

THE ARYAN VILLAGE.



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IN

INDIA AND CEYLON.

BY

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INTRODUCTION.

DURING the last forty or fifty years an immense wealth of facts, previously unascertained, has been amassed within the provinces of archæology, philology, and geology. By inference from these, and by reasoning upon the data furnished by them, the conviction is arrived at that man made his first appearance upon the earth very many ages ago, during a period of time when probably the physical conditions of the world were in important respects considerably different from those which obtain at present.

So far, also, as can be judged from these materials, the human race at its commencement was in the lowest conceivable condition of civilization. Its

progress upwards to that state of comparatively advanced culture, which is observed to generally prevail at the dawn of history, must probably have passed through at least three or four principal well-marked stages.

It is almost stating an axiom to say that human life can only be maintained by the continued use and consumption of material products of Nature, prepared, fashioned, and modified for the purpose by the application of human labour and skill.

Moreover, during man's lowest or least developed stage of civilization the animals and vegetables on which he feeds are both alike in a wild condition; he has not yet succeeded in domesticating either. The instruments, also, by which he catches and battles with the one, and gathers or roots up the other, are rude and inefficient—wooden clubs, bows with flint-tipped arrows, creeper-made cords, springes of fibre, stone-flakes, and such like things. His clothing is furnished from the skins of the beasts which he slays. His dwelling is a cave, or other natural

shelter, supplemented by branches of trees, skins, and clay or stonework. His fire, if any, is produced in a most laborious manner by friction. The family group is the limit of his society; and it is not too much to say that under the foregoing conditions the daily subsistence and protection of that group is only ensured by the incessant labour and anxious attention of every member of it, male and female.

In this state of things it is obvious there is little to favour improvement. The manner of life is necessarily erratic. As the jungle gets exhausted of its edible products, and the wild animals are killed down before their human persecutor, he must move on to new grounds. There is doubtless unity of purpose and co-operation inside each family circle. The father and the mother fight the battle of life for their progeny, as the lion and lioness for their cubs; and the children, as soon as may be, participate with them in the struggle. Collateral descendants from a near common ancestor, or even wife-connections, may sometimes be included in the

community. But all others are enemies—little better, if at all, than the beasts of the forest—competitors for the necessities of existence, and therefore to be avoided, kept at a distance, destroyed. From such circumstances ensued chronic hostility to all outsiders, as well as exigencies of self-defence, which gradually, though perhaps very slowly, led to the aggregation of families of the same blood into tribes.

There seems good reason to believe that for many ages man lived, sparsely scattered over the face of the earth, very much in the manner just attempted to be sketched. Small tribes of hunters, skin-clad and ill-armed, wandered from place to place, winning by their own strong arms a hard and precarious subsistence from the forest and the plain.

Evidently, the greater the advance made by any tribe through the means of superior intelligence and physique, and the improvement of arms, and the greater, consequently, its success in war and the chase, the larger in proportion would be the

extension of its hunting-grounds and the diminution of any other outside population.

For any further material progress of civilization the introduction of a new element is required, and apparently this first came in the shape of domesticated sheep and oxen. With this addition the hunter became changed into the pastoral nomad; the means of subsistence was better assured; life was less hard; the idea of property developed itself; there grew to be those who had much—many cattle—and those who, having little or nothing, necessarily become attached, as dependents, to those who had. The care of flocks and herds gave rise to the relation of master and servant—owner and dependent—superior and inferior. Small crafts sprang out of the needs of cattle-tending, the requirements of the camp, and the textile capabilities of wool. The incidental manual labour fell to the dependent and the younger members of the pastoral group; the superintendence and control to the family chief; and the differentiation

of the propertyless worker from the leisured capitalist commenced.

It is worth while to compare for a moment the two stages of human culture which have just been touched upon.

In the hunter stage man only barely manages to appropriate such and so much of the products of nature (or in other words, materials not produced or modified by human agency) as he needs for existence, and no more; and the attainment of this end calls for the unintermittent exertion of physical labour and anxious care on the part of every member of the hunting society.

By the advance to the pastoral stage man's dominion over natural products is largely extended. Better and more plentiful food, greatly improved clothing and articles of various degrees of fabrication enormously ameliorate his condition of life, and conduce to his welfare. Yet the labour requisite for these results is sufficiently furnished by a portion only of the community; and

proprietors, as distinguished from non-proprietors, are at least partially relieved from it.

A third great step in the course of human progress is distinguished by the cultivation of cereals, which obviously necessitates the more or less permanent sojourn of the cultivating community in one place, the prehension and clearing of a definite tract of ground, and some communal arrangements for tilling and depasturing it. Out of these circumstances grows a village organization embracing independent households and characterized by differences in social status, privilege, and occupation. With the ancestors of the peoples who are the principal subject of the following papers, there is in the cultivating group the leading man of the community, or village chief, having his share of the communal land, and maintained in a position of pre-eminence, authority, and leisure by the variously rendered service of the other members of the commune; there is the depository and expounder of ceremonial rules and observances, who has similar

advantages, only, less in degree; there is the husbandman cultivating his plot, and discharging his measure of duty to the chief; and the craftsman, no longer an ingredient in each family, but become by division of labour a distinct entity of the village, exchanges the results of his handywork and specially acquired skill against a share of the produce on the threshing-floor of his neighbours.

In regarding a social system of this kind one cannot fail to recognise the great advance which has been made upon the preceding stages in the economic application of human labour and intelligence to the reducing of natural products into possession, and the manufacturing or adaptation of them to the use of man. The aggregate of the articles brought within the reach of man and made available for his use and requirements is greatly larger in proportion to the numbers of the community than it was under either of the preceding conditions of life. This aggregate—in modern phraseology the wealth of the community—is distributed by a

process of exchange, which may be deemed in a certain sense the beginning of trade, but which yet is not trade. The cultivator, the miller, the carpenter, the potter, the weaver, each does his part in maintaining the out-turn of usable products, raw and manufactured, and so far as he produces in excess of his own household's wants he does so for the benefit of his neighbours, on the understood but not expressed consideration of getting in return for it shares of their respective productions.

It is especially to be observed that in its earliest form this peculiar sort of barter is regulated by custom, and is not a system of bargaining. It may be conceived of as having grown naturally out of the prior order of things. Antecedent to the times of the village settlement, those members of the nomad family group, who did the weaving, or the carpentering, or the tent-work, or kept up the cattle furniture, &c., simply performed the tasks which fell to them in ordinary course, and participated each according to his status in the

community of goods, which was the product of their joint labours. After the cultivating settlement had come into being, the tilling of the soil and the various artizan crafts became, probably by a slow process of gradual change, the separate occupations of independent households; but the old family principle only thereby experienced a new development: each occupation was directed to and limited by the wants of the whole village, and each craftsman in return for the results of his labour and skill in his own specialty received a customary share of all the other villagers' productions. The miller, for example, ground the corn of the village chief, and perhaps of the religious teacher, or wisdom man, upon an obligation of duty to a superior; he ground the corn of the watchman in return for the benefit of his service; of the potter for the needful supply of cooking and domestic vessels; of the cultivator for an ascertained quantity of grain at harvest time. In like manner the cultivator contributed a share of the produce of his threshing-floor to the chief

and other privileged persons of the village (if any) as a duty, to the watchman in return for his service, to the barber for his shaving, to the miller for his grinding; while the barber on his part shaved the miller's household for his grinding, the carpenters for a portion of the grain which the latter earned from the cultivators. And the other links of the village nexus, if pursued, yield a repetition of these illustrations.

It is a principal feature of this form of primitive village communism that the just-mentioned interchange of benefits or distribution of commodities is not effected through any process of competition, but is regulated by custom, which, in case of question, is determined either by the village chief alone, or by a village assembly.

And the spirit of enmity to all outsiders, which marked alike the hunter's family and the nomad camp, animated in a still greater degree, if possible, each separate village society. Except so far as community of blood, or other strong influence,

favoured the defensive combination of villages against common dangers, and so led practically to an enlargement of the commonwealth, each village community stood alone, self-sufficient and unyielding in its hostility to all that lay outside its own pale.

These two early communistic principles, last mentioned, have survived very persistently into the later stages of society; and their influence can be unmistakably traced in the land-economics of modern Europe.

The hostility, in particular, ripening eventually into militancy (to use an apt term of Mr. Herbert Spencer's), was the means of bringing about the next great change in the evolution of human society. The individual primitive man, in like manner, as he killed and eat such wild animals as he could reach and overcome, appropriated, without being troubled by any notions of right and wrong in the matter, the goods of such men as he encountered outside his own circle and was able to overpower.

The one was as legitimate prey as the other. And the combined force of the village, under the leadership of its chief, or perhaps a member of his family, naturally acted in a similar way towards other villages. From this root sprang the domination of a fighting class over an aggregation of villages, and so initiated the formation and growth of political communities; while the acquisition of the better weapons and other advantages tending to the increase of physical force, led in the end to the diffusion and predominance of the stronger peoples, and to the development of national feeling and power as we see it manifested in history.

How remote from the present times, was the apparent beginning of the human race, from which the foregoing, in large measure imaginary, course of evolution has been followed, can only be realized by briefly passing under review so much, little though it be, as is known of the successions of men which have since occurred.

The long series of ages which in geology is

termed the pleistocene period of the earth's history, is, it need hardly be remarked, distinguished from the periods which preceded it by the circumstance that a very large proportion of all the species of mammals prevalent during its currency have remained unchanged to the present day, and are at this time flourishing contemporaneously with man on the face of the globe. And only one species of mammal,¹ namely, the African hippopotamus, out of those few which survived from an earlier period into the pleistocene period, has succeeded in maintaining its place in the terrestrial fauna under the existing order of things. Moreover, no traces of man have yet been found which can certainly be attributed to any earlier date. And it therefore seems a fair inference to conclude that previously to the commencement of the pleistocene period the conditions of life on the globe were

¹ It will be seen that in the short survey of geological and ethnological facts which here follows, the views of Professor Boyd Dawkins and of the late M. Paul Broca, have been adopted.

not such as to favour the existence of man, while during that period conditions which suited a large number of the present contemporaries of the human mammal would probably offer no obstacle to his appearance.

The available geological evidence bearing on the point seems to establish man's existence at a time when enough of the pleistocene period had elapsed to suffice for the occurrence therein of considerable change in the physical circumstances of the earth and in the composition of its fauna and flora. In the earlier portion of the period the British Isles were a constituent part of the continent of Europe; and both Spain and Italy were probably connected with Africa. The climate of the European area was such as to enable the leopard to range as far north as the Mendip hills, the lion to frequent Yorkshire, and the porcupine to live in Belgium.

Then, as now, however, arctic conditions obtained in the polar regions; and as time went on

these spread southward. Several systems of glaciers grew up on the northern tracts of Britain, serving to cover Scotland and much of England under a sheet of ice. And this state of things prevailed for a long period of time. Afterwards, the rigour of the climate abated; temperate conditions came in; and the southern limit of ice and snow retreated northward.

Again, after an interval of the temperate *régime* which thus ensued, snow and ice once more resumed their sway over England and Mid-Europe for a period, which the effects produced by their agency prove to have been very considerable. And lastly, the ice and snow for a second time retreated from the south, giving place gradually to the temperate climate of historic days.

As the arctic climate, on the first occasion, came southwards, the hot country mammals left our latitudes for warmer regions, and were replaced by mammals of a temperate zone. These latter seem to have mostly come in from the east,

doubtless driven from Central Asia by the advancing cold on the north and finding the only practical outlets for them open towards the plains of Europe. These, too, in turn, were driven more southward as the arctic conditions continued to progress into lower latitudes. On the return of the ice-line the proceeding was reversed. And a like series of events, differing perhaps in degree, occurred at each oscillation.

During this long lapse of time new forms entered on the scene and the several successions of fauna backwards and forwards over the same ground gave rise to a very complex state of animal life. So far as the evidence at present extends, man was existing in England during the temperate interval which separated the two ice invasions. He was seemingly in the lowest stage of human civilization, possessing only the rudest and least effective stone implements and weapons. Professor Boyd Dawkins states¹ the effect

¹ *Early Man in Britain*, p. 137.

of the evidence to be that "man. was living in the valley of the lower Thames before the arctic mammalia had taken full possession of the valley of the Thames, and before the big-nosed rhinoceros had become extinct"; and he adds:—

"The primeval hunter who followed the chase in the lower valley of the Thames, armed with his rude implements of flint, must have found abundance of food and have had great difficulty in guarding himself against the wild animals. Innumerable horses, large herds of stags, uri, and bison, were to be seen in the open country; while the Irish elk and the roe were comparatively rare. Three kinds of rhinoceros and two kinds of elephant lived in the forests. The hippopotamus haunted the banks of the Thames, as well as the beaver, the water rat, and the otter. There were wolves also, and foxes, brown bears and grisly bears, wild cats and lions of enormous size. Wild boars lived in the thickets; and as the night came on the [hyænas assembled in packs

to hunt down the young, the wounded, and the infirm."

With the advance of the glacial climate man disappeared for a while from southern England; but after this had again given way to temperate conditions his vestiges become very plentiful, and serve to indicate that he was still in the lowest stage of culture. He lived by the chase of wild animals in the southern parts of England, in France and Spain, and throughout the Mediterranean area, as well on the African as the European side, in Palestine and in India—"a nomad hunter poorly equipped for the struggle of life, without knowledge of metals, and ignorant of the art of grinding his stone tools to a sharp edge."¹

His contemporaries in England, at this era, were the hippopotamus and the straight, tusked elephant, the reindeer, and other arctic animals; in Spain, the African elephant; and in Greece, possibly the pigmy hippopotamus. And there can be little doubt that

¹ *Early Man in Britain*, p. 163.

the period of time, for which this description is applicable, was of very long duration.

The progress of physical change which slowly and gradually led up to the historical state of things on the face of the earth, included change in the human species. The men whose remains are found under the circumstances above described are commonly spoken of as the river-drift men. During the latter part, however, of the pleistocene period these were apparently replaced by men of a somewhat higher type, whom it is convenient to distinguish by the name of the cave-men, and who not only added ingenious and efficient weapons and implements of bone to the rude stone weapons of their predecessors, but exhibited a remarkable talent for ornamenting their various weapons, tools, and implements, with graphic drawings of the animals they hunted and killed.

The geographical range of the cave-men was markedly less than that of the river-drift men. And there appears good ground for supposing that

the two groups sprang from different origins, and in particular that the cave-men were allied to, if not identical with, the Eskimo of the present day.

As in the case of the river-drift men the period of time covered by the generations of the cave-men was also very long, terminating only with the pleistocene age.

The era of time, which in chronological order immediately followed the days of the cave-men, and which itself reached to the commencement of history (in a certain manner, indeed, overlapping it), exhibits to us in the area of Europe man in three successive stages of culture, respectively denominated the neolithic, the bronze, and the iron age, all superior to that of the cave-men, and each forming a marked step of human progress in advance of the one which precedes it.

The men of the neolithic, or later stone age, had not discovered the use of the metals. As was the case with their predecessors, the river-drift

men and the cave-men, stone was their only cutting and piercing medium; and hence, notwithstanding the considerable interval of time which seems to have separated them from the cave-men, they strictly constitute a member of the stone-using group and are appropriately designated by reference to their position therein. They are, however, sharply distinguished from the earlier members of the same group by the fact that they managed, by grinding, to give polished surfaces and smooth edges to their tools and weapons of stone, thus rendering them greatly more efficient instruments than the rudely chipped instruments of the river-drift men and cave-men could possibly be. They lived in substantially constructed huts, and had attained to some proficiency in the arts of pottery and of weaving. The dog, the sheep, the goat, the ox, (short-horn) and the hog, which had not before appeared in the fauna of the earth, were used by them as domestic animals. To some extent, also, they practised

agriculture. They cultivated wheat, barley, millet, and peas; and they had their orchards of apples, pears, and bullaces.

Notwithstanding, however, that the men of the neolithic age were thus very far superior to their predecessors, the cave-men, in regard to all the material means of life, they were yet greatly inferior to them in pictorial art; so much so that it seems almost impossible, in reason, to suppose them to be the same people in an advanced state of development. Their distribution over Europe was also much more extensive than that of the cave-men. And, judging from the characteristics of the domestic animals and cereals which everywhere accompanied them, we may safely conclude that they came into Europe from the regions of Central Asia, overpowering or driving out by force of their material advantages the cave-men, who seem to have either merged in them or to have disappeared before them—some of them, perhaps, falling back on the more northern and arctic

regions, where the Eskimo now contrive to maintain an unenviable existence.

It is established satisfactorily by ample evidence that the people of at least the earlier portion of the neolithic age were, throughout the British Isles, Mid and South Europe, small in stature, with heads of the peculiar shape termed dolichocephalic—long-skulled. After a time, however, as the obscurity of the later stone age dawns into the grey light of history, it is perceived that there are certainly two very different sets of people in Europe under more or less the same neolithic state of civilization. The earlier long skulled folks seem to have been largely displaced by a tall, broad-skulled (brachycephalic) race, of no higher culture than themselves, who also came westward from the direction of Asia, and who are identified with the Kelts of history. By the greater physical strength, and probably the greater numbers of the latter, the little long skulled men were forced into the rougher and less

accessible localities, more or less isolated from each other; and there seems now to be a well-grounded disposition to believe that they are represented in modern times by the various dispersed branches of a family which has sometimes been termed Iberian, such as the Basques of France and Spain, the earlier Bretons, Welsh, Scotch, and Irish, the ancient Ligurians, Etruscans, &c.

Although both these early Iberians and the Kelts (as just distinguished) in their turn, the one after the other, but with a long unknown interval, appear to have come into Europe from Asia, yet the result of all the relevant evidence seems to be that they were radically distinct from each other in language, physique, and other characteristics, and must therefore be attributed to different sources. And the Kelts are now commonly looked upon as having been among the first of the numerous constituent peoples of the great Aryan family to sweep over and settle upon the European area.

The state of civilization, which has been termed

neolithic does not appear to have been materially modified by the ethnical vicissitudes just referred to. It was the civilization of the early Kelts, as well as of their Iberian predecessors; and it prevailed alike for a long duration of time with the inhabitants of Northern Africa, the whole of Europe and Asia, the two Americas, and the islands of the Pacific.

But after a time the knowledge of bronze, the first form under which the metals were used by man as a means of augmenting applied force, became general on the Continent of Europe; and it is noteworthy that when the tall broad-skulled Kelts invaded and swept before them the long-skulled (Iberian) people of the British Isles an event which was posterior—by a long interval of time to the displacement of the cognate people in France and Western Europe—they brought with them weapons and implements of bronze; and they possibly owed much of their success to the superiority over the stone-using islanders which these ancient “arms of precision” must have given them. With the use of bronze, for

some cause which remains as yet unexplained, the practice of burning the dead became customary instead of burying. As might have been anticipated, also, the employment of metal in the construction of implements and utensils gave rise to enormous improvement in the conditions of human life, and effected an immense advance in the welfare of man. Of this plentiful evidence remains in every part of Europe. The initial limit of the bronze civilization can, without much difficulty, be very generally ascertained, and it is plain that the date of its commencement is not for all places the same. Great progress, for instance, had been made in bronze industry in the south and south-east of Europe at a time when nothing better than the neolithic culture existed in the west and in the north. Originating in some outside centre-point, the art was probably brought into Europe by some invading people, and became gradually spread from east to west by the two ordinary means of diffusion, namely, commerce (elementary though it then was) and conquest.

The use of iron soon followed that of bronze, and served to mark a still more advanced grade of civilization. Like that of bronze, too, it came into Europe from the outside, and spread gradually from the south and east to the west and north.

At the commencement of the trustworthy history of Europe the small long-skulled pre-Kelts, bearing the locally differing names of Iberians, Vascones (or Basques), Ligurians, and Etruscans, were occupying the western portions of the British Isles and of France, the Spanish peninsula, the seaboard of the Savoy Alps, and the plain of Lombardy; the Kelts were pressing hard upon them in the eastern and northern districts of France; the Belgæ, again, were on the back of these; and the Romans and Greeks respectively inhabited the two Mediterranean peninsulas.

Those movements of the Kelts and Belgæ were then in progress by which the different tribes of the smaller pre-Keltic people were ultimately compressed into the restricted areas which their descendants still occupy. So far as anything was known of Middle

and Northern Europe, these regions were at that time sparsely inhabited by tribes in a low state of civilization relative to the Greeks and Romans, who were generally designated by the Latin writers Germans; while in the tract about the mouth of the Danube and the north shore of the Black Sea were an apparently altogether different set of people, called the Scythians. Somewhat later the group of Slavonians were recognised as a people distinct from the Germans; and we are all familiar with the subsequent westward and southward migrations of the German, Slavonic, and other little-civilized hordes, all proceeding as from the direction of Asia, which resulted in the subversal of the Roman empire, and led to the development of the many diverse nationalities which now cover the European area. The Latins themselves and the Greeks, as well as the Kelts already spoken of, are found, on examination of the relevant evidence, to be only the fruits of earlier migrations from the same quarter. And ethnologists seem to be generally agreed that

this group almost certainly came from one and the same mother-source in South-Western Asia as the German and Slavonic groups.

From this same centre also, besides the stream north-westwards into Europe, another stream of peoples flowed south-eastwards, bifurcating so as to give rise to the Iranian group in the south and the Hindu group in the east. The latter division, at several different times, poured into India at its north-west corner, and from thence wave by wave spread down the Indus and the Ganges and up the Assam valley, and overflowed southwards as far as it could over the table-land of Central and Peninsular India, displacing or mixing with the relatively aboriginal peoples which it found upon the ground.

The mass of peoples in Europe and Asia resulting from these several streams of migration, diverging from an apparently common centre, to this day exhibit such very marked affinities in their languages, and in other respects, as serve in the aggregate very convincingly to betoken their community of origin.

National traditions, and other historical materials, bear the same way. They are accordingly classed together by ethnologists under the designation sometimes of the Aryan, sometimes of the Indo-European, and often, by German writers, of the Indo-Germanic family of peoples.¹

On the outskirts of the area now occupied in Europe by the Aryan nations, as above defined, we find, in the south, one or two small isolated patches of non-Aryan peoples, seemingly the descendants of the neolithic pre-Kelts, with whom we have seen the Kelts in juxtaposition, and on the north the Finns, Lapps, and Samoides. The latter also form a decidedly non-Aryan group, nearly allied to the great yellow-complexioned family of peoples (commonly termed the Turanian or Mongolian family) which is spread over Asia north of the Himalayas. It would seem that the Aryan stream of Kelts, Latins

¹ The term Aryan seems to owe its appropriateness for this purpose to the fact that it is the name by which both the Hindu people and the Iranian people alike are spoken of in their respective scriptures, namely, in the Vedas and the Zendavesta.

Greeks, Germans, Slavonians, &c., in their progressive advance into Europe from the East, encountered on the ground the Iberian pre-Kelt and the Turanian on the south and north respectively, and pushed them on one side or absorbed them. The mixture of the Kelts and Latins with the small brown southern race is still easily recognised in the modern Romance group of Romanians, Greeks, Italians, Spanish, Portuguese, and the southern French.

In like manner the Iranian stream met, on the south, Arabs and the Mesopotamian ancestors of the Jews, who, with the Phœnicians and the inhabitants of Lower Egypt, and others, all allied to each other, belonged to a third very distinct family, now known as the Semitic. And it also appears, from recent discoveries, that these Semitic Mesopotamians were themselves preceded by a most remarkable people of advanced civilization, who have been distinguished by the name Accadian, and whose language seems to connect them with the Turanian family.

And the Hindu stream of Aryan immigrants, in

their turn, came into conflict with prior occupants of the soil in the river basins and on the peninsular table-land of India. These also appear to have been remotely connected, at least in language, with the Turanian family lying on the north of the Himalayahs. They were, however, very distinct from the latter in complexion (among other physical characteristics), for instead of being yellow they were black. The Kohls, the Ghonds, the Tamils; and the remaining members of the Dravidian or South Indian group are the representatives of these people at the present day, and are all very dark. It does not appear that the darkness of tint is the direct consequence of solar action, but it in some way implies qualities which enable the possessor the better to resist the deleterious conditions of tropical climate. And for this cause, probably, by force of the principle, "survival of the fittest," the Hindu population of the Indian peninsula, resulting from the greater or less mixture of immigrant with indigenous blood, is more purely Aryan in the

neighbourhood of the place of entrance, and manifests a gradual shading off of the Aryan type as one pursues the course of the stream's advance to its further tropical extreme. Kabul and the Punjab everywhere afford fine examples of the comparatively unmodified Aryan; but at a glance the ordinary Bengali of the Delta, or the Uriya of Orissa, is perceived to be of mixed origin. The lips, the nose, and the cheek-bones betray a foreign ingredient; and, above all, the darkened tint of the skin shows the infiltration from without of a very strong colouring material: the Kabuli is almost, if not quite, as fair as an Englishman, while the lower-caste Bengali very nearly approaches the negro in blackness. Thus it happens that within the limits of the Hindu branch of the Aryan family of peoples the utmost diversity of national character and feature is to be observed, a diversity which is especially striking in regard to the colour of the skin. The like occurs, though to a very much less extent, in the Iranian and European branches. But,

notwithstanding the very remarkable differences which serve to distinguish many members of the widely distributed Aryan family (as above described) from the rest, full consideration of all the relevant facts leaves little or no room for doubt that they are all, as a whole, sprung from, or rather developed in the manner indicated out of, a common origin, the local site of which was in the south-western highlands of Asia.

The great Turanian and Mongolian family of peoples who still cover the larger part of Asia and China is more numerous than the Aryan; and may be said to exhibit no sort of community with it.

And the Semitic again, in the present state of the information bearing upon the point, cannot be assigned a community of origin with either of the other families.

This survey, most incomplete though it be, of the career of the human race, reaching from the point of time when its appearance in the world

can be first made out, down to historical times, renders it plain that the existing state of mankind on the face of the globe, marvellously perfect as it seems to be in some quarters, has only been arrived at by a slow and tedious course of progression, not easily to be realized in conception, commencing with a stage little if at all in advance of that of the most intelligent beasts of the forest, and continued through a long series of ages which lie at present beyond measurable computation.

The spread of the ill-provided river-drift men in association with a hot-country fauna over the greater part of the known globe must itself have required a very long lapse of time. And the terrestrial and other physical changes, which took place while the river-drift men and the cave-men were living, evidently effected as they were by the slow action of the natural causes with which we are familiar, tell the same tale. Again, the total disappearance everywhere on the earth of the river-drift men, followed by their partial

replacement in Europe by the cave-men, who, though still a hunting people, were of a markedly higher culture than their predecessors, betraying an essentially different (probably a cold country) derivation, seems to point to an intervening long gap of time, as to the duration of which we can form no estimate.

Another gap of unknown interval wholly separates the cave-men from the men of the later stone (neolithic) age, who at their first appearance, as has been already recounted, are found to be an agricultural people in full possession of the most important of the cereals and of the domestic animals of the modern European farmer.

The Kelts and others, who formed the front of the first Aryan wave of emigration from Asia into Europe, doubtless joined on in time with the earlier long-skulled neolithic people. But the manner in which they must have become severed from their parent Asian stock, and differentiated from their collateral relatives, can only be accounted for by taking a large allowance of time

for the previous development of the family tree. With man, as with animals, the process of evolution is now known to be ceaselessly at work, though usually slow of operation. Each individual of a generation, being the product of two factors, repeats generally by inheritance the common characteristics of its two parents, subject to variations which are due to the combination of differing elements. With an alteration in the circumstances of life, a variety so arising, better adapted than the parent form to succeed under the new conditions, while retaining its general features, will come to prevail uniformly in every community which is by any means left to its own resources shut off from foreign intermixture. In this way every offshoot from a tribe or family, especially during the earlier stages of civilization, when intercommunication is restricted and life is dominated by the external conditions of nature, seems apt, sometimes speedily, though in general slowly, to grow into a divergent branch, exhibiting

differences of physical characteristics in comparison with the original type. And the change is both accelerated and augmented where the new community is formed from an intermixture of an immigrant with an indigenous race.

A like process goes on in language. The speech of each individual is generally the same as the speech of those from whom he has acquired it by imitation; this is equivalent to the rule of inheritance. At the same time it exhibits variation due to the individual himself, and the circumstances affecting him; and, on the principle of the "survival of the fittest," that variation which involves the least trouble under those circumstances consistent with clearness will in the end come to prevail with much uniformity.

In his "Introduction to the Science of Language" (vol. ii., p. 318) Prof. Sayce writes:—

"Does the science of language help us to answer the question of the antiquity of man? The answer must be both Yes and No. On the one side it declares as plainly

"as geology or pre-historic archæology that the age of the
"human race far exceeds the limit of six thousand years, to
"which the monuments of Egypt allow us to trace back the
"history of civilized man; on the other side it can tell us
"nothing of the long periods of time that elapsed before the
"formation of articulate speech, or even of the number of
"centuries which saw the first essays at language gradually
"developing into the myriad tongues of the ancient and
"modern world. All it can do is to prove that the antiquity
"of man as a speaker is vast and indefinite. When we con-
"sider that the grammar of the Assyrian language, as found
"in inscriptions earlier than B.C. 2000, is in many respects
"less archaic and conservative than that of the language
"spoken to-day by the tribes of central Arabia,—when we
"consider further that the parent language which gave birth
"to Assyrian, Arabic, and other Semitic dialects must have
"passed through long periods of growth and decay, and that
"in all probability it was a sister of the parent tongues of
"Old Egyptian and Lybian, springing in their turn from a
"common mother-speech,—we may gain some idea of the ex-
"treme antiquity to which we must refer the earliest form
"we can discover of a single family of speech. And behind
"this form must have lain unnumbered ages of progress and
"development during which the half-articulate cries of the
"first speakers were being slowly matured into articulate and
"grammatical language. The length of time required by
"the process will be most easily conceived if we remember
"how stationary the Arabic of illiterate nomads has been
"during the last four thousand years, and that the language re-
"vealed by the oldest monuments of Egypt is already decrepit
"and outworn, already past the bloom of creative youth."

"An examination of the Aryan languages will tell the same
 "tale, although the process of change and decay has been
 "immeasurably more rapid in these than in the Semitic
 "idioms. But even among the Aryan languages the gram-
 "matical forms of Lithuanian are still, in many cases, but
 "little altered from those used by our remote forefathers in
 "their Asiatic home, and in one or two instances are more
 "primitive and archaic than those of Sanskrit itself. What-
 "ever may have been the rate of change, however, it is im-
 "possible to bring down the epoch at which the Aryan tribes
 "still lived in the same locality, and spoke practically the
 "same language, to a date much later than the third millen-
 "nium before the Christian era. A long interval of previous
 "development divides the language of the Rig-Veda, the
 "earliest hymns of which mount back, at the latest, to the
 "fourteenth century B.C., and that of the oldest portions of
 "the Homeric poems, and yet there was a time when the
 "dialect that matured into Vedic Sanskrit and the dialect
 "which matured into Homeric Greek were one and the same.

* * * * *

"The Ural-Altaic family of languages bears similar testi-
 "mony. To find a common origin for Uralic, Turkish, and
 "Mongol, we must go back to an indefinitely great antiquity.
 "The Accadian of Chaldea is an old and decaying speech
 "when we first discover it in inscriptions of 3000 B.C.—a
 "speech, in fact, which implies a previous development at
 "least as long as that of the Aryan tongues; and if we would
 "include Accadian, or rather the Protomedic group of lan-
 "guages to which Accadian belongs, in the Ural-Altaic family,
 "we shall have to measure the age of the parent-speech

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"by thousands* of years. The Mongols, moreover, are
"physiologically different in race from the Ugro-Tatars, and
"it is difficult to estimate the length of time required for the
"complete displacement of the original dialects of Mongols,
"Mantchus, and Tunguses by those of a foreign stock. But
"it was at any rate considerable.

"Comparative philology thus agrees with geology, prehis-
"toric archæology, and ethnology, in showing that man as a
"speaker has existed for an enormous period; and this enor-
"mous period is of itself sufficient to explain the mixture
"and interchanges that have taken place in languages, as
"well as the disappearance of numberless groups of speech
"throughout the globe."

Thus it appears that the requirements of race-
differentiation and of speech-evolution argue just
as forcibly as geological considerations towards the
almost inevitable conclusion, that man has had his
place, and has been fighting the battle of life, in
the animal world for unreckonable ages of time.

The course of ethical development (in which
custom and usage has at all stages been a domi-
nant factor of vast retarding effect), so far as it
can be seized and realized, and as it has been en-
deavoured to be traced above, discloses therefore a
history, which does no more than accord with the

results of these other independent sources of testimony, and which is in no degree too protracted. The length of the period requisite for the actual progress made, and the extreme slowness of the general rate of advance, can only be rightly understood when the persistency of every social institution that has once been established is clearly apprehended. Indeed, conservatism is the primary principle of every regulated society of men. The activity of each community, and the conduct of its members, are, in all stages of culture, mainly directed and governed by custom and usage. Change means new acquisition of some sort, and commonly follows but slowly upon it.

And of all institutions among the Aryans perhaps a certain well-defined village organization, with its associated method of land-holding, has been the most widespread and has proved itself the most enduring. In the three papers which have been put together in the present small volume, an attempt has been made to describe

this organization, as it is found working, at least to a partial extent, in Bengal and Ceylon at the present day, and to offer an explanation of the manner in which it may reasonably be supposed to have grown up.

The first paper, which deals with *Modern Village Life in Bengal*, was first published in the *Calcutta Review* in 1864, and embodies the results of the writer's personal observations and inquiries pursued pretty continuously for all parts of the Presidency during a residence of ten years in Calcutta.

The second and much shorter paper on *The Agricultural Community in Ceylon* is the substance of notes made by the writer while living for two years in that island from 1877 to 1879.

And the third paper was read in the interval, namely in 1872, before the *Bethune Society* of Calcutta. Its aim is to explain the growth *ab initio* of the Bengal institution, as well as the rise of the social grades and property conceptions, which are intimately connected with it, by an

application of those principles of evolution and differentiation which are conspicuous in the foregoing concise review of such conclusions of modern scientific research as bear on the question, and by assuming for the purpose a great lapse of time in the development of the human race, such as the results of that research more than amply justify.

The Russian *Mir*, so fully and graphically described in Mr. Wallace's pages, is an instance of the like institution, also a living reality, in actual operation, at the present day among a third people of Aryan extraction. And there are probably few of the other Aryan nationalities in Europe which, even though they may have long lost the village organization itself, do not retain some still un-effaced impressions of the rules of landholding, and the conceptions of land rights which were incident thereto.

Moreover the manor, which has only recently ceased to have practical activity, was the English feudal form of the oriental village, or rather was

the substitute for it, which was brought into existence by the superposition of a foreign dominant power. Probably, too, the Anglo-Saxon hide of land was but the equivalent of the Bengal *jot*, i.e. a one-household share of the common land, originally the extent cultivable with one yoke of oxen—a one-plough portion of land.

The landlord's absolute property in land, and the usage of hiring it out to a farmer on a cultivating contract for a money rent, which has for some time prevailed in England to the exclusion of inferior customary tenures or occupations, is the outgrowth of the *unde* or *metayer* letting, which was the first mode of tilling by deputy under the earlier village and manorial system. Mr. Caird (*Landed Interest*, p. 53) remarks, that the landlord and tenant system "is so general in the United Kingdom that we really cannot be said to know any other, and yet, with reference to almost every other country but our own, is exceptional in Europe." Even now, as the same eminent authority

admits (p. 78), in Ireland the tenant "has established for himself a claim to a co-partnership in the soil itself." And this seems rather to be of the nature of a survival from an older state of things in spite of English influence to the contrary, and not to be a mere modern assertion of right on the part of the Irish farmer brought about, as Mr. Caird appears to think it has been, by reason of the landlord's neglect of his proper duties.

In England, again, and the greater part of Europe manors or villages became fused into larger administrative units—such as hundreds—and so eventually a national system of fiscal and municipal government was developed from the people upwards, and became consolidated into one homogeneous structure. In the East, on the other hand, various causes favoured the permanence of the purely village administration, and supreme political power became the prize and prerogative of the strongest arm, to be exercised through officers on the zamindari principle, with little concern

for anything else but the command of the local collections.

It need hardly be added that the Turks have introduced into Europe a modification of this latter form of government, and that it is now a question of very wide interest how this can be made to work in conformity with the ideas of national welfare which have been generated insensibly under the operation of a totally different system.

With these and other circumstances of the like kind in view, it is hoped that an attempt to bring under the notice of English readers a detailed account of such village organization as is yet to be seen active among the Indian Aryans may not be altogether inopportune.

**MODERN VILLAGE LIFE
IN BENGAL.**

THE PROPERTY OF THE
HOME DEPT.
OF THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

I.

INS AND OUTS OF THE VILLAGE.¹

IN an attempt to describe for English readers a type specimen of an agricultural village as it exists in Bengal at the present day, it should be premised that the Bengal village differs as much from an English village, as two things bearing the same designation can well be conceived to differ.

There is but one form of landscape to be seen in deltaic Bengal, and that a very simple one. From the sea line of the Sunderbunds on the South, to the curve which, passing through Dacca, Pubna, Moorsheedabad, forms the lower boundary of the red land of the North, the whole country is an,

¹ This with the six succeeding sections, almost as they now stand, appeared as an article in the July and October numbers of the *Calcutta Review* for 1874.

almost perfectly level alluvial plain. It exhibits generally large open spaces—sometimes very large—limited to the eye by heavy masses of foliage. These open spaces, during the height of the South-West Monsoon, are more or less covered with water; at the end of the rains by green waving swarths of rice; and in the dry season are to a large extent fallow ground, varied by plots of the different cold weather (or *rabi*) crops.

There exist almost no roads; that is to say, except a few trunk roads of communication between the capital and the district towns, there are almost none of the European sort, only irregular tracks, sometimes traversable by wheels, along the balks (or *ails*) which divide and subdivide the soil into small cultivated patches or *khēts*. The few other roads which do exist, are *kachcha*, i.e., unmetalled, and are pretty nearly useless except in the dry season.¹

¹ On the relatively high land of West Bengal, which lies outside the delta and below the *ghāts*, something like roads may be seen

The function of main roads as the means of locomotion and carriage of goods is performed in a large part of Bengal by innumerable *khāls* or canals, which branching out from the great rivers Hooghly, Ganges, Pudda, Megna, &c., intersect the country in all directions. Boat travelling upon them is somewhat monotonous, inasmuch as the banks are almost uniformly of bare, greasy, mud, high enough above the water, at other times than during the rains, to shut out from view all that is not placed immediately on their upper margin. But now and then extremely pretty scenes occur, where mango topes and bamboo clumps, straggling with broken front over and along the top, partially disclose the picturesque dwellings which are clustered beneath their shade. River craft of elegant shape and quaintly loaded cargoes are drawn to the *ghāt*, as the sloping ramp is called, or are

through and about the large villages, though even these are often not fitted for wheel traffic. The description in the text is intended for the delta alone.

moored in the water way; and at the bathing hour of early noon the shallower water becomes alive with groups of men, women and children immersed to the waist, and performing their daily ablutions in truly oriental fashion.

Whether a village is thus placed on the high bank of a *khāl*, or is situated inland, it invariably stands on relatively elevated ground above reach of the waters which annually clothe the Bengal world during the period of rains, and is almost as invariably hidden, so to speak, dwelling by dwelling in the midst of jungle. In fact the masses of seemingly forest growth which appear to bound the open spaces of the ordinary landscape are commonly but villages in a pleasant disguise.

These villages can be approached on every side across the *khēts* by passing along the dividing (*ails*) balks. No trace of a street or of any order in the arrangement of the houses is to be discerned in them.

Perhaps it would be correct to say that there

are no houses in the European sense; each dwelling is a small group of huts, generally four, and is conveniently termed a homestead. This is the unit of the material, out of which every village is constructed, and therefore merits a particular description.

The site of the group is a very carefully levelled platform, raised somewhat above the general elevation of the village land, roughly square in figure, and containing say about 800 or 1,000 square yards in area. The huts of which the homestead is composed are made of bamboo and matting, or of bamboo wattled and plastered over with mud, sometimes of mud alone, the floor of the structure also of mud being again raised above the level of the platform. Each hut is one apartment only, about twenty feet long and ten or fifteen feet wide, commonly without a window; the side walls are low, the roof is high peaked, with gracefully curved ridge, and is thatched with a jungle grass; the eaves project considerably, thus forming low

verandahs on the back and front of the hut. These huts are ranged on the sides of the platform facing inwards, and though they seldom touch one another at the ends, yet they do in a manner shut in the interior space, which thus constitutes a convenient place for the performance of various household operations and may be termed the house-space; the native name for it is *uthān*. It is here that the children gambol and bask, seeds are spread to dry, the old women sit and spin; and so on.

The principal hut often has, in addition to the door which opens on this interior quadrangle or house-space, a second door and well kept verandah on the opposite side opening on the path, by which the dwelling can be best approached. This is the *baithakhāna* (sitting room), and is the place where strangers, or men not belonging to the family, are received. It is also very commonly the sleeping place of the male members of the family at night. The mud floor of the hut or verandah

spread with a mat is all the accommodation needed for this purpose; though the head of the house or other favoured individual may afford himself the luxury of a *charpoy*, which is simply sacking, or a coarsely made web of tape or cord, stretched across a rude four-legged frame of wood. The hut which stands on the further side of the quadrangle, facing the *baithakhāna*, is appropriated to the women and children, one of the two others contains the *chula* or mud fireplace and serves the purpose of kitchen, and the fourth is a *gola* or store-room of grain. In one of the huts, whether in the quadrangle or outside, will be the *dhenki*, and that hut generally goes by the name of *dhenki ghar*. The *dhenki* is an indispensable domestic utensil, a very large pestle and mortar, the main purpose of which is to husk rice. The mortar is commonly a vessel, excavated out of a log of wood, and is sunk in the ground; the pestle is the hammer head (also wood) of a horizontal-lever bar which works on a low post or support, and

the other arm of which is depressed by one or two women applying their weight to it; upon their relieving this arm of their weight the hammer falling pounds the *paddy* in the mortar, and by the continuance of this operation the husk of the grain is rubbed off. *Paddy*, the grain of rice, somewhat remotely resembles barley, and must be husked before it can be eaten. It is surprising how effectively the *dhenki* attains its object.

If the family is more than ordinarily well off, the house group may contain more than four huts; there will often be a hut or shed open at the sides in which the cattle are tethered, carrying on a frail loft the primitive plough and other small implements of husbandry; also in Hindu houses a *thakurbāri*, or hut in which the figure of the family deity or patron saint is preserved.

When the number of huts exceeds four in all, one or more as the bullockshed, *gola*, &c., or even the *dhenki-ghar* will commonly be situated

outside the quadrangle, perhaps in front of or near to a corner.

The homestead platform is generally surrounded in an irregular manner by large trees, such as mango, pipal, palms. In small clearings among these a few herbs and vegetables are grown for family use in the curry; and the whole area or compound which belongs to the homestead is marked off from its neighbours, generally, in some very obscure manner, by most rude metes and bounds, though very rarely a tolerably neat fence of some sort may be met with. The women of the family keep the hardened mud floor of the house-space, of the principal huts and of the verandahs scrupulously clean, and often adorn the front wall of the *baithakhāna* with grotesque figures in chalk. But as a rule, the remainder of the homestead compound is in a most neglected dirty condition, even the small vegetable plots are commonly little more than irregular scratchings in the midst of low jungle undergrowth. There is

nothing resembling a well kept garden and there are no flowers. The ^{old} modern Bengali has a very imperfect appreciation of neatness under any circumstances, and is absolutely incapable, unassisted, of drawing either a straight line or an evenly curved line; the traces left by his plough, the edges of his little fields, the rows of his planted paddy, &c., exhibit as little order as the marks of inked spider legs across a sheet of paper.

The ordinary agricultural village of Bengal is but a closely packed aggregate of such homesteads as that just described, differing from each other only in small particulars according to the means and occupations of their owners, and more or less concealed among the trees of their compounds. There is too, here and there, waste land in the shape of unoccupied sites for dwellings, and also tanks or ponds of water in the excavations, which furnished the earth for the construction of the homestead, platforms, &c.

These tanks are often rich in all sorts of abominations, overhung with ~~jungle~~, and surface-covered with shiny pond-weed; but they are nevertheless among the most precious possessions of the village. The people bathe there, cleanse their bodycloths, get their drinking-water, and even catch fish in them. For, it should be mentioned that in Bengal every pool of water swarms with fish, small or great; the very ditches, gutters and hollows which have been dried up for months, on the first heavy downfall filling them, turn out to be complete preserves of little fish, and it is strange on such an occasion to see men, women and children on all sides with every conceivable form of net straining the waters for their scaly prey. Sometimes a fortunate or a wealthy ryot has a tank attached to his homestead all his own, to which his neighbours have no right to resort.

To find a particular dwelling among such a cluster as this is an almost impossible task for a stranger. The narrow paths which, threading deviously in

and out between the scarcely distinguished compounds, passing under trees and over mounds, around the tanks and across the rare *maidān* (green), answer to the streets and lanes of an English village, but in truth they constitute a labyrinth of which none but the initiated are in possession of the clue.

The land which the cultivators of the village, *i.e.*, the bulk of the inhabitants, till, is a portion of the lower-lying plain outside and around the village. The family of a homestead which may consist of a father and sons, or of brothers or of cousins, usually cultivates from 2 to 10 acres in the whole, made up of several plots, which often lie at some distance from one another. The men go out to their work at daybreak, plough on shoulder, driving their cattle before them along the nearest village path which leads to the open; sometimes they return at noon for a meal and bathe in the tank, and afterwards go out a second time to their work, but oftener they remain out till the afternoon, having some food brought to them about midday by

the women and children. One man and his young son (still in his boyhood) with a plough and a pair of oxen will cultivate as much as three acres, and so on in proportion.¹ There is no purely agricultural labouring class as we English know it. Small cultivators and the superfluous hands of a family will work spare times for hire on their neighbours' land, and in some villages, where the occupation of a caste, say the weavers caste, has died a natural death, the members forced to earn their livelihood by manual labour, amongst other employments take to labour on the land for wages. For the harvest a somewhat peculiar arrangement is often made. The *paddy* grown on land in one situation will ripen somewhat later or earlier than paddy grown under slightly different circumstances,² and so small gangs of cultivators from one village or district will go to help the cultivators of a distant village

¹ Perhaps even more, with the aid received in reaping, &c.

² Crops are known by designations drawn from the months or seasons in which they are reaped or gathered, as *Bhaduwi*, *Kharif*, *Rabi*; and these respectively depend upon the season of sowing.

to cut their paddy, this assistance being returned if needed. The remuneration received for this work is usually one bundle out of every five, or out of every seven, that are cut. The foreigners build a mat hut for themselves in the harvest field, extemporize a threshing-floor and after having completed their service, carry home their bags of grain. The large topic of agricultural cultivation and landholding will be treated of in a later page.

Perhaps the most striking feature apparent in the village community, as seen by the European eye, is the seeming uniformity in the ways and manners of the daily life of all the component classes, a uniformity which from its comprehensiveness indicates a low level of refinement. From one end to the other of the village the homestead presents scarcely any variation of particular, whether the occupant be a poor ryot or a comparatively wealthy *mahājan* or trader, and its furniture is pretty nearly as meagre in the one case as in the other. Sometimes the house of the wealthier and

more influential man is *pukka* or brick-built, but it is seldom on this account superior in appearance to the thatched bamboo homestead of his neighbour. On the contrary, it is generally out of repair and partially broken down. Its plan is quadrangular, like that of the homestead, with a similar arrangement of offices, and being closed in with its own walls the house is, as a rule, very dismal and dirty on the inside. The interior courtyard by its untidiness and unkempt aspect, commonly offers a striking contrast to the wholesome cleanliness of the open homestead *uthān*. Little more is to be found in the front apartment than in the *baithakhāna* hut of the peasant, if he has one. Probably the one man will have finer and more numerous body cloths than the other, and better blankets; his cooking utensils and other domestic articles (very few in all) may be of brass instead of earthenware, his *hukhas* of metal or even silver mounted instead of a cocoanut shell—his women will wear richer and a greater quantity of ornaments than the women

of his neighbour. He may have a wooden *gaddi* (*takhtaposh*), or low platform in his receiving-room, on which he and his guests or clients may sit cross-legged, slightly raised above the earthen floor. He may have a richly carved in place of a plain *sanduk*, or strong box, for the custody of his valuables, or even a plurality of them. But both households will conform to the same general habits of life, and those very primitive. The food of the two is pretty much alike, rice in some form or other and curry; and this is eaten by taking it out of the platter or off the plaintain leaf with the fingers. The appliances of a slightly advanced stage of manners such as anything in the shape of knives and forks and spoons for eating purposes, tables, chairs, &c., are almost unknown.

At home, and while at work, most men go naked, all but the *dhoti* or loin cloth, and very commonly children of both sexes up to the age of seven or eight years are absolutely naked. In Europe, as men rise above the poorer classes in means, they

apply their savings in the first instance to the increase of personal comfort, convenience, the better keeping of their houses, and its incidents the garden, &c. This appears not to be the case in Bengal to any great extent. Often the foreigner's eye can detect but little distinction between the homesteads and surroundings of the almost pauper peasant and those of the retired well-to-do tradesman. The mode in which the possession of wealth is made apparent, is ordinarily by the expenditure of money at family ceremonies, such as marriage, *shraddhas* (funeral obsequies) and readings of national and religious epics, the Bhagbut, Rāmāyan, and so on. On the occasions of *shadis* and *shraddhas*, the cost is in the preparation and purchase of offerings, presents, and payments to Brahman priests, presents to, and the feeding of, Brahmans generally. For the readings, the Brahman narrator (*kathak*) is paid very highly, and both he and his audience are sometimes maintained for several days by the employer. Then certain religious festivals are kept

annually by such families as can afford to do so. In particular Kalis' in Kartik (October) Laksmis' at about the same time and Saraswati's or Sri Panchamis' in Magh (end of January). And ceremonies in honour of Durga are commonly performed by well-to-do people. At these times rich families spend very large sums of money, indeed. The social respect, which is everywhere commanded by the possession of wealth, seems to be meted out in Bengal very much according to the mode or degree of magnificence with which these semi-public family duties are performed, and thus it happens that even in the most out of the way agricultural village, such small ostentation in this way as can be attained unto, is the first aim of the petty capitalist in preference to any effort at improving the conditions of his daily life. The people are still in a stage of civilization, in which the advantages of refinement and convenience in the manner of living are unfelt, and the exciting pleasures of the spectacle all powerful.

In village families, the women are almost all alike absolutely ignorant and superstitious. Their dress is a coarse cloth with rude ornaments on their arms and ankles. They do all the menial work of the household, even when the family ranks among the better classes. Their habit of going daily to the tanks to fetch water and for washing gives them opportunity for gossip and searching of reputations which is seldom lost and often produces a bitter fruit. The religious creed of both men and women is most crude and ill-formed, at best a tangled tissue of mythological fable. Such worship as is not vicarious, is fetish and deprecatory in its object. Women especially, probably from their greater ignorance and restrained condition of life, are disposed to attribute even common incidents to the agency of invisible beings. There are for them jungle spirits, and river spirits, headless spirits, six-handed goddesses, ghosts, goblins, and in some parts of Bengal witchcraft is firmly believed in. An old woman with uneven

eyes is certain to be looked upon as a witch, and children are carefully prevented from appearing before such a one. Girls perform *broto*s with the purpose of averting future ills. Astrology, half science, half faith, grows out of these elements and has its professors in nearly every considerable village. Signs of prognostication are carefully sought for, and bear each an assigned importance. For instance, sneezing is generally inauspicious. The ticking sound of the lizard is a deterring omen. When certain stars rule, the women of a family will not leave the house. Women will hesitate to cross a stream of water the day before that fixed for the performance of a *shradh*. In short, their down-sittings and uprisings, walking, sleeping, eating, drinking, may be said to be subject to the arbitrary control of spiritual agencies; and a numerous body of astrologers finds employment and a not despicable means of living, in the interpretation of the phenomena, by which these supernatural

governors allow their will or intention to be discovered.¹

The plot of ground on which the homestead stands and the small surrounding compound which goes with it, is hired of a superior holder. A common rent is Re. 1, 1-4 1-8 per annum for the homestead plot, and somewhat less for the attached piece. The buildings, however, which constitute the homestead, are usually constructed by the tenant and belong to him. Should he move to another place, he may take away the materials or sell them. This is one reason why mud, mat, and bamboo dwellings are the rule, and *pakka* (brick-built) houses the exception. The largest mat hut of a homestead will cost from Rs. 30 to 50 to build entirely anew. The *chulha*, or cooking-stove, is made by the women, of mud. The *dao*, or bill-hook, which as a tool is the Bengali's very jack-of-all trades, is got from the village blacksmith for a

¹ To make a pilgrimage to some one of certain very holy places, and if possible to spend the last days of life there, or at least to die on the banks of holy Ganges, is the cherished desire of every one, male or female, rich or poor.

few annas. The plough-handle of the cultivator is prepared almost for nothing by the ryot himself, perhaps with the assistance of the village carpenter, and its toe is shod with iron by the village blacksmith for one rupee.¹ An average pair of bullocks may be obtained for Rs. 20, and the price of the few earthen pots and pans of various sorts, which constitute the necessary utensils for household purposes, may be reckoned in pice.

From such facts as these an idea may be formed of the exceedingly scanty dimensions of the ordinary villager's accumulated capital; and too often of this even a large proportion merely represents a debt due to the *mahājan*.² The extreme poverty of, by far

¹ The plough is a most simple wooden tool without any iron about it except the pointed ferule at the toe. In shape it closely resembles a thin anchor; one claw goes into the ground at such an inclination that the other is nearly vertical and serves as a handle for the ploughman; the shank is the plough-beam to which the bullocks are attached. There is no share coulter, or breast; the pointed end only stirs the earth, it does not turn it. The whole is so light that a man easily carries it over his shoulder.

² See note (A) in the Appendix.

the largest portion, *i.e.*, the bulk of the population in Bengal (the richest part of India) is seldom rightly apprehended by English people, who have not had intimate eye experience of it. • It is the tropical climate and the tropical facility of producing rice which admits of life, and a certain low type of health being maintained on a minimum of means. Seven rupees a month is a sufficient income wherewith to support a whole family. Food is the principal item of expense, and probably one rupee eight annas a month will, in most parts of Bengal, suffice to feed an adult man and twelve annas a woman, even in a well to do establishment. Such of the villagers as are cultivators generally have sufficient rice of their own growth for the house consumption; the little cash which they require is the produce of the sale of the *rabi* (cold weather) crops. The other villagers buy their rice unhusked (*paddy*) from time to time in small quantities, and all alike get their salt, tobacco (if they do not grow this), *gurrh*, oil, *masala*, almost daily at the general dealer's (*modi*) shop.

Purchases in money value so small as these, namely, the daily purchases of the curry spices needed by one whose sole subsistence for a month is covered by one rupee eight annas, obviously calls for a diminutive coin. The pice, or quarter part of an anna, which is the lowest piece struck by the mint, is not sufficiently small, and cowries at the rate of about 5,120 to the rupee, are universally employed to supplement the currency.

The *modi's* shop is a conspicuous feature in the village. In a large village there will be three or four of them, each placed in a more or less advantageous position, relative to the village paths, such as at a point where two or more thoroughfares meet, in a comparatively open situation, or in the neighbourhood of the place where the weekly or bi-weekly *hāt* is held. The shop in eastern Bengal is most commonly a bamboo and mat hut, sometimes the front one so to speak of the homestead group, sometimes standing singly. To open shop the mat side next the path or roadway is either removed

altogether or swung up round its upper edge as a hinge, and supported on a bamboo post, pent house fashion. The wares then stand exhibited according to their character, seeds and spices in earthen or wooden platters on the front edge of the low counter which the raised floor presents, caked palm sugar (*gurh*), mustard and other oils, salt, rice in various stages of preparation in somewhat large open-mouthed vessels set a little further behind, and quite in the rear broad sacks of unhusked rice or *paddy* (*dāna*); on the side walls are hung the tiny paper kites which the Bengali, child and man alike, is so fond of flying, all sizes of kite reels, coarse twines, rude and primitive pictures, charms, &c., while the vendor himself squats cross-legged in the midst of his stores, or sits on a *morhā* outside. The liquid articles are served out with a ladle, the bowl of which is a piece of cocoanut shell, and the handle a small-sized bamboo spline, and are meted out by the aid of a measure which is made by cutting off a piece of bamboo cane above a knot. The

seeds, and so on, are taken out with the hand or bamboo spoon, and weighed in very rude wooden scales. Occasionally, when the *modi* does business in a large way, the hut which constitutes his shop may be big enough to admit the purchaser, and then the articles will be piled on roughly formed tables or benches. If the sale of cloths—piece-goods—be added to the usual *modi's* business, a separate side of the hut, furnished with a low *takhtaposh*, is generally set apart for this purpose. The *modi* then becomes more properly a *mahājan*, and the bamboo hut will usually be replaced by a *pakka*, brick-built room.

A market or *hāt* is held in most villages twice a week. The market place is nothing more than a tolerably open part of the village site. If one or two large *pīpal* trees overshadow it so much the better, but it is rare that any artificial structures in the way of stalls exist for the protection of the sellers and their goods; when they do so they are simply long narrow lines of low shed roofs covering

a raised floor, and supported on bamboo posts, without side walls of any kind.

The *hāt* is a most important ingredient in the village life system. Here the producer brings his spare paddy, his mustard-seed, his betelnuts, his sugar-cane, his *gurh* treacle, his chillies, gourds, yams; the fisherman brings his fish, the seedcrusher his oils, the old widow her mats and other handy work, the potter his *gharas* and *gamluks*, the hawker his piece-goods, bangles, and so on; the town trader's agents and the local *modis* come to increase their stocks, the rural folks come to supply their petty wants, all alike assemble to exchange with one another the gossip and news of the day; and not a few stay to drink, for it must be known that this is an accomplishment which is by no means rare in India.¹ Each vendor sits cross-legged on the ground with his wares set out around him, and for the privilege of this primitive stall he pays a certain small sum or

¹ See a paper of Rajendra Lala Mitra, Rai Bahadur, LL.D., C.I.E., in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* for 1873, Part 1. No. 1.

contribution in kind to the owner of the *hāt*, who is generally the proprietor, in the peculiarly Indian sense of *zamīndār*, of the rest of the village land. The profits thus derived from a popular *hāt* are sufficiently considerable relative to ordinary rent to induce a singular competition in the matter on the part of neighbouring *zamīndārs*; each will set up a *hāt*, and forbid his ryots (which may be *sub modo* translated 'tenants') to go to the *hāt* of his rival. If orders to this effect fail of success, resort is sometimes had to force, and so it happens that the holding of *hāts* has become fraught with danger to the Queen's peace, and the legislature has found it necessary to give extraordinary preventive powers to the magistrate.

If the village, or any substantial portion of it, is inhabited by Mussulmans, there will be a *maṣjīd* (or mosque) in it. This may be a *pakka* (brick) building, if the community has at any time possessed a member zealous and rich enough to defray the cost of erecting it. More commonly it is of mat

and bamboo. Almost always, of whatever material constructed, it exhibits one typical form, namely, a long narrow room (often in three or more or less distinctly marked divisions) closed at each end and on one side, and having the other side entirely open to a sort of rectangular courtyard or inclosure.¹ The *mulla* who officiates there may be a tradesman, or *modi*, gifted with a smattering of Arabic sufficient to enable him to read the Korān. He is in theory chosen by the *mahalla* (Muhammadan quarter), but practically the office is hereditary and is remunerated by small money payments made on occasions of marriages and other ceremonies.

¹ The characteristic of Muhammadan architecture in India is the hemispherical domed roof. This requires a base of equal dimensions as to length and breadth; and therefore whenever an oblong span has to be roofed over the length of the oblong is made some multiple of its breadth, and is divided into the corresponding number of squares by transverse rows of pillars and arches. The whole roof is then constructed of a succession of domes. In this way the long interior of a mosque becomes a series of compartments, commonly three, open to each other between the pillars or under arches; and the village mat room, which is to serve as a mosque, is made to imitate this arrangement without independent purpose.

In passing along a village path one may come upon a group of ten or twenty almost naked children, squatting under a *pīpal* tree near a homestead, or even under a thatched verandah appurtenant thereto, and engaged in marking letters on a plantain or palm leaf, or in doing sums on a broken piece of foreign slate, or even on the smoothed ground before them. This is a *patshāla* or hedge school, the almost sole indigenous means of educating the rising generation ; and by Government aid and otherwise this has under the English rule been developed into a most potent instrument for the spread of primary instruction. It still in its original meagreness exists in most country villages, serving in an infinitesimal degree to meet the needs of an enormous class which the more efficient Europeanized schools as yet fail to reach.¹ The instruction in these *patshālas* is given gratis, for it is contrary to an oriental's social and religious feelings of propriety that learning of any sort should be

¹This was written in 1874.

directly paid for. It is a heavenly gift to be communicated by God's chosen people, the Brahmins, originally to Brahmins and other twice-born classes only, but in these later days, with an extension of liberality not quite accounted for, to outside castes also, so far as regards reading and writing the vernacular, arithmetic, and other small elements of secular knowledge sufficient for the purposes of zamindari accounts. The instructor in a typical *patshāla* is an elderly Brahmin dignified with the designation *Guru Mahasoy*; occasionally, however, he is a *modi* or small tradesman who manage concurrently with his business to keep his eye on the group of urchins squatting under the eaves of his shop hut. Although there is no regular pay for the duty, the instructor does not any more than other folks do his small work for nothing; on the occurrence of special events in his family the parents of his pupils make him a small present of rice or *dāl*, or even a piece of cloth, and when a child achieves a marked stage in its progress, say

the end of the alphabet, words of one syllable, &c., a similar recognition of the occasion is made. A Brahman *guru* will in addition get his share of the gifts to Brahmans which form so serious an item of expense in the celebration of the many festivals and ceremonies obligatory on a well-to-do Bengali.

In parts of Bengal noted for the cultivation of Sanscrit learning, such as Vikrampur and Nuddea, something answering very remotely to an old-fashioned English Grammar School may now and then be met with. A turn of the village path will bring you to a Tol; there within a half open mat shed sit cross-legged on the raised mud floor ten or a dozen Brahman youths decently clothed, with Sanscrit manuscripts on their laps. They are learning grammar from the wonderful work of that chief of all grammarians, Panini, or more probably from Bopa Deva's book, or are transcribing sacred rolls. Each remains some two or three or even more years at this very monotonous employment, until he is able to pass on to the home of deepest learning,

Nobodweep. A rude shelf of bamboo laths carries a few rolls of Sanscrit manuscripts, and this is all the furniture of the Tol. The master of the Tol is a Brahman Pandit who in obedience to the Hindu principle not only teaches but maintains his scholars. He is sometimes, though not often, a very learned man, if learning means knowledge of the Sanscrit language and of the peculiar philosophy enshrined in it: and he is always personally poor. His means of maintaining himself and his disciples are supplied in like manner as, though with fuller measure than, is the case with *Guru Mahasoy*. The Pandit who keeps a successful school, gets a Benjamin's share of presents at all ceremonies and feasts; and all the richer Hindus of the neighbourhood contribute to his needs. He spends the vacations, say about two months of the year, in travelling from house to house (of those worth a visit), throughout an extensive area; and though he seldom actually begs, his purpose is known and he never leaves a roof without a honorarium of Re. 1

and Rs. 2, or even Rs. 20, according to the wealth of his host.

One poor homestead in a village may be occupied by two or three lone widows, who have been left desolate in their generation, without a member of their family to support them, and who have joined their lots together in order the better to eke out a miserable subsistence, and wretched creatures they are to the European eye, emaciated and haggard, with but little that can be called clothing. Yet, somewhat coarsely garrulous, they seem contented enough and certainly manage by mat-weaving and such like handy work, or when occasion offers by menial service, or perhaps oftener still by the aid of kindly gifts from neighbours, to gain a not altogether precarious subsistence.

And very few villages are without one or more specimens of the Byragi, and his female companion, coarse licensed mendicants of a religious order, in whose homestead one of the huts will be a *thakurbāri* of Krishna (an incarnation of Vishnu), whereat the

members of the very numerous sect of Boistubs or Vaisnabas (Vishnubites) on certain festivals lay their offerings. The Byragi, who may be termed the religious minister of one of the sects which owe their origin to the great reformer Chaitanya a little more than three hundred years ago, or perhaps more correctly a member of an ascetic religious order, has very commonly the reputation of leading a grossly sensual life, and his appearance does not always belie his reputation. This is an unfortunate outcome of the noble latitudinarianism, which first taught in modern India that all men without distinction of race, creed, sex, or caste, are equal before God.

The homestead of the *goāla*, or cowman, of which there will be several in a village, is precisely of the same type as are those of his neighbours: and he is also a cultivator as most of them are. Probably the cowshed will be actually brought up to the *uthān* and fill one of the sides. The cows are tiny little animals often not more than three feet high

and miserably thin. They are kept tethered close, side by side of each other in the open shed, and there fed with dried grass, wetted straw, and such like fare, except when under the care of a boy they are allowed to pick up what they can on the waste places about the village, and on the fallow *khēts*. The cowman and his cows are very important members of the village community, for all Hindus consume milk when they can afford to do so. After rice and pulse (*dāl bhāt*) it is the staple food of the people. Neither butter as it exists in Europe nor cheese seem to be known to the natives generally, although the art of making the latter was introduced by the Dutch, at their settlements such as Dacca, Bandel (Chinsurah) and is still practised there for the European market, and a crude form of butter, or as near an approximation thereto as the climate admits of, is also largely made for the richer natives and Europeans. This is commonly effected by first curdling the milk with an acid and then churning the curds. It is the business,

however, of the *goāla* not merely to sell milk in the raw state, but also to compound various preparations of it, thickened. One such preparation, *dahi*, is in consistency not very unlike a mass of thick clotted cream, as it may sometimes be got in the west of England, with all the fluid portion omitted or strained from it, and is pleasant enough to the European taste. This appears to be a universal favourite, and is daily hawked about from homestead to homestead by the *goālas* in earthen *gharas*, which are carried scale-fashion, or *bahangi*, suspended from the two extremities of a bamboo across the shoulder.

The blacksmith's shop is a curious place of its kind, simply a thatched shed, with old iron and new of small dimensions lying about in hopeless confusion. In the centre of the mud floor is a very small narrow anvil, close to the fireplace, which latter is nothing but a hole sunk in the ground. The nozzle of the bellows (an instrument of very primitive construction) is also let into the

ground. The headsmith, sitting on a low stool or on his heels, works the bellows by pulling a string with one hand while with a tongs in the other he manipulates the iron in the fire, and then, still keeping his seat, turns to the anvil whereon with a small hammer in his right hand he performs the guiding part in fashioning the metal, and an assistant also squatting on his heels follows his lead with a larger hammer. The hammer heads are long, on one side only of the haft, and, unbalanced by any make-weight, and the anvil is exceedingly narrow; yet the blows are struck by both workmen with unerring precision. The villagers require but little in the shape of iron work. A few nails, the toes of the ploughs, *kudalis* (cultivating hoes) *daos*, answering to bill-hooks, the *bonti* of domestic and other use (fixed curved blade) constitute pretty nearly all their necessities in the way of iron articles. These are mostly made or repaired by the village blacksmith. His stock of iron is principally English hoop-iron, which is bought

at the nearest town by him, or for him, and which has come out to India in the shape of hands round the imported piecegoods bales.

The professions are not altogether unrepresented in a Bengal village, for you may not seldom meet the *kabiraj* or native doctor, a respectable looking gentleman of the Vaidya caste, proceeding with a gravity of demeanour befitting his vocation, to some patient's homestead. If you can persuade him to open his stores to you, you will probably find him carrying wrapt up, as a tolerably large bundle (cover within cover) in the end of his *chadr*, a very great number of paper packets, resembling packets of flower seeds each carefully numbered and labelled. These are his medicines, almost all in the shape of pills compounded after receipts of antiquity ; many are excellent as specifics, and there seems reason to think that English medical men in India might with advantage resort more than they do to the native pharmacopœia. The *kabiraj* does not charge by fees in the manner of European doctors, but makes a