sleep, infects the dreamer with a chronic malady and another push is required from the *Diuri* to cure him. Epidemics follow warnings in dreams, the *Diuri* is often heard in dreams to announce to the villagers, of impending calamities, he gets warnings from the *Bongas* in his dreams.

Bamiya Boipoi, ex-*Diuri* of Durula narrated his experience while he was *Diuri* four years ago. One night he was coming back from a neighbouring village, when he heard somebody cry aloud.

"Ayum Jomme, Bamiya *Diuri*, Hasu duku hujutana", warning him of impending disaster.



He tried to locate the sound, he looked round, he looked up, the stars lit the sky but there was no sign of any person anywhere. He came back with a heavy heart and warned the villagers and entreated them to offer sacrifice to the *Dessauli*. The people did not listen to him. The *Maghe* festival was approaching, many fell ill, all his assistants were down with fever, they died except Juria who usually is employed to sacrifice animals before the *Bongas*. The latter struggled hard but survived, now a wreck of himself. The villagers realised their mistake, they assembled at the *Diuri's* house and promised to sacrifice a goat, at Borobhoji. Soon the promised sacrifice was made to *Dessauli* and the disease came under control. Segu Munda of Durita heard a warning in the summer of 1937. He was sleeping and he felt that somebody from behind was pushing him. He woke up, it was midnight, but there was none by him. While he was wondering how he was roused from his sleep, he heard, "Ayum Jomme Proja Honko Hasu duku hujutana", a warning that calamity was in sight for the villagers. Subdia Diuri of the village heard the warning and Koneya who resided just near the supposed seat of the village *Dessauli* also heard it. A week only elapsed when an epidemic came over the village and men, women and children died by hundreds.

The dreaming of foreigners, of merchants on horseback, of Europeans, people who are very powerful and wield influence over them, gives portends of future catastrophies and thus is regarded





as manifestation of a vague supernatural power, one that is the cause of all energy. The cycle has of late become a *Bonga*, the powerful rail engine is a *Bonga*, the aeroplane is a greater *Bonga* than any of the above. That is why these are becoming emblems of clans today among the Oraons, they are equally important among the Hos. When the curiosity of a child is raised by any mechanical contrivance, however simple or crude it may be, it is immediately satisfied by calling it a *Bonga*, he understands *Bonga*, in the same way as his father or any adult of his tribe does, it gives him a vague idea about a power the nature of which he does not know, nor the adults of his tribe would worry about. The very mention of the word *Bonga* is enough, and all his reactions can be easily anticipated.

The popular god of the Hos is the *Dessauli*; he is the deputy of *Singbonga*, he is powerful and interferes with their life and happiness. They do not know the shape or size of *Dessauli*, they worship him, and when they approach him with prayers and offerings, he presents himself in dreams as the *Diuri* or *Manki* or the *Munda* of the village. How many times the *Diuri* of Joorapukur has appeared in dreams and how has he represented himself as the *Dessauli*, the villagers know too well. The *Diuri* has been prayed to, propitiated, satisfied with gifts and his predictions about the future of the village have come all true. The respect that the *Diuri* receives from the villagers is seldom equalled by any shown to other



officials of the village polity. There is an unconscious hierarchy established among the officials of the village in accordance with the rôle they play in the affairs of the village. Dulu Manki who has represented the Hos in the Bihar Legislature has often been seen in dreams warning the people or chastising them, which has resulted in calamities to the village, which could only be averted by propitiating the village *Dessauli* or *Singbonga*, the great god of the Hos.

Power and influence are wielded in various degrees by people and the difference between one man and another, is considered to be due to the degree of power possessed by them. A Brahmin in the interior villages in Kolhan assured me that he had not to take any precautions against the Hos for they do not come near him for fear of being affected by his touch. He said it was different with the depressed and exterior castes who often transgress the limits of pollution by coming too near him. The Hos, even in those areas where the Brahmin has not penetrated, avoid him. A Ho will not give drinking water to a Brahmin however the latter may insist, if he is pressed too much, he would pour water in the *Lota* from a distance, so that he may not get the shock of touch from the Brahmin. This reminds one of the mutual avoidance between Brahmins and the Holiyas of the south. When the former enter the *Parachary* or settlements of the latter, the influence of the Brahmin is made innocuous by pouring cow-dung solution on his head, by beating him with broomstick





and by putting round his neck a garland of torn shoes. The Brahmins have to swallow this humiliation for the reward which they receive in the shape of heavy interests from the Holiyas for money advanced to them. Such precautions are found necessary in mutual interests and the origin of this practice is explained by the belief in *Mana* or an impersonal force, which, I should think forms the substratum of primitive religion everywhere. The superior receives the inferior very cordially no doubt, but the latter will avoid being too near the former, as he will tell you, it does not do any good to him. This may have determined the mode of salutation commonly practised among the Munda tribes, the possibility of coming too near each other is avoided by an elaborate movement of the limbs which completes a circle in some case.

A Ho will not take food from a stranger, he will not cook food along with members of other clans in the same kitchen, he will not use an oven already used by others, he will improvise his own oven and cook his meagre meal himself. The avoidance between man and man, between clan and clan, tribe and caste, has been dramatised in games and these are popularly played in the villages. This avoidance does not result from a regard for ceremonial cleanliness, nor has it been introduced by Hindu initiative as may commonly be held, but it appears that the avoidance is a precaution designed to avoid contacts between persons who possess different degrees of approach-



bility on account of their inherent power or *Bonga*. This power is possessed by both animate beings and inanimate objects in greater or less degree which account for their respective qualities, and their influence on human life. The possession of this power by an inanimate object does not transform it into a conscious being, the difference between the living and the non-living being only a matter of the possession of this vital energy. It is a kind of force or power, which is conceived to be inherent in persons and things, that accounts for the religious responses of the Munda-speaking tribes, and this force or power is variously represented in beings and things, in accordance with their effectiveness or utility. The possession of a soul or *Jivi* or *roa* does not make much difference as the power of a person does not depend upon the soul it possesses but upon the degree of power inherent in the person. The soul or *roa* is itself composed of this power, and the 'soul substance' is nothing perhaps but the power located in the soul. The custom of eating the vital parts of the body to augment power is derived by the Hos from the self-same belief.

Thus *Bonga* is used indiscriminately to signify man, animal, plant and even material objects. It is by virtue of this power that the totemic animal, plant, or material object gains its effectiveness and even its religious sanction. The totem is never a religious symbol among the Munda tribes, it is not a liturgic emblem, it is associated with their social organisation, it justifies social groupings,





and introduces marriage prohibitions which from experience appears to be based on sound and wholesome principles. The power possessed by the totemic animal or plant is derived from the impersonal force, *Bonga*, and thus it regularises social conduct and individual behaviour in respect to the animal and plant kingdom. Even material objects receive adequate importance by virtue of this power, and totem material gains its effectiveness through it. The plough and other agricultural implements possess this power in some form, and this makes them effective in farming. The man behind the plough is necessary, the bullocks which drag it in front are indispensable, but the labour spent by man and beasts together must be supplemented by the inherent force of the plough, which is the *Bonga*. Stones are believed to change their places, they are even supposed to grow by themselves, they are known in the olden days to fight with one another as, for example, when one hill sent fire, the other replied by sending snakes, but the latter were stopped from attacking the former, as on the way through the village, the snakes were sliced into pieces by men, the village is till today remembered as 'Bing Tapan'—the slicing of the snakes. The river flows its course by itself, its strength is in the current which represents the power that is *Bonga*. There are eddies and whirlpools, these are centres of power, the Hos exaggerate the importance of this natural interplay of forces, and call them *Nage Era*. Offerings and sacrifices are made to the *Nage Era*, for avoiding their inter-



ference with their life and happiness. They hear the voice of the river in the sound of the water, in the splashing and the bubblings, and in the "chatterings over stony ways" and they call it *Nage Era*. When they are asked about the seat of the *Nage Era*, about the shape, size, form, nature and attributes of this river-dwelling spirit, they have no answer to give, for they know not what the *Nage Era* is, but it is the *Bonga* of the river, just as *Marang Buru* is that of the great mountain and *Jabira Buru* that of the sacred grove. The milky way is called *Bonga hora*, it is the source of *Bongaism*, the gaseous look of the milky way represents an indefiniteness, an impersonal force or *Bonga* of the Hos.

This force which I have called *Bonga* is impersonal but that does not mean that anything that possesses *Bonga* should be inanimate. Those who have studied primitive religion, know how even inanimate objects have been credited by primitive people with a personality. Thus although most of the *Bongas* are conceived in animate forms, even inanimate objects are known as *Bongas*. Even if we admit that lower psychology recognises the difference between animate being and inanimate objects, which is indeed doubtful, in practice and in myths, the latter is very often given animate rôles and thus the distinction becomes more academic than real. Death reduces the power in man as it escapes through the pores of the body, through the eyes, the nose, the mouth and cases are known when fissures in the skull have indicated the exit of this





vital energy. When the powers possessed by a medicine man or Ojha do not descend to the disciples as is the usual belief of the Munda tribes, the disciples keep watch over the spot where the Ojha or the medicine man is cremated so that they can get some mystic power of their learned *Guru*. It is not to control the spirit of the departed and through it, the powers he possessed, but it is simply the belief that a dead man's power escapes at death and the proximity of the cremation spot would make it possible to seize some part of the escaped force that explains this solicitude of the disciples. Even when the Hos approach the cremation ground with this idea, they are nevertheless anxious to pray to the departed, and all the rites and ceremonies must be gone through in order that the survivors may enrich their influence by possessing some measure of the escaped power; that is why to die is *Bongaia* among the Hos, which means the union with *Bonga*, or impersonal force, that explains why the Santhals use the expression, "Goc Ko Doko Bonga Kana", "the dead ones have become *Bongas*".

Some Santhals were asked by Rev. Culshaw, if they meant by the above phrase, that the *Bongas* have no shape or form, to which they replied in the affirmative. But Rev. Culshaw thinks that they were probably rationalising for the use of the animate pronominal suffix 'Ko' tells against the impersonal character of *Bonga*.<sup>1</sup> I need not

<sup>1</sup> W. J. Culshaw: Some notes on Bongaism, J. R. A. S. B., vol. 5, 1939, pp. 427-31.



point out how inanimate objects are often addressed as animate, how gender is commonly interpreted in advanced languages, and how natural objects and phenomena like the sun, the moon, the thunder, lightning and fire are conceived in our language. These are frequently given animate rôle, and are addressed as personalities. It may or may not be a 'disease of thought' or 'disease of language' as Maxmüller puts it, but that does not detract from its reality. Rev. Culshaw thinks that the custom of drawing image of the dead after cremation on the spot where the body was interred or cremated and of making offerings to it in its name, bears out the interpretation that *Bonga* is still conceived of as personal and not as "a part of a large whole which is *Bonga*." (A Tribe in Transition, pp. 133-135). The Hos draw circles round the spot of cremation, and the Korwas of Mirzapur put stones in circles where cremation or burial takes place; this is not to conceive the deceased as a personality, but it is perhaps meant to hedge in the *roa* or *jivi* of the deceased, as otherwise the alleged antipathy of the disengaged soul may find expression in injury or harm to the survivors, a common belief among all primitive peoples (Frazer, Golden Bough). The raising of menhirs, dolmens and circles of stones is not also an attempt at personification as pointed out by Dr. J. H. Hutton (Census of India, Vol. 1 Pt. I 1931). The following note of Rev. Culshaw is interesting: "I was standing by my cycle, conversing with some Santhals, when a child of about





two, carried in his father's arms, pointed to the trade-mark of a lion on the cycle and said, '*Bonga*'. My surmise is that the child had seen pictures of Hindu deities in his village and thought that all pictures were *Bongas*'.<sup>1</sup> I would explain this experience a little differently. It is indeed difficult to conceive that the two-year-old child has a knowledge of the shape and size of lions, he knows about the Hindu deities and further has been taught to regard all pictures as *Bongas*, and what is more important, the child must have developed his vision so much as to point out the trade-mark of the cycle from a distance and while he is carried on the arms by his father.

As the Hos do not approach foreigners and as Europeans are regarded as *Bongas* it is probable that the father must have been at a respectful distance from Rev. Culshaw. The dazzle of the spokes and that of the nickel in the cycle raises the curiosity of aboriginal children and without being asked, many are seen to fetch grass to feed the 'animal' which is the cycle itself. I should think that the strangeness of the conveyance, something which is rare in the interior of the Santhal country, has stirred the curiosity of the Santhal child and the father who could not himself understand its mechanism, has stifled the curiosity of the child by saying that it was *Bonga*—and a *Bonga* certainly it is to the aboriginal people.

The difference between personal and imper-

<sup>1</sup> J. R. A. S. B. Vol. V., 1939, article No. 16.



sonal should not be taken seriously. Personal deities have become impersonal, while impersonal ones have been conceived as personal. *Singbonga* is gradually receding from the Munda pantheon, and it will become an impersonal god very soon, if the present clash of cultures and contacts of social groups continues. The small-pox has entered the pantheon of the Hos as *Mata*, as *Angar Mata* among the Korwas, and many other diseases will be installed as personal *Bongas* as their indigenous pharmacopœia proves more and more futile against their ravages. "The Santhals", writes Rev. Culshaw, "regard as animate all those beings which from their experience, and arguing from the analogy of human behaviour, appear to be independent agents, those entities, which either in fact or in myth, display what we may call personality".<sup>1</sup> This, however, does not exclude the inanimate objects from being considered as possessing 'personality' and many such objects figure as gods of the tribal people in the Chota Nagpur plateau. But this personality is not the same as is found in the Hindu conception of god-heads, it is the possession of the force or power, I have called *Bonga*, that endows personality to the gods of the tribal pantheon. But all this is possible because of a widespread general belief in a source of all power, a force that pervades space, which give shape and form to their host of gods and goddesses, as the nebula has shaped the

<sup>1</sup> J.R.A.B. Vol. V., 1939, article No. 15.





constellations.

Further evidence regarding the impersonal character of the *Bongas* may be gathered from the hymns and prayers addressed to the *Bongas* during the principal worship-festivals of the Hos. In the hymns and prayers addressed to the gods of the Hindu pantheon, we get ideas about the shape, form and nature of the divinities. The features of the Hindu divinities, are faithfully portrayed in them, but no such reference is found in the tribal hymns and prayers; the latter are protective formulae which refer to the dangers to which the Hos are exposed, and supplications to the *Bongas* to protect their life and property form their main theme. A few of these hymns and prayers are given below with their literal English renderings. All these are addressed to the *Dessauli*, which represents the supernatural power of their habitat and as such does not possess any shape, size or complexion. It is either the power of this village, that village or of a group of villages. The higher the number of villages in a group, the greater is the power of the *Dessauli* and the *Diuri* who serves the *Dessauli* gains his status in the village in accordance with the effectiveness of his rendition of these hymns and prayers.



## PRIMITIVE RELIGION

2  
CSL

### MAGHE PARAB

*Text by Sirdar Diuri of vill. Lisia*

*Text*

*English*

(a) Pertol Desauli, sevametanale Pertol Desauli, we serve you  
Sarametanale, ara sandi. we worship you with red  
cock.

Suka kalutite, sevametanale. With brown hen, we serve  
you.

Sarametanale, Lamajung, " We worship you, seeds of  
Lama.

Boonjajung, Jomeale nueale. seeds of Boonj may we eat,  
may we drink.

Mera kula, mera binj. Let not tiger, let not snakes,  
Hisi randi, dosi praja, twenty subjects, thirty sub-  
jects.

Lekatakome. Count them all.  
Ganda takome Sandupil. Number them all, while fetch-  
ing fuel wood.

Sakamhe; mera kulam mera binj. (While) plucking leaves; let  
not tigers, let not serpents.

Sevametanale, Sarametanale. We serve you, we worship  
you.

Kitabadchom, tali banjire, While fetching date leaves,  
mera kula, mera binj. and *savai* grass, let not  
tigers, let not serpents.

(b) Pertol Chonror-sevameta- We serve you.  
nale.

(c) Pertol Mahaburu.

(d) Pertol Dessauli, kujur hu-  
tub.

Sowasiko, danaiko, mid In the same *pinda* (seat).

Mid Chalpa, dubtanape In the same plank, you all sit,  
Jaharuntanape. you all congregate

Chitirako, maharako, gansiko. servants, bearers, menials.





matiarko, domko, duliako.

pot-bearers, basket-makers,  
load carriers.

sevametanalē, sarametanale.

we serve you all, we worship  
you all.

(e) Pertol Dessauli, Heselber-  
el Nage, Barubera Nage  
sevametanalē, sarametanale.

we serve you all.  
we worship you.

### OTEILI PARVA

#### *Text*

Oteili Birilitanalē, na.  
dole nueale.

jomeale . . bo-hasu.  
lai-hasu bugiakan.

hapakan ka, kera uri,  
mindi merom sabinko.  
bugiakanoka; Ape sida.  
hamboko, chilikape.  
jomnu kena, enleka, aleo.

jomnuika.  
ale enamente ape hamho.  
oagoe ko sevapetan.  
sarapetanale, mera binj.  
mera kulao lka.

#### *English*

Oteili and Birili we observe.  
now we shall drink,  
and we shall eat; headache,  
colic pains let we recover  
from.

let it claim, buffalo and oxen  
sheep goats all.  
may fare well, you formerly  
ancestors, how you.  
ate and drank, in the same  
manner.

we also may eat and drink.  
we, therefore, you ancestors.  
spirits we serve.  
we worship, let not be there  
tigers.

### BAHA PARAV

#### *Text*

Mad-kam ba sarjom ba, jome  
geda bu,  
Nue geda bu, hisi randi.

do-si praja honko  
leka takome ganda takome,

#### *English*

Flower of *Mabua* flower of  
*Sarjom*, we shall eat.

We shall drink, twenty sub-  
jects,  
thirty subjects,  
count them number them,  
snakes.



bing bolokula bolo.

kuti-kote machi kote;  
har darom ru darom.  
takome. San dupil, sakam he  
tanre;  
mera kula mera binj gea  
Siu dai siu harako.  
atingtanre mera kula mera  
binj; leka takome  
ganda takoma.

entrance, tigers' entrance  
(boundary).  
to the borders, to the verge.  
drive back, beat back  
them all. Fetching fuel  
wood, plucking leaves while  
let not tigers, let not snakes.  
plough-cattle  
while graze, let not tigers let  
not snakes; number them  
count them.

HERO PARAV

*Text*

*English*

See-chata-ote, gara chata.  
ote; here tea ko bidey-tea-ko,  
mera soyaoa, mera ganjoia,  
lutising leka, barusing leka,  
litikan latakange, gur-ban  
latumban-ka bing bolo, kula  
bolo, kuti kote machi kote,  
hardarom, rudarom.

Furrowed fields, tilled fields  
crops to be sown, plants to  
be planted, let not them rot,  
let not them decay, like *luti-*  
*sing* like *Bura sing*. May they  
grow in abundance, may they  
grow to perfection entering  
of snakes and entrance of  
tigers, to the borders to the  
verge, drive back, beat back.  
O, Desauli Mahaburu, uncas-  
trated goat with basketful  
of rice, worship you, I serve  
you; furrowed fields.

Desauli mahaburu, boka me-  
rom, dala choulite sevame-  
tan, saramentanaing: (see  
chata ote etc.)

(Offers a boda (goat) when paddy about 1". Goat forbidden  
for women).

BATAULI PARAV

*Text*

*English*

Delpunkia Bidha gurulu,  
hisi randi.  
do-si praja ko, jomegedako  
nuegedako.

Crop of *Gundbi*, Crop of *Gan-*  
*dhi* twenty subjects.  
Thirty rayats, will eat (and  
will drink.





244  
Mera lyee hasua ko, mera ko  
hasua ko, see dai siu hara do,  
atingtan gusam tanre, mera  
kulaoko mera binjoako san  
dupil sakam he tan re, hisi  
randi do-si praja honko, leka  
takome ganda takome;

Bing bolo kula bolo kuti kote  
machikote har darom ru  
darom.

let not stomachache let not  
headache, plough-able and  
plough oxen, while grazing,  
let not tiger eat them, let not  
snake eat them, while fetch-  
ing fuel wood while plucking  
leaves, twenty subjects thirty  
subjects, count them number  
them;

entrance of snake, entrance of  
tiger, to the border, to the  
verge, drive back, beat back.

## JOMNAMA

## Text

## English

Desauli Mahaburu nama mata

nama sura jomegedale nuige-  
dale

nama baba nama chouli

jomegedale nuigedale

kulu kore bing kore

meram akaringlea

meram kejalea; bugi akan

napaikan kale

(Mata-sura is the name of a green *sag* which grows wild).

Desauli Mahaburu, new wild  
*Mata* green

new *Sura* green, we shall eat,  
we shall drink

new paddy, new rice, we shall  
eat

we shall drink,

to the tigers, to the snakes,  
do not sell us.

do not betray us; let us fare  
well, let us get on well.

To summarise, *Bonga* is conceived by the Hos and cognate tribes, as a power, one that pervades all space. It is indefinite and impersonal to start with. That is why it is believed to take any shape or form. This power gives life to all animals and plants, 'it encourages growth in plants, it brings down rain, storm, hail, floods and cold. It kills and destroys evils, stops epi-



demics, cures diseases, gives current to rivers, venom to snakes and strength to tigers, bears and wolves. The vague idea of power later on condenses itself and is identified with things or objects of his environment, as the latter is regarded by primitive man as part of himself.'

*Bongaism* is based on a general emotional attitude towards the entire primitive milieu. Such attitude may be specified or projected to particular objects under stress of tradity and under the conditions of interest and attentional fixation to individual phases of the environment. Experiments of *Gestalt* psychology have shown that the adjustment of an animal under controlled conditions is not to particular unity but to the situation as a whole. The primitive man's adjustment is similarly to the whole environment and not to any part alone. This correlation between the environment and primitive man is essentially intimate as the unity of the body or the correlate of the various limbs. Objects of environment are regarded by him as parts of himself. The appearance of a strange man, animal or plant disturbs this integral adjustment. A break in the latter means that all the desires and trends of action are disoriented from their setting in things. Such disorientation is effected with pain through tension which arises due to the need of new adjustment and through the failure of satisfaction on the part of the desires and trends of action that turn away from their object.

If pain is convertible into fear as has been shown





by psychoanalytic research (Jones, E., Papers on Psychoanalysis, pp. 456-7) pain involved in new adjustment is translated into fear and thus we find among the Hos and other cognate tribes, the villagers who had never seen white man, are thrown into terror immediately some such person appears before them. Such fear and bewilderment, however, are not fixated on the person or object alone but on the entire environment. The objects of the environment were, however, a part of the personality so long. They were therefore animated, just as the limbs are animated. The process of sudden alienation from the personality through the introduction of an object believed to be strange does not change their character. The environment remains animated but strange. It comprises objects of fear, dismay or of a similar order of emotion. The maladjustment may set in through the introduction of one subject, the fear, etc., however, pertain to the whole.

It is only where the primitive man is restored to some kind of mental balance that he can view his own personality, the pictorial self as distinct from the environment that the seed of personification is sown. The environment which was a part of the self, now becomes, a set of other selves subject to the law of participation. Impersonality gives place to the personality in religious experience and the living environment becomes gradually full of living persons or *Bonga*.

This hypothesis explains why the child or even the adult of the primitive society should call



2 European a *Bonga*. For the European does not fit in with the environment and threatens to break up the integral adjustment of primitive life. Tradition and myth may also separate certain things or animals as not parts of the environment. These may then become *Bongas*. There may be certain occasions in which tradition and myth break the normal adjustment of life. A pervasive sense of fear and holiness then may diffuse the entire surrounding. Dreams supplement this conception of power. While dreaming of tribal officers or priests represents the beneficent traits of *Bongaism*, the evil spirits, those that do injure their person, or destroy their crops and material possessions are suggested by dreams of common persons, of old, barren women, or by illusions, such as 'seeing a damsel in distress' or 'beating a boy by a woman' who disappears in smoke in face of pursuit.





## CHAPTER XIII

## ANTHROPOLOGY AND SOCIETY

## (1)

Ten years ago, the Right Hon'ble Earl of Onslow in his Presidential Address to the International Congress of Anthropological Sciences (1934) spoke about the importance of anthropology to administration. He was the chairman of a Parliamentary Committee which inquired into and reported on the state of affairs in the various British Colonies and Mandated Territories in East Africa. This Committee we were told by the Right Hon'ble Earl of Onslow, unanimously recommended that the study of anthropology among colonial administrators should be encouraged.

This inclusion of anthropology as a subject for the civil service examinations both in England and India has been the logical consequence of our increased knowledge of human society. In recent years, Lord Hailey's African survey has added further argument for a scientific evaluation of primitive and of aboriginal cultures. The peoples of Africa who formed the subject of his able survey, are passing through an unprecedented economic and cultural crisis, engendered by their contacts with the European races. In their report,



Lord Hailey and his collaborators have made repeated plea for a large and more thoroughgoing study of African institutions and an intensive research on the African way of life and living.

Investigations into economic conditions, diet and nutrition, problems of health and welfare, law, customs, land tenure, should be encouraged, as without such knowledge it is not possible to help primitive groups or to bring out, all that is best in their cultures. Lord Hailey has pleaded for a scientific study of African life as a preliminary to 'further action'. His suggestions for permanently providing for such scientific inquiries are (1) the creation of an African Bureau which would act as a clearing-house for all information concerning Africa and (2) the foundation of an official body directly under the aegis of the British Government, disposing of adequate research funds and working largely through existing institutions for social and scientific research.

With the widening of the scope of the African administration as a result of allied war efforts, the importance of such recommendations must be recognised still more and any efforts to translate these suggestions to practical purposes would be welcomed by the social scientists in general and anthropologists in particular. That anthropology can be of much use to those engaged in diplomacy and administration has long been recognised; that it can fulfil a very definite function in the solution of many problems of culture, has been ably emphasised by Lord Hailey.





The first phase of occupation of Africa, the whole of it, is more or less over. "Today and for a long time to come", candidly wrote Prof. Westermann, "the fate of Africa is indissolubly linked with that of the white race. Africa will become what Europe and America make of it. Under the complicated condition of modern life Africans are not in a position to take their future into their own hands nor is Europe disposed to surrender its control over Africa. The great riches of raw material, both vegetable and mineral as well as the capacity of Africa for consuming European goods surpass even the hopes entertained at the time of the beginning of the colonial era, but the enterprise and capital of Europe and America are indispensable both for the exploitation of these riches and for setting up the regular exchange of goods between the two continents." Ignorance of customs and practices and institutions of the native people would not help the purpose for which such contacts have been established; on the other hand, a sympathetic understanding of the African point of view, of African psychology, would help develop reciprocity of social relationships and mutual trust without which durable relations between the rulers and the ruled are difficult to evolve.

In a paper read before the first Universal Races Congress held in 1911 at the University of London, the late Sir Brajendra Nath Seal put the anthropological point of view in the following paragraph : "A scientific study of the constituent



elements and the composition of races and peoples, of their origin and development, and of the forces that govern these, will alone point the way to a settlement of inter-racial claims and conflicts on a sound progressive basis, the solution of many an administrative problem in the composite United States and the heterogeneous British Empire and even the scope and methods of social legislation in every modern state." Since then, racial problems have become more acute and perhaps delicate, the problems of administration more complex and apparently insoluble and conflict of nationalities and races has assumed serious proportions.

An international outlook or an 'Universal Humanity' which has remained the ideal of social thinkers can develop on the basis of a scientific evaluation of races and cultures, their *ethos* and aspirations and not by a conflict of nationalities and races. Many countries of the world, Germany included, today 'are inhabited by multiple racial types, each of which has its peculiar traits, temperament and aptitudes, which act as handicap or afford advantages, hindering or helping their adjustment to the forces of their environment both social and physical. A knowledge of the biological, psychological and sociological conditions and causes which mould, shape and determine the rise, progress and even decadence of races and cultures can alone enable us to guide and control the future evolution of humanity by conscious selection and intelligent adaptation to the system





and procedure of nature.”

Von Luschan once referred to an order issued by a European governor in Africa which stated what Negroes, Arabs, Hindus, Portuguese, Greeks and other coloured people had to do on meeting a white man. The Greeks and other coloured people were not civilised according to this European plenipotentiary though the civilisation of the Greeks was a model in earlier days, the Arabs contributed substantially to human cultural achievement, the Portuguese opened up possibilities of international trade and commerce and in the words of Sister Nivedita (Miss Margaret Noble) India was the ‘head water of Asiatic thought and idealism.’

(2)

In every country of the world we find small or large amount of hybridisation and the results have not been uniformly good. While some biologists believe that race mixture of all kinds is fundamentally harmful to the parent stocks, there are many others who consider race-crossing biologically advantageous. Two facts have prejudiced our attitude to hybridisation. Firstly, hybrids are not given a good social status in the society, and secondly the evil effects of hybridisation are more visible as the ‘observed unions’ usually are confined to ‘sexual delinquents, wine addicts and women of easy virtue’.

Even if the biological principles involved are found justifiable, strong social antagonism



against mixed marriages would 'prejudice a fair trial over long periods'. In historic times, pure types are difficult to meet; all have mixed though in varying proportions. Yet a mixed group does not countenance mixed marriages, and restrict marriage by endogamy. The example of America may conveniently be cited in this connection. America is a hotch-potch of races. It is a melting-pot of racial strains. Although Madison Grant traces 70 p. c. of the Nordic stock, the contribution of the various races including the Negroes are considerable, although emigrants readily change their names and become aggressively American in less than a decade of residence. A majority of the embryonic (American) race as proved by Cedric Dover, is of Mediterranean, Eurasiatic and Negro origin. Many old Americans are really Eurasians in a wide sense, many are Euro-Africans and Eur-Afro-Asians both among the white and coloured groups. Mentally the Americans have been more mongrelised; they have inherited in the words of Cedric Dover, 'Teutonic seriousness, Irish spontaneity and wilfulness and Catholic democracy'. Yet, thirty states in America today forbid intercourse between whites and any coloured and in six a constitutional enactment prohibits the legislatures from ever passing law that legalises marriages between Whites and Negroes. "In Georgia, marriage between a White and African, West Indian, Asiatic Indian or Mongolian is forbidden while in Virginia a drop of Negroid dilution, if it is known, puts an otherwise White





man outside his own class." Even the blood transfusion service in America, today, has assumed a racial significance, as the whites are refusing Negro Mood for fear of mongrelisation !

Crossings of widely unrelated races are believed to be harmful, as a considerable amount of social dereliction and general inefficiency are found among hybrid groups resulting from such crossings. We are told also that mixture of races destroys "the natural racial aristocracy with its instincts and capacity of rulership, giving rise to a mongrel population with the low tastes of human-herd." We have yet to prove that a conquering race represents pure racial type or that it possesses such desirable quality transmissible by heredity.

Superior parents will produce superior children and 'race mixtures cannot create new traits which are not found in the parent stocks.' A racial or cultural group containing 'cacogenic' strains will produce defective children whether they inbreed or outbreed. If a particular racial type is susceptible to tuberculosis or pulmonary diseases, and if it inbreeds, the entire group will be threatened with extinction. In any cultural or national group, if the capable elements refuse to shoulder the responsibility of married life the better strains will become gradually eliminated, and social standards may decline. A dying group like the Korwas of the U. P. may be able to reorient their attitude to life by mixture with a powerful and vital tribe, or by assimilating desirable traits through miscegenation. The Kayasthas of the U. P. are divided into



a number of endogamous sections and 'inbreeding has been practised by them through centuries of survival.' In Bengal, their colleagues have 'broken all regional and cultural barriers and are welding into one big community constantly recruiting members from other castes'. This fact has made the Kayasthas of Bengal a 'national caste' as it were, while the U. P. Kayasthas have segregated into closed inbred groups. How far such inbreeding has been racially beneficial has not yet been investigated, but that it has not resulted in an increase of fertility or in a widening of the range of variations is apparent even to the casual observer. Poor physique and diseased constitutions have formed part of family heritage and inbreeding is likely to perpetuate such incompetence. Wide marriage field available in Bengal has led to accession of vigour to the Kayasthas and in some areas, they have absorbed and assimilated other castes as well.

If race-crossing is selective, as, for example, the superior elements of the one race cross with the superior elements of the other, there is every likelihood of race improvement, as part of the hybrid population will become intermediate in type, part will resemble one parent, part the other. The vitality and strength of the Punjabi, the industry and stamina of the Madras Brahmin, the spontaneity and resourcefulness of the Bengali, if inherited, will certainly produce a desirable blend ably fitted to hold its own against any amount of odds. The average results of heredity in the case of crossings of the





inferior elements of two races will not be eugenic as is illustrated by many hybrid stocks we meet today. All that can be said against hybridisation is that when racial differences are too wide and cultural environments dissimilar, hybridisation, voluntary or otherwise, may not produce stocks of desirable quality. Statistical data corroborate the view of Havelock Ellis that 'the areas of greatest racial mixture in England were the birth-places of an unusual number of superior men'. Family statistics in India compiled at random corroborate this statement no doubt, but how far 'dying out of better strains' in other areas through celibacy, late marriage and small families has lowered the incidence of superior men, needs to be studied before we can accept such hypothesis. In any case, our prejudices are largely born of ignorance and the fear of the strange and the unfamiliar, of the prospect of cultural maladjustment, and not of scientific knowledge. Even where the people speak the same language there exist local variations in dialect and food practices and such differences have often circumscribed the field of marital choice.

## (3)

In the field of cultural life, much that was unknown or imperfectly known, changes that could not have been anticipated even a decade ago, discomforts that have resulted from contacts, have raised problems, the solution of which is indeed difficult. Loss of interest in life among



Many primitive groups in India and elsewhere, has resulted from momentous changes in the environment, changes over which they had no control. Many primitive tribes have declined or are showing a tendency towards it. The Khonds of the Ganjam Agency tracts, the Asura tribe of Chota Nagpur, the Korwas in the U. P. and Bihar, the Todas in the Nilgiri hills are only a few of the many tribal groups that hold their life on slender terms.

Increasing denudation of forests, the consequent rigours of the forest regulations, the difficulty of maintaining a constant source of food supply in tribal areas, which is partly due to scarcity and partly due to their 'ineptitude and inefficiency' the introduction of diseases and vices, also of distillery liquor, ignorance of the administrative staff of their customs and institutions and the dual allegiance of the tribal population to the tribal leaders on the one hand and to the state officials on the other, all these and other causes are hastening the exit of tribal groups.

In Africa a system of indirect rule is being tried and a watchful committee on applied anthropology has been functioning for some time whose avowed object is to help the tribal groups in their struggle for adaptation. The problems of native life are being discussed by the committee with first-hand knowledge and solutions are suggested which help the administration in its efforts to subserve the ideals of native development. The following problems connected with South African native





## RACES AND CULTURES OF INDIA

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life suggested by Sir Alan Pim, K. C. I. E. as calling for anthropological study also could be discussed with respect to the tribal life in India. (1) In what way can Indirect Rule best be made to subserve the ideal of native development set before them by modern government? (2) How can the generally accepted body of native law be brought into line with the rapid changes in native custom, that are taking place with present-day economic developments? (3) Is there any way in which the principle of Indirect Rule can be applied to the mixed populations which are growing up in the industrial areas? (4) Could a system of land tenure be devised, suitable to areas which might be added to native reserves, subject to provisions that the occupants must adopt efficient methods of cultivation?

With thirty millions of primitive population and double that number belonging to the exterior castes, the problem of administration cannot be solved by increased franchise or reservation of posts on a population basis. A scheme of positive, negative and preventive measures must be worked out to solve the problems of primitive life and institutions. The positive measures may include education on rational lines with a view to help the tribal people to adjust themselves to changes which are slowly but surely coming on them, utilisation of the natural resources in tribal areas with the help of aboriginal labour and tribal supervision if possible, inculcation of ideas about the sanctity of marriage, family life and tribal solidarity,



new prescriptions for their old maladies and their old pharmacopoeia revitalised by selective adoption of new medicines and dietetic adjustments, also by new provision of maternity clinics and welfare centres. The negative measures should include provisions against exploitation by alien landlords, middlemen and itinerant traders and unscrupulous tribal officials or local revenue and police staff, also measures of protection against the spread and diffusion of ideas which may sweep them off their feet or detribalise them permanently. The preventive measures are no less important as 'racial poisons' are spreading with increasing rapidity in tribal areas and already some tribal groups have been seriously affected by infectious diseases which are passed on to them through indiscriminate matings with diseased elements among the floating population in tribal areas.

How far racial poisons have affected tribal groups can be illustrated by the example of the Khonds of the Ganjam Agency tracts in Orissa. The incidence of syphilis among the Khonds is so high that it is known as 'the Khond disease' in this part of the country. In the three villages we investigated 15 % of the Khonds, men, women and even children showed syphilitic affections, congenital or acquired. The social laws and usages of the Khonds make it possible for an indiscriminate mixing of the sexes before marriage. When the man and wife with immature children go to the hill-tops for Podu cultivation (*Jhum*), young men and women are left behind in the village.





The bachelors of village sleep in one dormitory and the maidens share another. As marriage within the *Gochi* or village is prohibited by tribal custom, the bachelors of one village migrate to the neighbouring village and share the dormitory with maidens of that village. Thus there is a shifting of scenes from village to village till each man finds his sweetheart. Thus any acquired disease can be passed on through such indiscriminate mixing and it is no wonder that the Khond disease has reached such serious proportions today. How the Khonds acquired this disease is a question on which unanimity is not possible for obvious reasons.

## (4)

Life in primitive society has been complicated by various causes. The attitude of the higher social groups to primitive institutions has been responsible for much of the loss of interest of primitive people in indigenous customs and practices. To take one example, dances are usually popular with aboriginal tribes in India. Animated dances to the tune of drums and flutes, cymbals and sing-song monologues have so long been indispensable to primitive social life. Dances have provided recreation to the youths of both sexes in primitive society, they have helped in the selection of mates, in translating joys and sorrows and in the manifestation of social and clan solidarity. Hunting, herding and agricultural activities have been similarly mimicked in dances which



helped to create interest in these economic pursuits and were also believed to augment the yield from the fields and the gains from the chase. The pastoral Khasas of the cis-Himalayan region have their masked dances which take the shape of pantomimes and the dancers are found to parade the village masked in cattle masks with the avowed object of warding off the evil eye, pests and diseases and also to increase the strength of their herds.

Urban contacts have everywhere disorganised primitive social life, so that dances have lost their significance and communal dances are no longer considered indispensable to group solidarity. In religious worship and in temples, as among the Khasas, we find spontaneous participation in dances by men and women of the village though the usual practice is for the Badinis (female dancers) or professional dancing girls, to dance traditional patterns before admiring crowds. In the Chota Nagpur plateau, the Mundas and the Hos are abandoning their dances, and village politics, rivalry and social disputes are replacing their time-old recreation. The effects of this transfer of interests have already been evident in the high incidence of imported diseases, poor physique, inferiority complex and a bitter antagonism against advanced groups in the neighbourhood.

The Bhils in the interior of the Panchmahal districts, under the initiative of the Bhil Seva Mandal, appear to have survived the effects of disintegration and detribalisation for the time being at least. Songs and dances still form impor-





tant recreation among them and are not looked down upon by even the sophisticated among them. In schools maintained by the Seva Mandal, regular courses in dancing are included and the teachers and the taught take part in dances, which has helped to maintain the institution among the rural people. In social ceremonies, marriage and festivals, young men, instructed or not, join in dances and new techniques are being introduced by the boys and girls who receive special training at school. Although traditional dances are being discarded, and spectacular demonstrations of ritual dances are rarely noticed, the recognition of dances as a legitimate activity of the Bhils has proved of immense social and survival value.

The artistic and rhythmic value of primitive dances have already been recognised, and though these have been filmed for their fun value by enterprising producers, students of art have long realised their social as well as aesthetic importance and have incorporated them in their repertoire or have assimilated the technique and skill of primitive performances. The Santhal dance is now known all over the world, the Manipuri dance has long been popular with a section of artists and Bhil dances have influenced the style of some famous dancers in northern India in recent times. The Kathakali and other folk dances have long been famous and there is hope for the adoption of many more styles that are danced and forgotten in the wildernesses. Indian culture of the last few centuries has been more urban than



rural and the dances that were recognised by Indian Courts, Muslim and Hindu, were meant more to appeal to sex than to other emotional needs. The growing popularity of folk dances today shows a new orientation of our attitude to such fundamental aspects of our aesthetic life.

Folk tales, myths and legends, songs and tribal art and architecture all depict the intellectual efforts of primitive people to understand and interpret the relations existing between man and the forces of the environment, and also express the emotional background of savage life or as Roy put it, 'their innermost feelings, ideas and aspirations and their sense of the beautiful.' One of the problems of administration of primitive and backward peoples, or excluded areas as they are now constituted, is to see that such manifestation of 'emotions of the soul, the rhythmic movements of the feet expressing supreme facts of life should not be allowed to be suppressed in the name of reform. The dances and songs are even now believed, by the less sophisticated sections of primitive people, to stimulate the beneficent forces of nature so as to induce plenty in crops and game'. "As we watch the dancers in their various dances", writes Sarat Chandra Roy, "in some with alternate forward and backward steps, in some with light and in others wheeling round and round in circles and again spreading out in a straight line, in some arranged in parallel lines, in some stooping low and swaying their hands to and fro and in others dancing in an





erect posture and at intervals stamping their feet on the ground and at the termination of a song bursting forth in chorus in a deafening exclamation of 'Hir-r-r' or 'Hur-r-r', we may imagine the various movements and postures and exclamations to be pantomimic representations intended to exert a beneficial magical influence on different agricultural operations and other seasonal activities of the tribe."

(5)

Economists, statesmen and those who are interested in the vital statistics of the country believe that the social crisis in India has been precipitated by over-population and consequent under-nutrition and malnutrition. The rate of population increase has already assumed alarming proportions, and remedies must be thought out to reduce the pressure of population on the resources of the country. In India people breed like fleas and die like moths. India is overful by every conceivable test. While it cannot be denied that the misery, destitution, and the phenomenal poverty of the country are largely due to the excessive number, there exists also considerable disparity in the distribution of population from province to province, between the various economic regions.

The density of population in India varies from one per square mile in Chagai in Baluchistan to nearly 3,228 per sq. mile in the Lohaganj Thana of the Dacca district. This district has a mean density of 935 persons per sq. mile, the provincial



mean being 646 persons per square mile. The Chittagong hill tracts have a density of 43 per sq. mile and are inhabited by a large number of small or big tribes. The mean density in Bihar and Orissa ranges from 969 persons per sq. mile in the Muzzafarpur district of Bihar to 43 in the Feudatory state of Rairakhel. Assam has a more varied density. In the Surma valley the density is 438 per square mile, in the Brahmaputra valleys it is 171, and in the hill divisions in Assam inhabited by scattered communities, the mean density is only 39, the provincial mean being 137 per sq. mile. The mean density in the Madras Presidency ranges from 89 in the Agency tracts much of which now form part of the Orissa province, 154 in the Deccan excluding states and 471 in the west coast.

Thus we find that the hill division of Assam, the Lushai hills, parts of Chota Nagpur, parts of Central Provinces, the agency tracts in Orissa, the Nilgiri hills and the Travancore forests all have a low mean density, sometimes less than twenty as in the Lushai hills or 30 to 34 in parts of the Chota Nagpur plateau. Most of these areas are inhabited by primitive and aboriginal tribes, whose culture pattern sets the limit to the size of the local groups. Many of the tribes in India are living a nomadic life. They move in batches of five to ten families, build improvised shelters in the interior of forests with leaves and bamboo poles, or make mud hovels with low doorways through which they can just crawl in and out. When death occurs in the group, the entire settlement moves





up to some new site where they build in like fashion. Even where a large number of families live in the same locality, they do not build compact villages but prefer to scatter themselves over the field, so that each family has its hut on the land it tills for subsistence. Hunting tribes are found to build at distances from one another not because they do not require one another's co-operation but they fear lest the misfortune of one family, the wrath of the gods they own, may not be transferred by contacts. The pastoral Khasas of the cis-Himalayan region build compact villages to protect themselves from organised theft and vendetta and also for economic living, but when they suspect divine wrath or vengeance, they leave their village and build on new sites. Even the artistic and pretentious houses they have built up at considerable expense, are left behind so that the angry gods may not have any cause for further chastisement in their new settlement.

The size of social groups in primitive society therefore depends upon the pattern of cultural life of the society and the amount of food which is at the disposal of man at the worst and most sterile time of the year, especially if that season lasted too long. The meagre food supply and the uncertain yield from the forests or fields have caused man in the early stages of his career to roam about in groups composed of a small number of persons and to live separated from each other by considerable distances. Density has grown with the abundance of food, with the increase of knowledge of the



economic possibilities of the environment, and of the methods developed to secure subsistence from the natural surroundings. At a low density there is not much increase of population, but when a certain density is reached population increases rapidly and the means of economic co-operation develop accordingly, but when population really reaches a very high density, a saturation point is reached beyond which any population finds it hard to move up. The Kharias and the Birhors still live in groups of five to ten families and they do not show any high rate of increase. Precarious subsistence, crude material equipment and lack of effective organisation prevent the formation of stable communities among them, but the same is not the case with the Mundas and the Hos who are living today in villages with an effective tribal organisation and possess a knowledge of agriculture, also of the possibilities of their economic environment. A time may come when they may have exhausted all scope of economic co-operation, the per capita income may go down and they will have overstepped the limits of adjustable density unless of course new forces, tools and implements make their appearance and they can succeed in effecting a new economic rehabilitation.

Estimates of the size of primitive social groups must vary greatly due to the obvious difficulty of ascertaining correct figures. Even careful investigators have found it difficult at times to record the number of tribal population of a village or of a locality as at any time all the people are not





within bounds. The author had planned a number of village surveys in tribal areas and in spite of his very careful planning and record the figures had to be changed every time the enumeration was attempted. Even at night, part of the population stay out and the inmates of a house either cannot express their strength in numbers or are reluctant to declare it for fear of imaginary consequences.

According to the 1931 census, there are in India 25 millions of primitive people; of this number 20 millions are in British India and 5 millions are to be found in the states. These are classified into 3 groups by Dr J. H. Hutton, (1) Primitive tribes collecting forest produce (but generally speaking not, at any rate until recently, practising agriculture, (2) Primitive tribes, pastoral, (3) Tribes practising agriculture, hunting, fishing and industries (without effective differentiation of occupation) and nearly derived castes. The latter are subdivided into as many as eleven groups.

The numerical strength of a tribe ranges from a few hundreds to more than 2 millions as, for example, among the Santhals (2,524,472 and the Bhils (2,454,144). Some of the tribes have increased in number while others have declined considerably and hold their lives on slender terms. The following table will indicate the trend of tribal demography in India:



TABLE I

<i>Name of the Tribe</i>	<i>Where found</i>	<i>Total Strength</i>	<i>Increase or decrease since 1921</i>
Chenchu .. ..	Madras and Hyderabad	10,342	-2,060
Kota .. ..	Madras	1,121	-83
Toda .. ..	Madras	597	-43
Nayadi .. ..	Cochin and Travancore	296	-5
Mavillar .. ..	Madras	1,341	-396
Gadaba .. ..	Bihar, Orissa and C. P. and Madras	48,154	-5,616
Malpaharis .. ..	Bihar, Orissa	37,437	-1,535
Bhoksa .. ..	U. P.	7,618	-8
Badaga .. ..	Madras	43,075	-2,746
Naga Tribes .. ..	Assam	139,965	-7,297
Angami Naga .. ..	Assam	49,239	-2,491
Lhota Naga .. ..	Assam	18,238	-161
Andamanese .. ..	Andaman Islands	460	-326

In the Second Table, will be found a number of larger tribal groups who have shown considerable increase in numerical strength and also those who have shown increase but such increase has not been progressive.

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TABLE II

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<i>Name of the Tribe</i>	<i>Where found</i>	<i>Total Strength 1911</i>	<i>Total Strength 1921</i>	<i>Total Strength 1931</i>
Asur .. ..	Bihar and Orissa	3,716	2,245	2,024
Bhuiya .. ..	C. P., Bihar and Orissa	714,960	630,862	681,165
Bhumij .. ..	Bihar, Orissa	272,667	240,229	27,401
Birhor .. ..	"	2,299	1,510	2,350
Chero .. ..	"	166,002	..	17,906
Juang .. ..	"	12,823	10,454	15,024
Katkari .. ..	Bombay, West India States	91,841	81,202	88,336
Kharia .. ..	Bihar & Orissa	133,657	124,521	146,037
Khond .. ..	Madras, Bihar and Orissa	750,289	698,668	741,078
Korwa .. ..	C. P., C. I., B. & O., U. P. & Hyderabad	200,077	185,553	237,847
Munda .. ..	Bengal, Bihar and Orissa	558,200	559,662	658,450
Oraon .. ..	Bengal, Bihar and U. P.	835,994	842,906	1,021,355
Santhal .. ..	Bengal, Bihar and Orissa	207,8035	218,9511	2,508,789
Ho .. ..	Bihar and Orissa.	420,179	441,424	523,158
Tharu .. ..	U. P., Bengal & Bihar	63,629	61,751	69,403



The figures in both the tables have been taken from the 1931 census (Imp. Tables, Vol. I. Pt. II). Correct estimates of hill and forest tribes are indeed difficult. But as the wild nomadic tribes are settling down, the estimate of their strength is becoming more and more accurate. So that the figures of 1931 census are on the whole more reliable than those arrived at previous enumeration. Even if the 1931 estimate is taken as reliable, it is difficult to get any accurate picture of net variation from decade to decade. The Bhils, for example, are recorded to have increased from 1,067,792 in 1911, to 1,859,661 in 1921, and to 2,025,753 in 1931, a phenomenal increase as the Bhils have doubled their strength in 30 years. The Tadvi Bhils, a section of the major Bhil tribe recorded 24 souls, in 1911, 14,156 in 1921 and 20,817 in 1931. The Bhilala, who must be grouped with the Bhils for obvious reasons recorded 1,563 in 1911, 196,457 in 1921 and in 1931, they numbered 232,230. These examples show that the variation in the figures of the Bhils is due to defective nomenclature and consequent errors in tabulation.

The Gonds offer a similar example. The net variation of the Gonds in Bihar and Orissa recorded 25,673 in 1911, 24,853 in 1921 and only 708 in 1931. The Hindu Gonds of C. P. and Berar recorded 367,257 in 1911, 454,792 in 1921 and 1,036,673 in 1931. The tribal figures are 1,966,636 in 1911, 1,654,791 in 1921 and 1,224,465 in 1931. Thus, it appears that the enumeration of the Gonds in





the various censuses could not be done on the same basis and tribal Gonds have recorded as Hindus in one census and Hindu Gonds have enumerated themselves as tribal in the succeeding census. There is another fact which needs to be borne in mind. A tribe recorded in different provinces may not represent the same cultural stock, or the same tribe may be enumerated as two or more distinct tribes in different provinces. Even then we should think the tribal demography today is characterised by the following trends:

1. A progressive decline of many tribal groups.
2. A slow increase among many tribes and a tendency to decline among others.
3. A rapid increase of tribes living in certain parts of the country.

Tribal groups have come into contacts with the Hindu castes in most areas. Contacts with civilisation have undermined social solidarity, invaded tribal security, introduced discomforts, diseases and vices. (1) Many tribes have failed to maintain their tribal structures and have either been assimilated with more vital stock or have withdrawn themselves from contacts as a defensive measure. The Andamanese, the Korwas, the Todas, the Chenchus are on evil days and are preparing themselves for exit. (2) Some tribes have left their tribal moorings, have settled in the neighbourhood of higher cultural groups whom



they serve. Today they have developed some sort of interdependence or symbiosis. The Gond tribes of Bastar may be taken as an example of the latter process. (3) The nomadic tribes who secured their livelihood by catering to the periodical requirements of settled communities as, for, example, the Marwaris or the Lakhota, supplying agricultural implements of the latter or repairing their indigenous tools and utensils, the Nats supplying crude nostrums for the restoration of lost manhood, the Kanjars providing amusement, acrobatics and dances for the village communities, find it difficult to continue their customary life and have enlisted themselves into the ranks of criminal tribes whose attention to the rural communities is a perpetual concern of the administration. (4) Lastly, we have a number of tribes who live in compact villages in large numbers, have taken to agriculture or other occupations and their transition from hunting to settled life has been effected without great hardship to them. Such are the Hos, the Mundas, the Oraons and the Santhals, who have shown considerable increase in number and have succeeded in adjusting themselves to changed economic environment. The Mundas and the cognate tribes had passed through much vicissitudes of fortune, but the timely help generous as it was, they received from the Christian missionaries and also from the administration, helped them through their crises and today they show signs of life pulsating with hopes and fears, indicating vitality and sound grip on their future.





(6)

A case of social symbiosis is afforded by the various tribes grouped under the Gonds, in the Bastar State. When different cultural groups, originally distinct and separate, migrate into an area and settle down together, they must react and adjust themselves to each other and eventually they evolve a *modus vivendi*. "There may exist between the separate groups and migrant strata the closest co-operation which is the fruit of a far-reaching adjustment". The social, economic and religious activities of these groups represent a reciprocity and interdependence linking section with section in the framework of a larger embracing social group unit, which fact is known as social symbiosis. In other words, it is evolution from many simple and isolated cultural groups of a complex cultural solution or fusion. Such a fusion can be marked into stages as the different cultural groups come in contact, associate permanently for mutual benefit (though the groups remain distinct) until finally the distinctive characters of the different constituent cultural groups are lost.

The Dusserah festival in the Bastar State, which is held in honour of Dhanteswari, the family goddess of the ruling family, affords an example of symbiosis or cultural solution. The ceremony, however, continues for 15 days and each day there is a new programme of rites, rituals and customary observances. The peculiarity of these celebrations is that it has brought together the various



cultural groups in Bastar State as sharers of a common heritage, for even the lowest of the castes has not been denied its rôle in the communal worship.

In the organisation of temple worship all over the south the various castes and tribes have been assigned their respective duties, so that economic participation of the diverse and heterogeneous social groups has become possible. The division of society in the south and the two groups now designated as exterior and interior castes have duties corresponding to their racial affiliations. Thus the exterior castes who belonged primarily to the Australoid or Pre-Dravidian substratum of population, are allowed to co-operate with the interior castes, which represent perhaps the superior race, the Mediterranean strain in the south, in duties which do not bring them together into close contact, while the performance of rites and rituals connected with the worship are done by members of the interior caste. In Bastar, however, the co-operation between the various cultural groups which do not appear to have maintained their ethnic identity is more real and the inferior cultural groups have not been denied an important rôle in the organisation and performance of worship. In the south economic partnership between primitive and backward groups has been regarded as essential, but no serious attempt has been made to bring together the different groups into a common religious fold. In Bastar, the fact of their cultural difference has been forgotten and there is one





festival for all in which rites and customs of primitive and advanced cultures have blended together.

The Maharas a Hinduised caste yet 'untouchable', weaver by profession also known as well versed in witch-craft and sorcery must be consulted by the ruling chief before the programme for the festival can be drawn up. A small girl, seven to eight years of age, is ceremonially married to the priest, which makes her eligible for the function. She comes out veiled along with her companions of her caste, moves round a swing seven times and is armed with a stick and shield. A Teli, oil-presser by caste similarly armed suddenly makes his appearance and offers to fight the girl, who defends herself against his skilful dash. While the duel progresses the Mahara girl foams at the mouth, and ultimately falls into a swoon, and is gently laid on the swing on which a bed of thorns has already been fixed. Her eyes become fixed and her restlessness disappears; gentle swings do not upset her nor does the thorn bed on which she lies flat. She is calm and composed, victory is stamped on her little face and she must now be approached through the priest, prayed to for the successful performance of the traditional ceremony, which she usually grants. She is then garlanded by the ruling chief or his representative, after which the latter with his retinue returns to the palace and holds a Durbar the same evening.

An analysis of the customary division of labour obtained during the Dusserah festival will show



how far the different tribes co-operate among themselves in social, economic and religious life. The construction of the chariot is left with the Saonras, the Lohars make the iron nails and bars required for the chariot. Dhakars supervise the construction, the Khatis are the special Pujaris of the chariot who perform the *Puja* both before and after the construction, the stool on which the sword is kept in front of the Halba Jogi who replaces the ruling chief during the Nawaratri (nine nights) for performing all the austerities required to be done in accordance with traditional practices, is made by the Sunris. The Gadabas supply the bearers for the Raja's palanquin. The Halbas supply the Jogi, and also protect the Raja with drawn swords when the latter camps in the Muria settlements after the ceremonial kidnapping by the latter. They also take part in the sacrifice, as a Halba is invariably engaged to kill animals for sacrifice. The Murias, Dhruvas and Dandami Marias pull the chariot while the Bhatras figure prominently on the occasion of the triumphant entry of the Raja to the capital after the kidnapping by the Murias. The Maharas supply the girl who determines the auspiciousness or otherwise of the festival. The respective importance of the various groups may be interpreted by the duties each is required to perform, so that there is a well-assessed division of labour based on the numerical strength and cultural stage of the group concerned. The Bhatras parade armed with arrows which are less effective than swords owned by the Halbas as the latter are





supposed to be descendants of old garrisons or 'paik militia'. The Dhakars who are Rajputs and are the highest cultural group in Bastar, are not required to do any manual labour, their duty being supervision. But whatever be the respective rôles of the various cultural groups, their participation in the festival is indispensable and all the year people wistfully watch for the return of the annual festival. Not only in this festival, in almost all economic spheres the existence of the various groups as independent units has become difficult and intercommunications between them and reciprocity in their economic undertakings has become more real than before. Thus a symbiosis has developed among the tribal and the higher cultural groups which has been of great help in the adaptation of the tribal elements in the state.

(7)

With the increase of contacts of the aboriginal tribes with the cultural groups in and around the tribal settlement, the dependence of these tribes on the dominant higher culture of their comparatively civilised neighbours has become real. The process of acculturation or inoculation of the tribal cultures, with elements of social value from advanced cultures, has assumed more than academic importance. Suitable adaptation of alien traits are necessary not only in the interest of the tribes concerned, but also of the country as a whole, for unity of culture and uniformity of beliefs and ideas are essential for national solidarity. The large number of pri-



primitive tribes and depressed or exterior castes in India must be brought in line with their comparatively more fortunate compatriots, and the sooner it is done, the better for all concerned. But this transition must be effected in such a way that the tribal people may not get detribalised, for it is as much necessary to adopt new ideas and behaviour patterns as it is to conserve indigenous customs and institutions of social and survival value.

In a memorandum for the study of acculturation (Man, XXXV, 162) Professor Melville J. Herskovits submitted an outline for the study of acculturation. He defines acculturation as comprehending those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups. "He distinguishes acculturation from 'culture change' of which it is but one aspect and from 'assimilation' which is at times a phase of acculturation." Of course acculturation is different from diffusion which may happen without first-hand contact. The results of acculturation are acceptance (A) adaptation (B) and reaction (C). A tribe or a cultural group may take over the greater portion of another culture and may lose most of the older cultural heritage. This has been the case with the Bhumi of Bihar, an aboriginal tribe of Munda ethnic type, who is in the process of forming a caste or has already been a caste. This taking over of the elements of another culture may be with the acquiescence





On the part of the members of the accepting group, in which case it is possible to assimilate the inner values of the culture which is being accepted.

Adaptation takes place where both original and foreign traits are combined so as to produce a smooth functioning cultural whole which is 'actually an historic mosaic.' The Rajbanshis of Bengal or the Koch provide an example of such adaptation. The Majhwars, the Cheros of Mirzapur, the Tharus of U. P. are further examples. A reaction may also set in where because of oppression or because of the unforeseen results of the 'acceptance of foreign traits' contra-acculturative movements arise, these maintaining their psychological (a) force as compensations for an imposed or assumed inferiority or (b) through the prestige which a 'return to older pre-acculturative conditions may bring to those participating in such a movement.' The Mundas and the Hos of Chota Nagpur have reacted against the oppression and exploitation of their neighbours, whose elements they have borrowed and assimilated from time to time. A sort of contra-acculturative movement has started in tribal areas in Chota Nagpur, but a return to older, pre-acculturative conditions is not possible; on the other hand a reorientation of their outlook is envisaged in their newly awakened tribal consciousness which makes them seek sanction for their borrowed elements of culture in prehistoric civilisations which they have been claiming as their heritage. The Indus Valley civilisation is now being claimed by the intelligent section of the tribal



people as evolved by their ancestors, but how far they would be able to get over their inferiority on this claim, has to be seen.

In any case, the process of acculturation is proceeding in tribal areas and tribes who have failed to acculturate are on evil days and their maladaptation will soon lead to their exit or incorporation by other more vital groups. A study of the process of acculturation in different regions will show how the tribal groups are fighting hard for survival, and any assistance that is needed should be a responsibility of those who boast of a higher civilisation but fail to notice the view-points of others less fortunately placed.

Primitive society in India as elsewhere has maintained itself in spite of civilisation, against all apathy and neglect, also exploitation and oppression. As S. C. Roy put it, "Have they not for centuries been ground down under the oppression of the rich and the powerful and groaned under various economic and social evils, not the least of which is the cruel stigma of untouchability?"

A backward group, slow to change and rigidly conservative, must face discomforts due to changed economic conditions. The struggle for existence is a selective process as it eliminates the weaker elements but the stronger succeed in adapting themselves and thus maintain continuity of cultural life. The large number of primitive and backward tribes and castes in India show that these have effected an adjustment to the forces of their environment and possess sufficient vitality to exist





and perpetuate their kind. It is the duty of the advanced sections of people to assist in this struggle for survival and of the administration to watch their interests and protect them from undue interference by the foreign elements of population in tribal areas and also from over-zealous officers.

No apology is required to cite a few cases of misunderstanding that have prejudiced the administration in the eyes of the tribal population in the Chota Nagpur plateau, recorded by the late Rai Bahadur Sarat Chandra Roy whose interest in tribal life and culture is well known. Writing about the discomforts of tribal people Roy wrote, "Any one having had occasion to watch at close quarters the administration of justice in certain aboriginal areas of India will be struck by the amount of injustice done, in spite of the best intentions, by judges and magistrates and police officers of all grades owing to their ignorance of the customs and mentality of the aboriginal tribes they have to deal with."

The aborigines of Chota Nagpur are organised on territorial basis which is known locally as the *Parha* system. A group of 5 to 20 villages constitutes a *Parha* presided over by a divisional headman who is variously designated as *Manki*, *Raja* and similar titles. On special occasions at least once a year, a meeting of the *Parha* council is held and the villages constituting the *Parha* and also neighbouring villages are informed about the place and date of the meeting. A police inspector in 1921 during the days of the non-co-ope-



ration movement, came across one of these *parwanas* or notice issued on behalf of the Munda Raja and he suspected a plot by the Raja to overthrow the government established by law, which required the loyal and devoted services of the police officer. He lost no time in reporting the matter to the Deputy Commissioner who necessarily had to act on the police information. The Deputy Commissioner consulted Roy who explained the situation. Roy and a few police constables and an officer in plain clothes were deputed to the meeting to find out what it actually meant. Not long after Roy reached the place three or four police sub-inspectors arrived on the scene, which so much frightened the Mundas that they decided to disperse without transacting any business. The presence and intervention of Roy saved what would otherwise have been an ugly situation, and a violent demonstration against the government. This meeting discussed their agrarian grievances, educational needs, etc., and had nothing to do with any subversive activities as interpreted by the police inspector.

Every Oraon village has a flag or flags which they carry in procession to their inter-tribal dancing meets known as *Yatra*. A contractor who was to construct a railway bridge was assisted by people of two villages in the vicinity, one a Hindu and the other Oraon. Superstitious beliefs were prevalent about the spirit supposed to dwell in the river over which the bridge was to be constructed, for on two previous occasions the bridge was washed





away due to rains and flood. The contractor wanted to placate gods of both the villages, he repaired an old dilapidated Hindu temple, and presented a flag with a railway engine drawn on it, to the Oraons. The possession of the new flag, which indicated power was coveted by other Oraon villages and another village who wanted to increase its power made a very large flag with the railway train painted on it, and marched triumphantly in procession to the annual *Yatra*. The infringement of the patent right of the former village who claimed the flag as its exclusive right led to protests and a free fight which resulted fatally in two killed and others injured. The police confiscated the flag, prosecuted a large number of people for criminal breach of peace which resulted in conviction of some of the villagers. The next year precautions were taken by the District Magistrate against recurrence of trouble and he requested Roy to assist him. Roy constructed a flag with the emblem of an aeroplane and presented it to the village which carried the offending flag and explained to the village elders the superiority of the aeroplane which was readily understood by them. A happy solution it was, and the trouble was stopped at the root, thanks to the intervention of the anthropologist.



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