

individuals and small groups, both full-blood and half-caste, even in long-settled districts.

With regard to social anthropology, it is almost impossible to indicate a relatively 'untouched' tribe for research. The west-central region of Western Australia and the neighbouring south-western corner of the Northern Territory could be included in that category, though the culture is not likely to differ much from those studied in adjacent regions. Moreover, preliminary work is already being done there. The need now is for follow-up research amongst tribes and in areas studied during the past thirty years, concentrating on the process of change, or specializing on selected aspects. A start has been made.

Research has also been carried out amongst many remnant aboriginal groups on pastoral stations and around 'bush' townships in an attempt to 'salvage' their social structure and at least something of their culture. This helps to plot the aboriginal map and so provide a basis for broad generalizations. Mixed-blood aboriginal groups, too, have been studied in most states. Elements of the indigenous culture survive amongst some of them; in addition, the processes of adaptation, of acculturation, and of assimilation, as manifested amongst them in varying degrees, afford a subject of research which is of theoretical significance as well as of practical importance.<sup>1</sup>

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## ANTHROPOLOGICAL RESEARCH PROBLEMS IN INDIA

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India, with a total population of nearly 360 millions,<sup>2</sup> has a tribal population of nearly 25 millions,<sup>3</sup> besides about 50 million 'backward' people. By the Constitution Order of 1950, 212 tribes in 14 states were officially declared to be 'Scheduled Tribes'. These tribes form a rich material for anthropological research.

The Indian caste system, with its water-tight compartments; the conserving and soothing effect of the Hindu religion; the interest of the privileged classes which by a change had everything to lose and nothing to gain; the ignorance and passivity of the underprivileged and low classes; the conservatism of the former colonial powers, who in their own interest discouraged any form of revolutionary change—all these factors preserved intact a variety

1. A fair idea of the research carried out in the New Guinea, Melanesian and Australian fields during the past three decades can be obtained from *Oceania*, a quarterly journal now in its twenty-seventh year. It has been devoted almost wholly to the publication of the results of field-research in this region, having been founded by the Australian National Research Council on the principle that research without publication is futile. (The University of Sydney took over the publication in 1955. Professor A. P. Elkin has been editor and manager since 1933.) Field-work articles on this region have also appeared in other anthropological journals, and as least thirty books and monographs have been published.

2. The exact number given in the Census of 1951 was: 356,829,485.

3. The Census of 1951 gives the number as 19,111,498, but this number is certainly too low. There was a strong tendency among the Census enumerators to return the aboriginals as Hindus.

of races and cultures which ranged from the lowest level of the Stone Age to a high form of civilization. Like a living museum, it provided a wonderful and inexhaustible field of study for all anthropologists, sociologists, prehistorians, historians and folklorists.

Since independence, however, India, owing to her large population and ancient civilization, claims a leading position among the new independent nations of Asia. She is very sensitive about the backward state of nearly a fifth of the whole nation. The Indian Government, therefore, is making tremendous efforts to bring this large portion of the people up to the level of the rest of the population. But not only reasons of political and social prestige prompt India to adopt this policy; the new Constitution of India too enjoins equal rights and equal opportunities for all Indian citizens of whatever creed, class or cultural level. Moreover, all political parties are keen on wooing the aboriginal and backward classes, which form a rich reservoir for the parties to swell their numbers and are a pliable mass which may easily be led whichever way they want.

Consequently government officials and a host of unofficial social workers and reformers bring strong pressure to bear on the aboriginal and backward classes to give up their primitive way of living. A widely propagated and officially directed educational policy does the rest to 'uplift' them.

The result is that the tribes and the backward classes of India are fast losing their independence and isolation and are being forcefully drawn into the strong current which is sweeping the whole country into the powerful stream of general material progress and national prosperity. Whether they like it or not, they have to give up their old traditional ways of life and to adopt the new national culture which is as yet still in the making. Their old picturesque customs and beliefs, their usages and modes of life must be abandoned and a new and modern way of living must be adopted. Thus the old cultures and ways of life in tribal and backward areas will soon be irretrievably lost. Anthropologists, sociologists and folklorists may deplore this development, but it cannot and should not be held up.

If the present pace of cultural and material progress goes on for another twenty years, only a faint memory of the former tribal cultures will survive. Already giant steel plants (at Bhilai, Roorkhela, etc.) with model towns and labour settlements are built in the heart of the tribal areas and the aboriginals flock in thousands to work in the new factories; gigantic projects of new mines, oil wells and refineries are planned in the yet undisturbed primeval forests, while in the near future the most extensive irrigation works will inundate large tracts of the jungle and irrigate others for intensive cultivation. This will necessarily bring an influx of large numbers of new and eager settlers and labourers into the tribal areas.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, the political upheavals in the wake of independence created a vast refugee population for which new land and employment must be found. The only land where the population is less dense and where large forest tracts can still be opened for cultivation is the old homes of the tribes. The government has already decided to settle large numbers of the refugees in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa amidst the tribes.

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1. This government policy is nothing new. Aboriginal tribes in central and southern India have for a century been increasingly deprived of their land, either by government appropriation or by exploitation. In the central area this led to repeated bloody revolts.

It is therefore imperative that anthropological research be undertaken in India on a large scale without delay, while the ancient tribal cultures are still alive and available for study and observation. Much is already lost, as the tribal cultures, especially in the south, are now disintegrating and disappearing.

What is most needed is, in my opinion, a detailed and comprehensive study of all the various peoples and castes of India, but especially of the tribes and the backward classes. Such studies should aim at presenting an accurate and complete picture of the culture of each tribe or caste. In a more general manner, reports on all the castes and tribes of the various Indian states and provinces have already been compiled by British officials. But they could present to us only the general ethnological pattern of the Indian subcontinent, as the compilers of these reports, however well-intentioned they may have been, were mostly very amateur ethnographers. Their generally superficial and often incorrect descriptions of the races and cultures of India must now be supplemented by monographs on individual tribes and castes; these should be written by expert anthropologists.

It appears that the compilation of bulky monographs in the style of Rivers and Seligman is no longer in vogue. Many American and British anthropologists nowadays prefer to study a particular phase of primitive culture and do not usually choose to describe a particular tribe in all its cultural aspects. Such an approach to the subject may be preferable in America, Africa and Oceania where much field-work has been done; but it would be premature in India, where only a few tribes and races have been studied scientifically and in great detail.

A few such monographs have, in recent years, been written on Indian aboriginal and backward classes by V. Elwin, W. Koppers, W. V. Grigson, C. von Fürer-Haimendorf, O. R. Ehrenfels and S. Fuchs. Assam is fortunate, for a good number of its tribes have been studied and described in good monographs written by various British officials and Christian missionaries. Several monographs have also been composed by Indian anthropologists such as D. N. Majumdar, S. C. Dube, I. Singh and T. B. Naik. But unfortunately they do not go sufficiently deep into detail. I suppose that their very intimacy and familiarity with Indian beliefs and customs prevent them from describing accurately and in minute detail these cultures and beliefs—they take too much for granted. For them a single word is often sufficient to create in their mind a whole series of thought associations, but for the non-Indian the same word has only its particular word-value.<sup>1</sup>

Three vast areas in India present themselves most urgently for anthropological research: Central India (Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa), North-Eastern India (Bengal and Assam) and Southern India (Kerala, Mysore and Madras).

1. T. B. Naik, in his monograph on the Bhils, says for instance on page 161: 'When they are sure that he is dead, all weep loudly'. The author, I suppose, alludes to the well-known Hindu custom, which the Bhil have adopted, of the mourning women singing dirges. But how is a non-Indian to know that dirges are sung by the women and what kind of dirges are sung? A reader of Naik's book, not familiar with Indian customs, will think that all the mourners, men and women, do nothing but weep aloud.

## THE CENTRAL AREA

The tribes of the central area can be divided into three linguistic groups, each group speaking either an Aryan dialect, a Dravidian, or a Munda language.

Tribes now speaking an Aryan dialect are: the Bhil, Bhilala, Meo and Mina in the west; the Baiga, Ahir, Banjara, Panka, Ojha, Pardhan, Bhoi or Dhimar, Bharia-Bhumia, Agaria and Binjhwar in the centre; the Dhanwar, Bhaina, Bhuiya, Kisan-Nagasia, Kawar, Kamar, Bhunjya, Dhoba and Halba in the east and south of the central area. The Nahal have a language of their own.

The Dravidian-speaking tribes live in the eastern and southern section of the central area. They are: the Maler, Oraon or Kurukh, Mannewar, Kaikari, Gond, Maria, Muria, Bhatra, Parja, Kolam, Koya and Khond (or Kondh).

The tribes speaking a Munda language live mostly in the eastern section of the central area: the Korwa, Chero, Turi, Asur, Kol, Munda, Kharia, Birhor, Bhumij, Kharwar, Mahli, Ho and Santal. The Korku live nowadays far away from the main group in the centre and the Juang, Gadaba, Savara and Bondo in the south-eastern region of the central area.

Of these tribes only the following have been studied more in detail: the Bhil,<sup>1</sup> Baiga,<sup>2</sup> Pardhan,<sup>3</sup> Agaria,<sup>4</sup> Bhuiya,<sup>5</sup> Kamar,<sup>6</sup> Oraon,<sup>7</sup> Gond,<sup>8</sup> Maria,<sup>9</sup> Muria,<sup>10</sup> Korwa,<sup>11</sup> Asur,<sup>12</sup> Munda,<sup>13</sup> Kharia,<sup>14</sup> Birhor,<sup>15</sup> Bhumij,<sup>16</sup> Ho,<sup>17</sup> Santal,<sup>18</sup> Savara,<sup>19</sup> and Bondo.<sup>20</sup>

Much valuable, though generally unreliable, information may be found in the series *The Castes and Tribes of India*, compiled mainly by British officials.<sup>21</sup> The same is true of the various Census Reports, published every tenth year by the Indian Government. But most of the papers in these volumes have been written by amateur ethnographers and must be treated with caution. Journals

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1. W. Koppers, *Die Bhil in Zentralindien*, Horn-Wien, 1948. T. B. Naik, *The Bhils*, Delhi, 1956.
  2. V. Elwin, *The Baiga*, London, 1939.
  3. S. Hivale, *The Pardhans of the Upper Narbada Valley*, Oxford University Press, 1946.
  4. V. Elwin, *The Agaria*, Oxford University Press, 1942.
  5. S. C. Roy, *The Hill Bhuiyas of Orissa*, Ranchi, 1935.
  6. S. C. Dube, *The Kamar*, Lucknow, 1951.
  7. P. Dehon, *Religion and Customs of the Oraons*, Calcutta, 1909. S. C. Roy, *The Oraons of Chota-Nagpur*, Ranchi, 1915. S. C. Roy, *Oraon Religion and Customs*, Ranchi, 1928.
  8. I. Singh, *The Gondwana and the Gonds*, Lucknow, 1944. C. von Furer-Haimendorf, *The Raj-Gonds of Adilabad*, London, 1948.
  9. W. V. Grigson, *The Maria Gonds of Bastar State*, 2nd ed., Oxford University Press, 1949.
  10. V. Elwin, *The Muria and their Ghotul*, Oxford University Press, 1947.
  11. D. N. Majumdar, *The Fortunes of Primitive Tribes*, Lucknow, 1944.
  12. W. Ruben, *Eisenschmiede und Dämonen in Indien*, Leiden, 1939.
  13. S. C. Roy, *The Mundas and their Country*, Calcutta, 1912. J. Hoffmann and A. van Emelen, *Encyclopaedia Mundarica*, 13 vols., Patna, 1930-41.
  14. T. C. Das, *The Wild Kharias of Dalbhum*, Calcutta, 1931. S. C. Roy and R. C. Roy, *The Kharias*, 2 vols., Ranchi 1937.
  15. S. C. Roy, *The Birhors*, Ranchi, 1925.
  16. T. C. Das, *The Bhumiyas of Seraikella*, Calcutta, 1931.
  17. A. Chatterji and T. C. Das, *The Hos of Seraikella*, Calcutta, 1927. D. N. Majumdar, *The Affairs of a Tribe*, Lucknow, 1950.
  18. C. Mukherjea, *The Santals*, Calcutta, 1943. W. J. Culshaw, *Tribal Heritage*, London, 1949. D. N. Majumdar, *The Santal*, Delhi, 1956.
  19. V. Elwin, *The Religion of an Indian Tribe*, London, 1954.
  20. V. Elwin, *Bondo Highlander*, Oxford University Press, 1950.
  21. Cf. E. T. Dalton, *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*, Calcutta, 1872. H. H. Risley, *Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, 2 vols., Calcutta, 1891. H. H. Risley, *The People of India*, Calcutta, 1908. R. V. Russell and Hiralal, *The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India*, London, 1916. W. Crooke, *Tribes and Castes of the North-West Provinces and Oudh*, Calcutta, 1896.

such as *Man in India* (Ranchi), *The Eastern Anthropologist* (Lucknow), *Anthropological Papers* (University of Calcutta), *Journal of the Nagpur University*, *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society*, *Journal of the Mythic Society* (Bangalore), the *Anthropos* and others, contain more reliable information.

A detailed study of any of the above enumerated tribes, particularly of those not yet studied scientifically, would be most welcome. All these tribes are being more or less completely assimilated by the national Indian culture. Certain of them, such as the Bhil, Bhilala, Gond, Banjara, Nahal, Khond, Maler, Gadaba, Juang and Korku are of special anthropological interest and as such a study of their cultures and traditions should, before all other studies of a more particular and less urgent character, be undertaken by the experts.

The Bhil are of great importance not only because of their numerical strength (2,233,000), but also because they are spread over such a large area of Western India. They are found mainly in Rajputana, Madhya Pradesh and in the northern Bombay State, but reach as far as Sind. The various regional Bhil groups differ much in physical appearance, in culture and language. This may be due to the influence of the various castes and peoples with which they came into contact. But it is also possible that the Bhil are not at all a uniform race or people. Several different tribes may have assumed the name of Bhil as a generic name. So far only two Bhil groups have been studied scientifically, those of Jhabua<sup>1</sup> and those of Gujerat.<sup>2</sup> A comparison of the two groups reveals great cultural differences. Only a detailed knowledge of the rest of the Bhil groups can decide whether these differences are due to the environment or to their origin.

Another yet unsolved question is how far the Bhil extend to the south and east of their habitat. Of the tribes in Northern Bombay State and in Gujerat—the Warli, Thakur, Katkari, the Chodhra, Dhodia and Dubla—only the Warli,<sup>3</sup> Katkari<sup>4</sup> and Chodhra<sup>5</sup> have to some extent been studied. For lack of proper information it is not clear whether these tribes are the northernmost extension of the South Indian tribal group, or the southernmost Bhil group. It is more probable that they belong to the southern area, because at least the Warli have the institution of the youth dormitory which is found in Southern India, but not among the Bhil.

The racial origin of the Bhil is still an unsolved puzzle. Until we have a clear picture of their original culture and language, and until the Bhil have been studied and measured scientifically, this question cannot be solved.

The problem of the original Bhil language also deserves special mention. Today all Bhil groups speak Aryan dialects. C. Thompson,<sup>6</sup> an expert on a Bhil dialect in Gujerat, states that about 84 per cent of the Bhili words collected by him were of Sanskrit origin (Gujerati and Marathi), 10 per cent of Persian origin and 6 per cent of unknown characters. These latter words might be remnants of their original language. A greater number of such words can probably be found in the language of the Jhabua Bhil and in the local dialects

1. W. Koppers, op. cit.

2. T. B. Naik, op. cit.

3. K. J. Save, *The Warlis*, Bombay, 1945.

4. A. N. Weling, *The Katharis*, Bombay, 1934.

5. B. H. Mehta, *Religious Thought and Worship amongst the Chodhras of Gujerat*, Bombay 1934.

6. C. Thompson, *Rudiments of the Bhil Language*, 1875.

of the various Bhilala groups. The Bhilala are in many aspects more conservative than the Bhil, and may thus have preserved more words of their original language.

This study of the Bhil dialects must be undertaken immediately, as with the introduction of school education in the Bhil areas their vocabulary will soon lose the words of their original language.

The Bhilala, a strong and vigorous tribe in Western Central India, are supposedly of mixed Bhil and Rajput stock. This claim should be carefully examined; most probably the Rajput origin is only claimed in order to increase the social prestige of the tribe. A great portion of the Bhilala is already strongly Hinduized, while other groups are more conservative and may have preserved much of their original culture.

What has been said about the Bhil applied equally strongly to the Gond. This important race of over three millions is likewise distributed over a large area and its regional groups show considerable differences in material culture, language, religion and social organization. As the Gond were in the past of some political importance and founded several petty kingdoms in Eastern Central India, lesser tribes may have been assimilated by the Gond. But this question cannot be solved unless more regional groups have been studied scientifically. So far only the Maria and Muria Gond of the former Bastar State and the Raj-Gond of Adilabad are known in appreciable detail.

Some regional Gond groups speak Aryan dialects, while others speak a Dravidian language, the Gondi or Kui. This language has been studied in the Betul District<sup>1</sup> and in former Bastar State,<sup>2</sup> but nowhere else. Only a meagre vocabulary has been collected. More information on this language is much needed.

Gondi is a Dravidian dialect which the Gond adopted when they lived more in the south. For it appears that the Gond have occupied their present habitat only for about a thousand years; in former times they must have lived in an area where Canarese was spoken, as their language is akin to Canarese. A. Ayappan has recently pointed out that the Gond have not only linguistic but also cultural connexions with Southern India.<sup>3</sup> But this must be investigated more thoroughly before it can be accepted as an established fact.

Of the other aboriginal Dravidian dialects spoken in the central area only Kolami<sup>4</sup> has been studied by an expert. It would be particularly fruitful to analyse the language of the Oraon and that of the Maler (Malto).

The Banjara or Lambadi, in former days nomadic cattle breeders, are spread over an immense area which extends from Rajputana over Madhya Pradesh to far into the Deccan. Today the Banjara speak the languages of the regions where they live. But in southern Madhya Pradesh I have it on the authority of a group of Banjara that in their dances they used to sing in a language which they could no longer understand themselves. It is necessary to investigate this claim before the language is quite forgotten. I may in passing mention that no satisfactory monograph exists on this important and populous tribe (300,000).<sup>5</sup>

1. C. G. Chevenix-Trench, *Grammar of Gondi*, Madras, 1919.

2. A. N. Mitchell, *Grammar of Maria Gondi Language*, Jagdalpur, 1942. W. W. Winfield, *Grammar of the Kui Language*, Calcutta.

3. A. Ayappan, 'The Tribes of South and South-West India', in *The Adivasis*, Delhi, 1955.

4. M. B. Emeneau, *Kolami, a Dravidian Language*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1955.

5. *The Monograph on the Banjara Clan*, by N. F. Cumberledge, published 1869 and reprinted 1882, is obsolete.

A study of the Nahal is again significant because they still possess their original language which may be pre-Dravidian and pre-Munda.<sup>1</sup> R. Shafer believes that the Nahali might be the original language of the Bhil.<sup>2</sup> This is very doubtful, for the Nahal appear to be an independent tribe. The fact that they are treated as inferior caste by the Bhil and Korku, with whom they live in close symbiosis, suggests that they were subjugated by those two tribes. The comparison of anthropometric data collected from the Bhil and Nathal also suggest a different racial origin. Nahali is spoken only in very few villages of Southern Madhya Pradesh. Of their cultural life even less is known than of their language.

The Khond (740,000), an important tribe of Orissa, speaking a Dravidian dialect, were in the past famous for their human sacrifices. A study of this tribe by an expert anthropologist is imperative, as the tribe is already in the process of full acculturation.

The study of the Maler appears also to be of importance, for according to S. S. Sarkar<sup>3</sup> they are of Veddid racial type; consequently they must be connected with the primitive tribes of Southern India.

Another problem still unsolved and therefore challenging the anthropologist is: when and from where did the Munda tribes enter India? The connexion of the Munda language group with the Austro-Asiatic languages has recently been questioned. It is also unknown how far the Munda languages are represented in Southern India, for no survey of the South Indian languages has ever been made. The Munda have traditions suggesting that they formerly occupied a much larger area. This may be true, for even now we find Munda-speaking tribes living at great distances from the main group. The Korku, the Gadaba and Savara, and the Juang are such tribes, which for this reason are of great anthropological interest. In their isolation they may have preserved their original culture and language better than the Munda themselves.

A problem yet unsolved is the origin and function of totemism in the tribes of Central India. H. Niggemeyer believed that the Gond were the main carriers of this totemism.<sup>4</sup> Since his thesis was published, much new material has come to light and a revision of his earlier conclusions may be required. But it is still unknown how many of the tribes have totemism and its exact function in these tribes.

To the north of the central area, with its many and vigorous aboriginal tribes, we find in the sub-Himalayan regions of Uttar Pradesh a number of small tribes which show at least remnants of tribal culture. If they were studied properly, more cultural traits of an ancient period might be revealed. These tribes are the Bhotia, Bhoksha, Tharu, Khasa, Ban Manus, Bora or Karki, Majhwar, Kewat, Musahar, Bind, Raji, Kolta, Khasiya, Rawalta, Biyar, Dhangar, Ghasiya, Saharia, Khairwar and others. Of these only the Khasa and Tharu have been studied in praiseworthy detail.<sup>5</sup>

While the tribes just mentioned have retained at least a resemblance of tribal independence, we find in the same area wandering tribes often with criminal propensities. They are probably food-gatherers and hunters who

1. R. Shafer, 'Nahali, a Linguistic Study in Paleothnography', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 1941, Vol. 5, pp. 346-71.

2. R. Shafer, *Ethnography of Ancient India*, Wiesbaden, 1954, p. 11.

3. S. S. Sarkar, *The Aboriginal Races of India*, Calcutta, 1954, pp. 36-69. See also : S. S. Sarkar, *The Maler of the Rajmahal Hills*, Calcutta, 1938.

4. H. Niggemeyer, 'Totemismus in Vorderindien', *Anthropos*, 1933, Vol. 28, Mödling-Wien.

5. D. N. Majumdar, *The Fortunes of Primitive Tribes*, Lucknow, 1944.

were dispossessed of their land and could not be forced to settle to a sedentary agricultural life. Such tribes are the Gurjar, Nat, Pasi, Dom, Habura, Bauria, Sansiya, Karwal, Bhatu, Bagdi, Kanjar, Dusadh, Kachi, Moghia, Beriya, Sonari, Satiya, Baheliya and Bansphor (Basor). A fair number of such tribes are found also in other parts of India, especially in the south. A study of these tribes might prove very fruitful and enlightening if it digs deep enough beyond their superficial Hindu veneer.

#### THE SOUTHERN AREA

While the tribes of the central area are populous and vigorous, the tribes of the southern zone are generally small in numbers and obviously more primitive. Many of them are mere food-gatherers who unwillingly had to take to a primitive form of cultivation; they were dispossessed of their land when the large tea plantations were started, where many of them now work as labourers. They have given up their original religious beliefs and social customs and now follow those of the surrounding Hindu castes. Not one of these tribes has retained its original language, though it is possible that their local dialects of Tamil, Malayalam, Telugu and Canarese contain broken remnants of their original languages. The study of these dialects has still to be done.

The tribes of the southern area are: In the north of the whole area, in Andhra, the Reddi and Chenchu, then in Madras State the Korava, Yerukala, Kallar, Maravar and, as mentioned before, the Lambadi. In the Nilgiri Hills we have the Toda, Badaga and Kota; there and in the adjacent Wynaad taluk we find seventeen or eighteen different tribes. The strongest tribes number only a few thousand, such as the Kurichiya, Paniyar and Karimpalan, while the Mulla Urali and Kurumba Chetti, the Kunduvatiyan, Kadar, Aranadan, Uridavan, Kanaladi, Pathiyan, Kattunayakkan and Tachanad Muppan are small tribes, with a only a few hundred members apiece. Along the Western Ghats are the Koraga, Uruva and Irula. In Travancore and Cochin we find the Mala-Pantaram and Paliyan, the Malavetan, Thandapulan, Mala-Arayan, Ulladan, the Muthuvan, Kannikan, Sholaga, Malaser and Nayadi tribes.

Of all these tribes only the Reddi,<sup>1</sup> Chenchu,<sup>2</sup> Toda,<sup>3</sup> Kadar<sup>4</sup> and Nayadi<sup>5</sup> have been properly studied. About the other tribes we have some rather unreliable information in the *Castes and Tribes*.<sup>6</sup> It will be impossible to gain a clear picture of the cultural prehistory of southern India unless these tribes are studied one after another accurately and scientifically. Although most of them have lost much of their original culture, especially in religion and social organization, it may be still possible to reconstruct their racial and cultural history if research is taken up immediately. Anthropometric data are equally urgently required.

1. C. von Fürer-Haimendorf, *The Reddis of the Bison-Hills*, London, 1948.

2. C. von Fürer-Haimendorf, *The Chenchus*, London, 1943.

3. W. H. R. Rivers, *The Todas*, London, 1906.

4. O. R. Ehrenfels, *Kadar of Cochin*, Madras, 1952.

5. S. Ayappan, *Anthropology of the Nayadis*, Madras, 1937.

6. R. E. Enthoven, *The Tribes and Castes of Bombay*, Bombay, 1920-22. L. A. K. Iyer, *The Travancore Tribes and Castes*, Trivandrum, 1937-41. L. K. A. Iyer, *The Cochin Tribes and Castes*, Madras, 1909-12. L. K. A. Iyer and H. V. Nanjundayya, *The Mysore Tribes and Castes*, Bangalore, 1928-35. E. Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, Madras, 1909.

There is some controversy going on about a submerged Negrito strain in the racial constitution of these southern tribes. B. S. Guha is quite positive about its existence, while S. S. Sarkar and D. N. Majumdar oppose his view. Much more anthropometric material must be collected before this question can be solved. Likewise, a more extensive collection of anthropometric data will settle the question whether these tribes belong to the so-called Veddid race or whether they are (Proto-) Australoids with a mixture of Negroid blood.<sup>1</sup>

Of special interest is the mother-right which is prevalent in South India. It may be a Mediterranean importation which has spread through the Nayar to the other tribes and castes. In South India it is commonly connected with polyandry. Though O. R. Ehrenfels has studied the matriarchal system in India,<sup>2</sup> further information is needed. This study must be made soon, as matriarchy and polyandry are yielding to the prevailing moral standards of the patriarchal peoples. The Indian Government too favours the abolition of matrilineal inheritance and greater uniformity with the rest of India.

We find polyandry and matriarchy again in some sub-Himalayan and Assamese tribes. Ehrenfels asserts that many cultural traits prevalent in matriarchal cultures are found all over India. This would suggest that matriarchy was commoner in India before the arrival of the Aryans who, with pronounced patriarchal convictions, were opposed to matriarchy and probably responsible for its disappearance in Northern and Central India.

There must have been a totemistic centre somewhere in South India; in the Western Ghats we find a number of castes and tribes with totemistic practices. The study of South Indian totemism should be undertaken without delay, as it is dying out fast.

#### THE NORTH-EASTERN AREA

While the races and peoples which most effectively shaped the history of India entered from the north-west, the country was certainly also populated from the north-east, via Assam and Bengal. A great number of aboriginal tribes still live on the hills and in the valleys of the eastern sub-Himalayan slopes, and form a racial and cultural bridge between South-East Asia and India.

The tribes of this north-eastern aboriginal area are as follows. In the south of Nepal and Bhutan and in the centre of Assam: the Gurung, Murmi, Magari, Limbu, Lepcha, Kanauri, Kiranti, Rabha, Garo and Khasi, Mikir and Kachari. In the south and east of Tibet: the Momba, Aka, Daffa, Apa-Tani, Miri, Abor, Sulung, Gallong, Minyong, Pasi, Padam, Pangi, Mishmi, Khamti and Singphong. The Nara tribes: the Rangpan and Konyak in the north, the Rengma, Sema and Angami in the west, the Ao, Lhota, Phom, Chang, Santam and Yimstsungar in the centre, the Kacha and Kabui in the south and the Tangkul and Kalyo-Kengu in the east of the Naga country. In Manipur we also find the civilized Meithei. In the south of Assam we find the Kuki-Chin tribes, the Lushai, Chakma and Lakher.

Comparatively more anthropological research has been done in Assam and

1. When Prince Peter of Greece went to Kerala to study polyandry there, the Nayar decided to withhold all information on polyandry in their caste. They seem to be ashamed of this marriage form previously found among them.

2. O. R. Ehrenfels, *Mother-right in India*, Hyderabad, 1947.

we have good monographs on the Lepcha,<sup>1</sup> Abor-Miri,<sup>2</sup> Garo,<sup>3</sup> Khasi,<sup>4</sup> Kuki,<sup>5</sup> Apa-Tani and Daffa,<sup>6</sup> Lakher,<sup>7</sup> Konyak,<sup>8</sup> Rengma,<sup>9</sup> Sema,<sup>10</sup> Angani,<sup>11</sup> Ao,<sup>12</sup> Lhota,<sup>13</sup> and the Manipur Naga.<sup>14</sup>

Various attempts have been made to bring order into the confusing variety of races and cultures which are found in the north-eastern aboriginal area. But only a detailed study of all the tribes can decide the question whence they came into their present habitat and where they lived in former times. Another yet unsolved question is whether any of these tribes have racial and cultural connexions with Indian tribes. C. von Fürer-Haimendorf assumes that there is a connexion with the Munda tribes of Middle India. Contact was broken with the invasion of the Aryans, who drove a wedge between the two tribal areas.

The languages spoken by the aboriginal tribes of Assam are divided into Tibeto-Burman, Sino-Tibetan and Mon groups. The Naga tribes alone speak between themselves more than forty different dialects. The Naga languages especially are very incompletely known.

The pacification of the raiding and head-hunting tribes in the north-eastern frontier districts of India was a great problem for the British administrators of Assam; since independence the Indian Government is even more anxious to make the north-eastern borders of India safe against Tibet and Burma. Though the Naga tribes resent this intrusion, ultimately they will have to yield to the Indian administration. Once they are subdued, their ways of living will also change.

#### THE LOW CASTES OF INDIA

An immensely rich store of prehistoric and archaeological evidence is hidden in the culture of the low castes and untouchables of India. This source has scarcely been tapped; it would undoubtedly yield much valuable information. There is one monograph on the Balahis<sup>15</sup> in Central India, a short one on the Chamars<sup>16</sup> and Mahars<sup>17</sup> respectively, but not reliable information is available on such large and important castes as the Doms, Chuhras, Koris, Kolis, Dhers, Mehtars, Mangs, etc., in northern and central India, and the Pulayans, Cherumans, Holeyas, Madigas and others in the south of India.

1. G. Gorer, *Himalayan Village*, London, 1938.
2. G. Dunbar, *Abors and Galongs*, Calcutta, 1916.
3. A. Playfair, *The Garos*, London, 1926.
4. P. R. T. Gurdon, *The Khasis*, London, 1914. T. C. Raichaudhuri, *The Khasis*, Calcutta, 1935. S. Endle, *The Kacharis*, London, 1911.
5. J. S. Shakespear, *Lushei Kuki Clans*, London, 1914. W. Shaw, *Notes on the Thadou Kukis*, Calcutta, 1928. T. C. Das, *The Purums, an old Kuki Tribe of Manipur*, Calcutta, 1945. A. G. McCall, *The Lushai Chrysalis*, London, 1949. L. A. Waddell, *The Tribes of the Brahmaputra Valley*, Calcutta, 1901.
6. C. von Fürer-Haimendorf, *Himalayan Barbary*, London, 1955.
7. N. E. Parry, *The Lakheres*, London, 1932.
8. C. von Fürer-Haimendorf, *The Naked Nagas*, Calcutta, 1946.
9. J. P. Mills, *The Rengma Nagas*, London, 1937.
10. J. H. Hutton, *The Sema Nagas*, London, 1921.
11. J. H. Hutton, *The Angami Nagas*, London, 1921.
12. W. C. Smith, *The Ao Naga Tribes of Assam*, London, 1925. J. P. Mills, *The Ao Nagas*, London, 1926. S. N. Mazumdar, *Ao Nagas*, Calcutta, 1925.
13. J. P. Mills, *The Lhota Nagas*, London, 1922.
14. T. C. Hodson, *The Naga Tribes of Manipur*, London, 1911. T. C. Hodson, *The Meitheiis*, London, 1908.
15. S. Fuchs, *The Children of Hari*, Horn-Wien, 1950.
16. G. W. Briggs, *The Chamars*, Oxford University Press, 1920.
17. A. Robertson, *The Mahar Folk*, Oxford University Press, 1938.

The racial history of these castes is almost completely unknown; very little is known about their culture. No doubt, they have adopted much of the Hindu culture, but they have many customs and beliefs of their own which would throw new light on the prehistory and early history of India. The Indian Government is making strenuous effort to 'uplift' these castes. Education and social work among them will have their salutary results, but they will dry up a rich source of information for anthropologists, sociologists and folklorists. Much could still be salvaged if the study of these castes were undertaken soon.

This brief survey of anthropological research problems in India shows that so far India has been much neglected by scholars of anthropology and allied sciences. Research in the vast subcontinent should be taken up both extensively and intensively and organized systematically. It will yield rich results not only for a better knowledge of Indian prehistory and early history, but also of the cultural and racial links with the outside world.

Historical documents are rather sparse, since the ancient Indians were not much interested in history, and existing documents were soon destroyed in the many wars and conflagrations, by inclement weather conditions or by insect pests. Thus the past history of India must be laboriously reconstructed from the prehistorical and anthropological evidence. Since these sources are now in danger of destruction, anthropological research in India must be intensified before it is too late.